

The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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FREE INSIDE

Your 2017
Oban Times
wall calendar

JANUARY			FEBRUARY			MARCH				
MON	2	9	16	23	30	MON	6	13	20	27
TUE	3	10	17	24	31	TUE	7	14	21	28
WED	4	11	18	25		WED	8	15	22	29
THU	5	12	19	26		THU	9	16	23	30
FRI	6	13	20	27		FRI	10	17	24	31
SAT	7	14	21	28		SAT	11	18	25	
SUN	8	15	22	29		SUN	12	19	26	

APRIL			MAY			JUNE				
MON	3	10	17	24	MON	1	8	15	22	29
TUE	4	11	18	25	TUE	2	9	16	23	30
WED	5	12	19	26	WED	3	10	17	24	31
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FRI	7	14	21	28	FRI	5	12	19	26	
SAT	8	15	22	29	SAT	6	13	20	27	
SUN	9	16	23	30	SUN	7	14	21	28	

Public praised for role in hunt for missing Crystalla

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THE COMMUNITY response to help find a woman missing from Oban has been 'outstanding', said the co-ordinator of a number of volunteer searches throughout the area.

Darrel Williams, the manager of the St Columba Hotel in Oban, put out a call on Friday night after hearing that his colleague's mum had gone missing and he and many others wanted to help.

Mr Williams, a keen member of Oban Lorne rugby club, was supported by his fellow players who gave up their Christmas lunch on Saturday to help with the search.

Mr Williams said: 'It has been a very difficult time. The family thank everyone who has been helping and thinking about Stel-

la. We went out looking on Friday night and then again all day on Saturday.

'People have been so kind by getting out to look. So many people, including colleagues, friends - even the staff in the Regent Hotel who went on a minimum service to get out and join in as well. We've walked all over the place and in some cases we have covered the area twice.

'I've been overwhelmed by the outstanding support from all the community to get out in some terrible weather to find someone who is a stranger to them.

'Thank you to the community and all the people who have been helping us search.

'It is now time for the emergency services to continue to do their work.'

Oban RNLI said it was asked

initially by Stornoway Coastguard to assist in the search for a person reported missing to Oban police late on Friday evening December 16. The lifeboat launched at 11.40pm and conducted a close search of the shoreline from Oban Cathedral, past Dunollie and along to Ganavan and Dunstaffnage.

Oban Coastguard team conducted a shore-based search in the same area along with a Coastguard rescue helicopter.

On its return, the lifeboat searched the north and then east shores of the Isle of Kerrera.

Nothing was found and the lifeboat returned to her berth where she was refuelled and ready for service by 2am.

Police appeal for assistance with continuing search

POLICE Scotland are seeking the assistance of the public in trying to trace a woman missing from Oban since Thursday December 15. Crystalla Dean, 52, was last seen by her daughter at her home in Longdale Crescent at 8pm last week.

The following day, her daughter returned to the house and, when her mum failed to return home, she contacted police and reported her missing.

Crystalla is described as white, around 5ft 1in tall, with a slim build and curly hair which is dyed blue. It is believed she may have been wearing jeans and boots.

Crystalla has dogs Breagha and Brodie and she normally



walks them in a wooded area beyond the cathedral, known locally as The Witches.

Extensive inquiries have been carried out with officers

and specialist police resources being used in the search to locate Crystalla. However, all attempts to locate her have so far proved unsuccessful.

The search for Crystalla is continuing, with Police Scotland's mountain rescue team and police divers being assisted by partner agencies, such as HM Coastguard and the mountain rescue team.

A police spokesman said: 'Crystalla has recently been dealing with some personal issues and her family just want to know she is safe and well.'

'If anyone has seen Crystalla or has any information or knowledge as to her whereabouts, please contact Oban Police Office on 101.'

TIMESLINE

New towing for Scottish waters

THE Maritime and Coastguard Agency has awarded a five-year contract for a new Scottish emergency towing vessel (ETV) to Ardent Maritime Netherlands BV, to begin on December 31, 2016.

The ship is the levoli Black, a 70m towing vessel of some 2,283 gross tonnes and a bollard pull of 139 tonnes. The vessel is experienced in ETV operations, having served as an ETV for the Netherlands from 2010-13.

The levoli Black is making her way from the Adriatic to relieve the existing emergency tug, the Herakles, by December 31.

Council rapped over exam results

A FREEDOM of Information request about exam results in Argyll and Bute was mishandled by the local authority, the regulator has ruled.

The officer said the local authority should not have withheld exam information from parents when it was requested. An Argyll and Bute Council spokeswoman said that among the 1,200 inquiries the authority received more than 98 per cent of people were happy with the response.

Number of rats is on the increase

EYEWITNESSES are reporting an increased number of rats in Oban. On social media, people are blaming a number of factors, including a fire at the Millpark depot in Oban, and the new three-weekly bin collections. Anyone with concerns can phone Argyll and Bute Council's pest control team on 01546 605514.

Storm Barbara will disrupt ferry sailings

STORM Barbara is forecast to bring 90mph winds to west and north Scotland before Christmas Day.

Ferry operator CalMac has warned travellers to check regularly for disruption on individual routes online at www.calmac.co.uk or via its smartphone app or on Twitter.

CalMac operations director Drew Collier said: 'We will review sailings case by case, but would advise anyone planning to travel by ferry to take this into account when planning journeys.'

The Gourock and Dunoon passenger service, operated by Argyll Ferries, may also be affected - see updates at www.argyllferries.co.uk.

The Met Office issued a 'be prepared' amber warning for severe weather, with gusts of 80-90mph expected on Friday into Saturday until they ease in the morning, and 'the potential for some structural damage, as well as disruption to power supplies and travel, with restrictions on bridges'.



Woodwind and fiddle pupils from Oban High played for the pensioners' treat on Tuesday lunchtime.

Fears for future of music tuition

CHRISTMAS events and festivals may fall silent in future, it is feared, if plans for reducing music tuition across Argyll and Bute go ahead.

The Oban Times has been approached by a number of music tutors and organisations to raise the issue after the council's budget consultation asks the community to choose between bins and education.

They say that from April music tuition in schools will be greatly reduced, with pupils being encouraged to visit private tutors after school which parents can be charged for.

A scheme set up by the Argyllshire Gathering for piping tutoring will continue with its current arrangements, includ-

ing tutors visiting pupils in schools throughout the area.

The music tutors are so fearful for the future of music education that they are now asking people to speak out about how important music is to the local community through the local authority's online consultation.

In September, Argyll and Bute Council was sanctioned by the Scottish Government after a question was raised by Michael Russell MSP in the Scottish Parliament over the charging of pupils for music tuition during the school day.

At that time it was agreed that pupils could not be charged for music tuition in schools.

Mr Russell said: 'I am sure the council inadvertently crossed the line on this matter but it is clear there can be no charging for music tuition during the school day, no matter who is teaching the pupils.'

'Accordingly, Argyll and Bute Council has ceased such charging immediately and refunded any charges paid by parents or carers which have been requested in such circumstances.'

It is understood that plans are being discussed within the local authority to reduce the number of hours available to pupils in schools to reduce the numbers of pupils needing tuition during the school day.

Derek Connery, from Bid4Oban, said the tradition of music in Oban and wider Argyll is very much part of the attraction of the town.

He said: 'We rely on Oban High School Pipe Band and other musicians from the Oban High School traditional school of music for many of the events we put on.'

'The tutoring they receive through school is second to none.'

'Tutoring from more experienced musicians is part of the tradition that keeps that going.'

At the time of going to press, the council had failed to respond to requests for comment.

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Plans for link road on island approved

A LINK road connecting two communities on Kerrera came a step closer last week, when Argyll and Bute Council agreed to design it, if a local group bid for the £500,000 cost to build it.

The six-mile-long island opposite Oban is home to more than 30 residents in two communities in the north and south, each linked to the mainland by ferries at Gallanach and Oban's North Pier, but only linked to each other by a dirt track. A community-led initiative aims to provide a road connecting the two settlements, which could expand the island's population.

A report on the Kerrera link, presented by head of roads Jim Smith to the Policy and Resources Committee on Thursday December 15, explained: 'The island community has been seeking to have a road built linking the north and south. Residents view the provision of a road as a lifeline link due to concerns regarding existing access for emergency services and medical staff to the island.'

'Planning permission is in place for the road but no detailed design has been completed. No funding has been identified to undertake detailed design [and] legal processes to confirm the availability of the land and on-site construction materials.'

'To assist with the bidding process and to make the bid application more robust, council officers arranged for a topographical survey along the route corridor, which has been completed and made available to the community group.'

The report proposed the council should carry out the design of the road, while the community group progress the planning applications and 'seeks to secure contributory funding via the sale of building plots on the island.'

'The likely cost of construction is estimated to be in excess of £500,000. The final price will not be known until tender returns are received. This is particularly relevant due to the island setting and the logistical challenges of bringing plant, materials and equipment onto the island.'

Councillors approved the recommendations on Thursday, adding only that the council 'write to the community group seeking agreement to the arrangement prior to the commencement of the detailed design'.

Gigha tribute to Russian sailors who died in wreck

MARK DAVEY
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WHEN a giant wave smashed factory fishing ship Kartli onto a reef near the Isle of Gigha, killing four crew members in 1991, it was the last ship registered in the Soviet Union to be wrecked.

Those events, from a quarter of a century ago, were remembered in a series of moving ceremonies on Gigha last weekend attended by Russian Consul General Andrey Pritsepov and the Lord Lieutenant of Argyll and Bute, Patrick Stewart.

Exactly 25 years to the day, on December 18, 1991, the Kartli, a 1,900-ton, 240ft ship lost power in a huge storm and smashed into the reef in Tarbert bay.

At the time John Martin, 75, was team leader of Gigha Coastguard rescue. He said: 'It was a terrible night, with a westerly gale blowing.'

The memorial efforts have been led by Igor Ratikin, who was a friend of the crew and captain, having worked at the shipping office that dealt with the Kartli.

During events to mark the anniversary, Mr Ratikin handed out specially struck medallions. The first was given to David MacLellan, 46, who is now the Islay lifeboat coxswain, but then was 21 and serving his first year.



Gigha primary pupils with the consul general Andrey Pritsepov and head teacher Julie Wilson.

Mr MacLellan said: 'We got the call at about midnight. I was in bed. It was horrendous when we put out from Port Askaig.'

Mr Ratikin wrote a book about the sinking in Russian, published in 2009, and with the 25th anniversary approaching, contacted the Gigha Heritage Trust to see if a memorial could be arranged.

A stone cairn was constructed, by Andy Clements, round a prominent hillock at the north end of Gigha overlooking Tarbert Bay,

on the north-west coast of the island, where the remains of the ship are 30ft down.

Mr Clements said: 'The cairn is built with stone from Gigha quarry and a sighting compass from the Kartli is installed on the top. It is possible to sight through the compass and see the waves breaking over the reef where the ship foundered.'

On Sunday, James McLellan conducted a service at the parish church of Gigha and Carra, in which he incorporated the events surrounding the sinking.

admire the selflessness of those who, regardless of their own safety, helped on that night.

Mr Pritsepov said: 'It is a great privilege and an honour to stand here on this island dedicating a piece of Russia on Scottish soil.'

'I would like to thank the community of Gigha for your compassion and memory and, of course, all the members of the Coastguard and lifeboat men.'

Alasdair McNeill, an elder of the church on Gigha organised a collection in 1991 for the ship's captain, Vladimir Gayduk, who lost a leg but survived.

After the cairn's unveiling Mr McNeill said: 'In days to come, when people pause at this memorial, may they do so with respect and reverence.'

Later at a reception in the Gigha hotel Mr Martin presented Mr Pritsepov with one of the few surviving bottles of Gigha whisky bottled when the island passed to the trust.

Gigha children led by primary head Julie Wilson, performed a Robert Louis Stevenson poem about Christmas at sea. Later Mrs Wilson said the Russian consul general had told her he wanted to try to find a similar Russian island and initiate a school twinning exercise.

Mrs Wilson said children from Gigha were keen to invite Russian children to Scotland.

Argyll firms are up for awards

NINE Argyll businesses are among the finalists in the 2017 Scottish Rural Awards.

The Scottish Rural Awards are the ultimate benchmark of success in Scotland's countryside, highlighting the enterprise, skill and innovation of those who live and work in rural areas.

The shortlist spans 10 categories which celebrate all aspects of rural life, from artisan food and tourism, to education, conservation and agriculture.

Shortlisted in the Business Start-Up category, which is open to companies trading for less than two years, are Lord of the Isles at Craobh Haven, Craine Communications in Oban, and creative agency Brandfire, based in Campbeltown.

The Wee Isle Dairy, on the Isle of Gigha, has made the finals in both the Business Start-Up and Artisan Food categories.

Cologin Chalets and The Barn Bar, by Oban, and The Puffer Bar and Restaurant at Easdale have been shortlisted in the Rural Hospitality category, while the Oban Winter Festival has been shortlisted for a Rural Tourism award.

Joining them is the Oban Phoenix Cinema, which is a finalist in the Rural Enterprise category, and The Farm Stall in Bellochan, which has been shortlisted in the Agriculture category.

Now in their third year, the Scottish Rural Awards are partnered by *Scottish Field* magazine, part of Wyvex Media Ltd, which also owns *The Oban Times*, and the Scottish Countryside Alliance, and backed by a number of sponsors for 2017, including Aldi, the Bank of Scotland and Subaru.

More than 200 nominations for businesses were made since launching at the beginning of August, spanning locations from the Outer Hebrides to the Borders.

A winner, runner-up and highly commended in each category will be unveiled at the Scottish Rural Awards and gala dinner, which will take place on Thursday March 16, 2017, at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh.

Richard Bath, editor of *Scottish Field*, said: 'Scotland's rural communities are displaying a quite remarkable amount of energy, innovation and imagination as they diversify existing businesses and create opportunities.'

For a full list of the finalists, visit www.scottishruralawards.org.

'Traffic lights' installed on Mull ... to help otters cross the road

TRAFFIC lights to help otters to cross the road safely have been installed on Mull thanks to a dedicated band of volunteers, after their research found 50 otters had been run over in the past four years.

The semi-aquatic mammals, members of the weasel family - which includes badgers, martens, minks and wolverines - sleep and rear their young inland in 'holts' but feed on fish, frogs, crayfish and crabs out to sea, where they are fast and agile swimmers with powerful webbed feet.

Their name is from the same root as the English word 'water'. Otters are inquisitive, playful and intelligent, often appearing

to take childlike enjoyment in sliding around on muddy banks or in snow.

Volunteers of the Mull Otter Group (MOG) have tried to reduce the numbers killed on the island's roads, recorded as 50 since January 2013, by putting up 'otters crossing' warning signs and clearing culverts. But with traffic expected to increase by 50 per cent due to cheaper ferry tickets because of the Road Equivalent Tariff, members are hoping their latest ploy of roadside reflectors will keep the fatalities down.

The reflectors, which cost £525 for each set, work by reflecting the light from oncoming vehicles at right angles into the eyes of any

otter who may be contemplating crossing the road. It is hoped the otters will learn that, when the verges are illuminated, it warns them not to cross the road - like a red traffic light.

MOG member Marie Fox wrote on the group's website: 'Otters need to cross the roads which lie between the feeding area on the shore and the places where they rest and get fresh water, which are further inland.'

'We wish they would wait until it's safe to cross the road, or always use the convenient tunnels aka culverts. But until someone figures out how to teach otters about road safety, we have to think of other methods.'

As part of a trial, two sets of



Otters in Oban Bay. Picture: John Speirs

reflectors have been installed in Mull's 'hot spots' for otter deaths, with the second set put in near Pennygown.

'It has proved successful on Skye,' said Marie. 'We hope it will be successful on Mull.'

'If the lights are, we will install them in other areas where otters

have been killed by vehicles.'

'Road traffic accidents are a massive problem,' explained group chairwoman Jane Stevens.

'Last year we lost 25. This year we have lost 14. Every single day otters dice with death to get to the sea to eat and get back home again.'

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We would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas

Firms warned over safety flaws

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EMPLOYERS are being reminded to keep staff well trained and safe at work, after a ruling by Oban Sheriff Court saw an established business fined £3,000.

3663 Alba Ltd, who purchased Forreth's Food Services in 2013, was censured after a worker, Steven John Tonner, who had been given no formal training, was injured driving a forklift truck.

Now the environmental health team at Argyll and Bute Council is warning that many other workers may be in a similar

situation – and it will push for prosecution in every case.

Councillor David Kinniburgh, spokesman for regulatory services, said: 'The council is committed to supporting local businesses, which is why our environmental health team engages proactively with all employers, big and small, to help them work well.

'As a partner with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), we have a role in supporting businesses to manage risk, helping them tackle work-related ill health, as well as avoiding the potentially costly fines which come with breaches of health and safety legislation.

'We can be proud of the record of the overwhelming majority of businesses in Argyll and Bute when it comes to occupational health and safety.

'However, where and when necessary, we do take enforcement action, such as in this recent case.

'An accident investigation by our team identified failings in the company's management of mandatory health and safety training, which led to a prosecution and a fine of £3,000.

'This should serve as a reminder to other businesses of the potentially serious consequences of breaking health and safety at work law. No matter the type of

business, workers have the right to have the appropriate training to ensure they go home safe and well at the end of their working day.

'The council's environmental health team is here to help businesses and is happy to provide advice and support, on a confidential basis, to help them comply with the relevant legislation. Please don't hesitate to call the council on 01546 605519.'

Information on how to ensure workplace transport is safe to use and workers are properly trained to use it can be found on HSE's website at www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/index.htm.



Steven John Tonner had his hand crushed in an accident.

Playpark fund hits £76,000

FRIENDS of Oban Community Playpark have raised £23,000 towards finishing its final phase, the under-fives play area – leaving only £24,000 to go to reach their £100,000 target.

Friends of Oban Community Playpark is a fundraising group aiming to build 'an outstanding play and recreation area for five to 15-year-olds in the green field next to Atlantis Leisure, created and fundraised for by our community for our community', according to its Facebook page.

Chairwoman Lyndsay Elliott told *The Oban Times*: 'Our recent funding successes are £10,068 from Scottish Sea Farms (SSF) Heart of the Community Fund and £12,942 from Crerar Hotels Trust, which will be used to build a new all-inclusive under-fives playpark at Atlantis Community Leisure. Friends of Oban Community Playpark are aiming to raise a total of £100,000 and with these new donations, have about £76,000 towards the project.

'Both Crerar Hotels Trust and SSF have previously supported our project, with both contributing to the older children's playpark, and we are delighted at their ongoing support.

'We need to continue to close the funding gap and have some grants pending early 2017, so it is a real possibility that we can start building in 2017.'

On top of raising £76,000 for the under-fives playpark, so far the group has 'built an awesome playpark for five to 15-year-olds', which opened in February, and upgraded a memorial garden.



In a galaxy far, far away ... there's a cookie monster

FANS of *Star Wars* flocking to see the latest film *Rogue One* at Oban's Phoenix Cinema on Monday may have been surprised to spot the cookie monster rather than Darth Vader.

The blue, googly-eyed, voracious biscuit-eating puppet from the US children's TV series *Sesame Street*, famous for the phrase 'me want cookie', made a guest appearance in Oban's cinema to watch the eighth instalment in the epic space saga – and *The Oban Times* can exclusively reveal the cookie monster ate a packet of Revels.

However, the cookie monster in question was actually Lee McKillop,

a janitor at Kilniver Primary School, who was dressed in her fuzzy onesie to raise money for the Sophie North Charitable Trust.

'This is a charity that is close to my heart,' writes Lee on her fundraising page 'My Onesie Night Out', on mydonate.bt.com. 'I have a friend who lost his daughter in the Dunblane shootings in 1996. This charity was set up in her memory and I'm aiming to raise £100.'

Lee has already smashed her target, making £326 by Thursday last week.

This year was the 20th anniversary of the Dunblane massacre, when 16 children, including five-year-old Sophie

North, and their teacher were killed by Thomas Hamilton in a mass shooting.

To honour Sophie's memory, her father, Dr Mick North, set up a charity in 2004. It makes three donations each year, on the anniversary of the tragedy in March, on Sophie's birthday in October, and in April, in memory of Sophie's mum, who died of breast cancer in 1993.

By the end of last year, the trust had made 25 donations totalling £6,156 to charities related to children's diseases and hospices, breast cancer, care of the terminally ill, and conflict resolution and anger reduction.

Ms McKillop, a friend of Mick, said:

'The things he has been through – it is just amazing. He was one of the main forces against handguns.'

Earlier this year Dr North said children in Britain are safer as a result of a successful campaign to ban handguns a year after the tragedy.

Lee added: 'I work in a wee primary school myself and it could have been any of us. I tried to think of what I could do. I tried to think of something Sophie would have liked.'

So she picked her cookie monster onesie out the bedroom drawer and decided to wear it to the cinema, because 'it would be busier, just to add to the embarrassment'.

New homes approved for Glenshellach site

A PLAN to build six more affordable houses in Glenshellach has been approved by councillors, writes Sandy Neil.

The application for six two-storey houses east of Hayfield, submitted by Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA), was recommended for approval by Argyll and Bute Council's planning officers at the meeting of its Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee (PPSL) at Kilmory Castle on Wednesday December 14.

It drew 121 expressions of support, summarised at the meeting, with many echoing the argument that Oban 'desperately' needs new fuel-efficient housing when the population is falling, and it needs to support services such as schools, shops, police stations and hospitals. Another argued: 'Funding has been made available by the Scottish Government and Argyll and Bute Council's SHIP Fund, which should not be lost for a project which will be of benefit to residents.'

On the other side sat 100 objections. One objector cited a 'jarring contrast' between the 'individuality' of Hayfield's existing one-and-a-half-storey houses, with their slate roofs, timber windows and stone or timber cladding, and the proposed two-storey homes with 'steeply pitched roofs and low quality finishing materials'. They asked: 'How can one set of stringent rules apply to one development and be totally disregarded for an adjacent site?'

Another argued the 'traffic

now being funnelled down Glengallan Road has reached saturation point', and that 'additional traffic will have an adverse impact on pedestrian safety particularly with the large number of school children in the area'.

The development 'will exacerbate flooding in the lower glen and Lochavullin area', another objector said, adding: 'Glenshellach is already classified by SEPA as a significant flood hazard area and are continuing to support residential development to the detriment and the hazard of properties lower down the glen. All further development within the Glenshellach area should be stopped pending a full flood survey of the whole catchment area.'

However, planning officers replied: 'SEPA hold no information to suggest that the application site subject of the current application is at risk of flooding.'

Others argued 'this part of the town is already overdeveloped and no encouragement should be given to squeezing in more houses than the local development plan (LDP) defines'.

Council officers responded: 'The LDP states that "the housing provision numbers are indicative and in appropriate circumstances may be varied at the discretion of the planning authority. Should the current proposal for six units be approved, this would represent an overall increase in units within the allocation from 11 to 18 units, which is considered to be acceptable and would relate well to the higher density development directly to the east of the site".'

Earlier, at a hearing on November 14, councillors voted unanimously to approve ACHA's plan to build 12 houses by Hayfield, which had received no letters of support and 43 objections. The original application for 18 houses had been reduced to 12, but Steven Fair, who represented objectors to the 'tightly crammed' development of 'excessive number and density', argued six of the houses had simply been relocated to an adjacent site and a second planning application, and they 'jointly propose 18 houses on an 11-house allocation'.

The council stated this application now brings the number of affordable units on that site to 18, significantly more than the 25 per cent required in the LDP.

Councillor David Kinniburgh, chairman of the PPSL, said: 'We were happy to approve this application. This planning approval, in keeping with the council's local development plan and national planning policy, is great news for people in and around Oban who are looking for good-quality, affordable housing.'

'It's also good news for people who work in construction – new developments support local joiners, plumbers, builders, electricians and so on.'

Councillor Robin Currie, policy lead for housing, said: 'This is a very exciting time for housing in Argyll and Bute. With 554 new affordable homes having already been created, and plans for up to another 650, this will go a long way to addressing the housing shortage.'

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TIMESLINE

Parking rakes in £345,794 in fees

OBAN car parking charges have raised £345,794 for Argyll and Bute Council between July and September this year – £55,000 over its target.

The figure was released to the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee in the Corran Hall on Friday. The report stated: 'The popularity of RET (road equivalent tariff) which has seen the reduction in ferry fares, has increased ferry traffic and vehicles visiting the town.

'This may have had a knock-on effect on car parking income.'

Lifeboat races to aid grounded ship

OBAN RNLI lifeboat was called out on Thursday December 15 following a mayday call from a cargo boat aground under Connel bridge.

At 3.10pm the lifeboat was tasked to respond to the call for help from the Havgul. The vessel had been entering Loch Etive during the short period of slack water.

The RNLI said that at peak flow on a spring tide, the falls can run at up to 12 knots with more than 4,600 tons of water passing through the narrow gap every second. Fortunately, the grounding took place at slack water.

The RNLI arrived just in time to see the vessel refloat on the rising tide.

Windfall is cause for celebrations

SEVEN community organisations will receive a share of £20,780 from the Big Lottery Fund.

The groups are Mull and Iona Community Trust, Lismore Community Trust, Isle of Kerrera Development Trust, Isle of Luing Community Trust, Islay and Jura Youth Action, Kilfinan Community Forest company and Tobermory Playpark.

Each organisation has received a grant between £1,000 and £5,000 and have been asked to organise events or activities that would bring people together and celebrate what makes their local communities special.

Argyll and Bute MSP Michael Russell said: 'I congratulate all those who have succeeded in their applications. These projects will provide much-needed activity in a variety of communities where small amounts of money go big distances. Celebration is the theme of these grants and I am sure each area will be celebrating today.'

Sale of toys gives boost for Rockfield

A SALE of toys donated by MacQueen Bros Charitable Trust has raised £1,720 towards developing Oban's Rockfield Centre.

On May 13 last year Oban Communities Trust officially took ownership of the former Rockfield School building in the centre of Oban, with the ambition to transform it into a creative cultural hub for the town. The cause has benefited from many fundraising activities, including the sale of toys in abandoned containers at MacQueen Bros storage in Oban.

Graham MacQueen, a trustee of both organisations, thanked

the community for their support. 'Every pound coming from the community is vitally important,' he said. 'If we get a pound from the community, it helps us with the funders. The Rockfield Centre will be an example nationally of community spirit and cohesion of which we are proud to be part.'

Gordon McNab, chairman of Oban Communities Trust, added: 'We are very grateful to the MacQueen brothers Charitable Trust for this contribution and continued support for the project. This project is for the community, and driven by the community.'



Gordon McNab, chairman of Oban Communities Trust, receives the cheque for £1,720 from Linda Fraser, a trustee of MacQueen Bros Charitable Trust.



THE ANNUAL Light up a Life service took place at the Corran Halls last week, where a tree was illuminated in remembrance of loved ones who have died.

The service, which is organised by Friends of Oban Hospice, involved readings and prayers, as well as performances from the Taynuilt Gaelic Choir and piper Ryan MacInnes.

The event first started 10 years ago and people who attend the service receive a candle that they

can light to remember a loved one. A tree that has been covered with lights, thanks to Oban Electrical Services, is then illuminated.

'Each light represents someone that has passed on,' said Margaret MacLean, chairwoman of Friends of Oban Hospice.

'I think it is very important. It gives people a chance to reflect.'

'It is quite a short service, but it is an emotional one.'



Preparing for the big day

BRENDAN O'Hara MP helps Lorraine MacCormick, manager of Hope Kitchen, sort through Christmas presents that were handed in by donors for those who are not so fortunate.

The Oban-based charity, which provides food and com-

fort to people in the town, will be opening from 12pm until 2pm on Christmas day. They are also hoping to treat some of their recipients out for a Christmas lunch or dinner, which it has never been in a position to do before. Picture: Kevin McGlynn



Daniel and his little sister Niamh with Santa.



Nicole takes Elisiah and Annalise to see Santa.

Santa drops in to visit Soroba

SANTA CLAUS took time out of his busy schedule to pay a visit to Soroba last Saturday.

Assisted by a number of happy 'elves', Santa helped the Soroba Community Centre raise a total of £409, through tea and coffee and a raffle.

'What a wonderful day we've all had at our Santa's Grotto,' Soroba Community Centre posted on social media. 'A

massive thank you to all who made it possible: our wonderful helpers for setting up, tea and coffee, raffle selling and just looking after everyone; our fabulous bakers for our wonderful spread; our fantastic donations for our raffle; Tesco Oban for its generous donation; the children, parents, grandparents, friends and family for coming along to support us.'

At Random

MARTIN LAING
mlaing@obantimes.co.uk



Waste system is fit only for the bin

THE problems with our bins are not going away. Last week we reported the overflowing mess endured by residents of flats in the Soroba area of Oban, and we have been contacted since by other people elsewhere lamenting an abominable waste collection service.

Among them is septuagenarian Robert Davidson from Breadalbane Mews in Oban, whose letter published on page 10 chronicles a terrible story of pensioners being mocked as they struggled with their bins.

There have been complaints for some time but ever since Argyll and Bute Council changed to a three-weekly bin collection, the system has been shockingly poor.

No-one seems to know when – or if – their bins are going to be emptied. And with Christmas fast approaching and a consequent upsurge in the amount of waste produced, heaven only knows how badly the situation might deteriorate.

Yes, the council has to try to make financial savings but the plain truth is that this ill-conceived system is just not working.

It's high time we returned to fortnightly collections for general waste and consigned this nonsense to the bin.

Rising stars of the rugby world

OBAN rugby star Magnus Bradbury has been making headlines recently, having won his first full cap for Scotland in the win over Argentina last month.

However, there are other local rugby players making big names for themselves, including Magnus's brother Fergus, whom I watched playing for Stirling County against Currie in the BT Premiership on December 10.

Fergus is a very handy looking prop forward who has represented Scotland at age-group levels, most recently in the Scotland under-20s against Georgia last month. He put in a pretty good shift for Stirling and is definitely one to watch.

But another local star of the game is Abigail Evans, who has amassed a number of caps for the Scotland women's team, both in the full game and at the sevens version.

Abigail earned her first appearance in the national side in February 2015 against France, making her the first player from the Oban area to represent their country at this level.

She is a real star of the women's game. Watch out for more on Abigail in *The Oban Times* in the near future.



Bringing Hope to the less fortunate

SPARE a thought for the selfless souls at Hope Kitchen in Oban, who will be out on Christmas day this weekend to open the café in Argyll Street over the lunch period.

Hope (Helping Our People Eat) is a brilliant charity that exists to help those who have precious little.

Well done to them and have a very merry Christmas.

What do you think? Email to mlaing@obantimes.co.uk.



Santa and his elves at the Soroba Community Centre's grotto.

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Festive greetings to our readers



Argyll and Bute Provost Len Scoullar

This year's festive season is well under way. All across Argyll and Bute preparations have been in hand for celebrations, for festivities and for spending time together with loved ones after a very busy few weeks of activity.

Despite all that busyness, it is a time which can bring much joy and happiness, and I hope also that for everyone it brings even just a little welcome peace and quiet after a challenging year.

There are those for whom the festive season is less joyful, though, for many different and often difficult reasons; and, as always, my thoughts and prayers are with them at this time especially, in the hope that they too will find some comfort and peace.

Inevitably over the festive season, as each year draws to a close, amid busy times we may take a moment to reflect on the months just passed. 2016 has been a year of much change and many challenges; but as we reflect on that, we can also take comfort on the fact that the New Year ahead offers us fresh hope, a new start and an opportunity to make changes for the better wherever and however we can.

At this special time I wish everyone across Argyll and Bute the best possible Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Michael Russell MSP
What has been the highlight of your year? Being given another five years to work for the people of Argyll and Bute at the election in May.
What has been the low point of your year?

The EU referendum result in the early hours of June 24. It was the wrong thing for Argyll and Bute, which knew that and didn't vote for it.

What has been your word of the year and why?
Brexit – because I now eat, live, sleep and breathe the subject, working to try to get the best deal for Scotland and for Argyll and Bute.

Who has inspired you this year, and why?
All those who campaign against injustice and imposition. Lots of them in Argyll and Bute but I would have to mention the resilience of Ann Colthart from Connel, whose life has been made a misery by a severe failure in the planing system.

Councillor Michael Breslin, who has stood up to intense pressure from the council.

The residents of Struan Lodge and Auchinlee, care homes threatened with closure but around which the community has rallied.

Those fighting to re-establish a school library service after it was closed by Argyll and Bute Council.

And the people of Glen Creeran, who are not prepared to allow a quarry to disrupt their beautiful glen.

What is your big plan for 2017?
To keep campaigning for the people of the area and for Scotland in whatever roles I find myself.

Brendan O'Hara MP
What have been the highlights of your year? The re-election of my colleague Michael Russell as MSP for Argyll and Bute and the return of Nicola Sturgeon as First Minister.

Also being invited to accompany Nadia Murad to the United Nations when she was made a UN Ambassador for rights of Trafficked People.

What has been the low point of your year? Sadly, there have been far too many to choose from in this particularly awful year but I'd have to go for the Brexit vote, closely followed by the election of Donald Trump.

What has been your word of the year and why? 'Don't worry, that'll never happen.'

Why? Because over the past

12 months we've seen the ridiculous and sublime become stark realities – against all the odds, things that should never have happened, have.

Who has inspired you this year and why? Without a shadow of a doubt, my brother and the way he has battled cancer for most of this year means he is the most inspiring person I have ever known.

What is your big plan for 2017?
I have three major initiatives to help Argyll and Bute in 2017.

A. I will tirelessly promote Machrihanish as the UK Spaceport

B. Work to bring an international trade delegation to Argyll and Bute over the next 12 months to help local companies export, particularly into China.

C. Visit the Faroes Islands to see how undersea tunnels and 4G mobile connectivity have transformed the economy of a rural community.

who took part in the Rio Paralympic Games – a wonderful example of what you can do if determined and brave.

What is your big plan for 2017?
Too many plans to mention but we are hosting some major conferences in 2017 that will bring national and international research communities into Oban. SAMS is becoming a popular conference venue and next year we are excited to be hosting the UK Arctic conference.

What has been your word of the year and why? 'Post-truth' – a new word for an old concept: lying.

Who has inspired you this year and why? The organisers and supporters of the East Lochaber and Laggan Community Trust in their campaign for greater community involvement in the Rio Tinto Alcan estate – a powerful grassroots movement which engaged locals and inspired us to think big.

What is your big plan for 2017? To organise a charity swimming race between elected politicians in the MACpool in Lochgilphead. Dust off those Speedos, Mike Russell...



Marri Malloy

As convenor of Oban Community Council, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the councillors to wish everyone a very happy Christmas and a good year for 2017.

We have had a busy year, as always, trying to keep up with what's happening in the town. We are involved with local groups to ensure we keep our fingers on the pulse but we can only do this if we have the support of the local community.

We would encourage residents of Oban to come along to our meetings with their concerns or just observations. They would be warmly welcomed.

Thanks for your support in 2016 and it only leaves me to say have a lovely festive season.

SAMS director Prof Nicholas Owens

What has been the highlight of your year? We produce consistently high-quality research at SAMS but I am incredibly enthused by our growing student population, particularly the 25 international students on our aquaculture Masters, ACES. Nations represented on campus now include Jamaica, Brazil, Belize, Colombia, China, Israel and the Philippines. It builds a great atmosphere.

What has been the low point of your year?
I think it would have to be the uncertainty caused by the Brexit vote. Time will tell what the impact will be on our research funding but the immediate uncertainty has caused confusion throughout our long-established European networks.

What has been your word of the year and why? 'Seaweed'. We carry out lots of research at SAMS into how it grows, how it could be a source of fuel and how it could be used in food properties. Having our own seaweed farm has really caught the imagination and people have lots of questions about it.

Who has inspired you this year and why?
Not one person but all those

who took part in the Rio Paralympic Games – a wonderful example of what you can do if determined and brave.

What is your big plan for 2017?
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What is your big plan for 2017? To organise a charity swimming race between elected politicians in the MACpool in Lochgilphead. Dust off those Speedos, Mike Russell...



Martin Dorchester, CalMac

I think we can safely say that the highlight was winning the CHFS2 contract.

I don't think we've got a particular low point, but uncertainty in the run up to the CHFS2 announcement was a challenge.

I was inspired by fairness and learning. We were really pleased to accept the Living Wage Foundation's Scottish Champion Award 2016 and I'm proud, too, of the apprenticeship schemes which we have in place, adding a brand new one in hospitality with maritime enhancements this year.

The big plan for 2017 is to continue our ambitious transformation commitments made in the bid for CHFS2 contract.

Donald Cameron MSP

What has been the highlight of your year? Getting elected to the Scottish Parliament in May, and fulfilling a lifetime ambition to represent the people of the Highlands and Islands.

What has been the low point of your year? Being regularly confused with both David Cameron and Donald Trump. Closely followed by being contacted on my 40th birthday by three funeral planning companies offering their services.

What has been the low point of your year?
There haven't been any. Instead, there have been opportunities to learn about what we can do better next time around.

What has been your word of the year and why?
Interesting question. Probably Brexit – not for any pro- or anti- reasons, but because it has provoked debate around so much that we've taken for granted and, regardless of where we find ourselves in the future, reminded us that it's up to us to make a difference.

Who has inspired you this year and why?
Andy Murray's single-minded focus and determination to reach the pinnacle of his sport is pretty inspirational.

What is your big plan for 2017?
To help deliver the successful appointment of Bid4Oban for a second term.



Graeme Bass, Bid4Oban

What has been the highlight of your year?
Oban Live. This event showcases Oban like nothing else and the fact that we were blessed with magnificent weather made the event all the more memorable.

What has been the low point of your year?
There haven't been any. Instead, there have been opportunities to learn about what we can do better next time around.

What has been your word of the year and why?
Interesting question. Probably Brexit – not for any pro- or anti- reasons, but because it has provoked debate around so much that we've taken for granted and, regardless of where we find ourselves in the future, reminded us that it's up to us to make a difference.

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Oban Times district reporter for Taynuilt, David Paterson

What have been the highlights of your year?
Two highlights. The first was when my son Innes married the lovely Edie in May – it was a cracking wedding. The other highlight was our amazing holiday in Iceland to celebrate my wife Audrey's special birthday (better not tell you which one!).

What has been the low point of your year? The UK voting to leave the European Union in the June referendum. A sad day.

What has been your word of the year and why? Brexit. Although we've constantly heard this word for several months, I don't feel we're any closer to finding out how it will affect us. I still think it sounds like a breakfast cereal.

Who has inspired you this year and why? World number one wheelchair tennis player Gordon Reid who lost strength in his legs as a young teenager but has since won many honours, including Wimbledon and gold at the Paralympics.

The fact that this courageous guy was born in my home town of Alexandria is a bonus.

What is your big plan for 2017?
I just want to be healthy, happy and keep on singing with my two Gaelic choirs.



Annie Macleod, locality manager for Oban, Lorn and Isles

This is an excellent report. I would like to thank the staff.

Home is rated as excellent

EADAR GLINN residential home in Oban has received an excellent rating during an unannounced inspection.

The Care Inspectorate carried out the inspection of the Argyll and Bute-owned residential home on September 22.

The report has recently been published and it highlighted the quality of care and support, and quality of staff of Eadar Glinn.

The report also said: 'Eadar Glinn provides a safe, individual, person-centred service to each resident in the home.'

'Paperwork is up-to-date and person-centred and monitoring of the service takes place on a regular basis. Personal independence is encouraged and staff provide one-to-one service when the rota allows.'

'Professionals visit when required, and one GP told us that he wished his mother lived in the Oban area and could be admitted to the home as in his opinion it was one of the best he has ever known.'

The Care Inspectorate added that it was unable to identify any major areas for improvement and that there were no requirements or recommendations.

Annie Macleod, locality manager for Oban, Lorn and Isles, said: 'This is an excellent report. I would like to thank the staff.'

Cadets land cash windfall

IT IS plain sailing for Oban Sea Cadets as the unit has successfully secured a £7,093 award from the Big Lottery Fund.

The funding will be used to upgrade safety and boating equipment, and the group is hopeful that the improvements will help attract new members.

The Oban unit first opened in 1948 and was re-established in 2004.

Donald Cameron, MSP for the Highlands and Islands, said: 'This is a great boost for the Oban Sea Cadets and new equipment will allow them to expand their membership and equip even more youngsters for life in a challenging world.'

'The work of the sea cadets in supporting the development of young people is so important, especially in providing a moral compass and sense of citizenship. And, of course, it's great fun.'

'I am so pleased to see the Oban unit thriving and hope to hear more about their achievements as the Big Lottery Fund award begins to have an impact.'

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OT

Oban

OBAN High School Parent Council organised a fundraising quiz at the golf club on Saturday December 10. There was an excellent turnout with around 50 people making up 11 teams, despite competing with so many other events at this time of year, including the last night of the panto. A total of £215 was raised to be spent on providing extra activities and resources for the pupils, including running the school minibus that was bought with funds previously raised by the parent council. The quiz was run by Tony Cave, a well-known and popular quiz master. The parent council thanks Tony for all his hard work, the golf club for hosting the event and all the local businesses, parents and staff who supported the event by providing raffle prizes and by coming along. The parent council's next fundraising event will be a race night in the new year.

Dalavich

DALAVICH Improvement Group (DIG) is celebrating after receiving a major cash boost from a community windfarm fund. An Suidhe Community Fund through Foundation Scotland awarded DIG £17,300 which it used to buy five-acres of land adjacent to the village and community centre. Ownership of the field will enable DIG to preserve it as a recreational space for residents and visitors.

Dunbeg

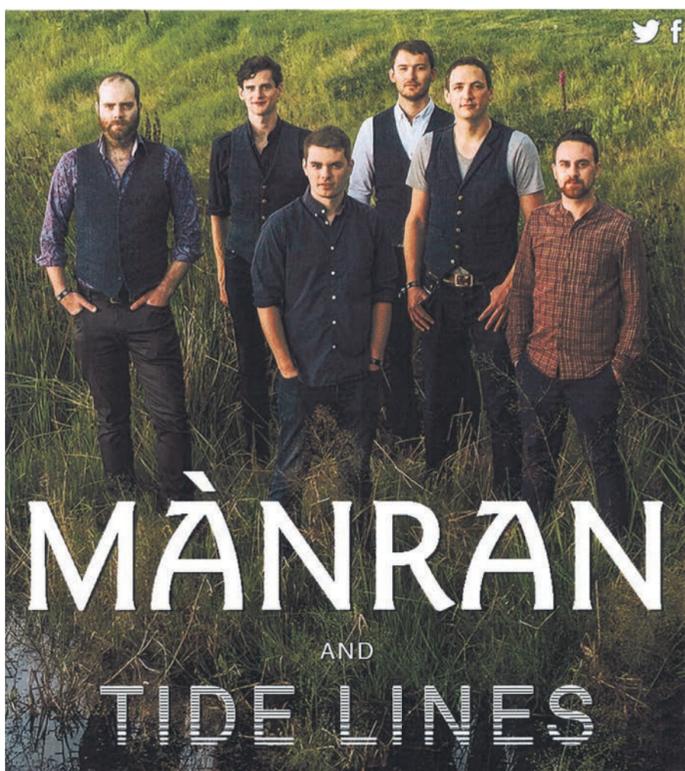


MP boosts piper Ross

While visiting constituents in Oban and Lorn, Argyll and Bute MP Brendan O'Hara had a chance encounter with a busker in Dunbeg. Young piper Ross Mackay was busking at the gates of Dunbeg Primary School to raise money for the school when Mr O'Hara dropped some money in his box. Photographer Kevin McGlynn took this photograph of head teacher Sine MacVicar, Mr O'Hara and Ross.

Uist and Barra

COMHAIRLE nan Eilean Siar is launching an Employability Challenge Fund in Uist and Barra. And the comhairle is seeking expressions of interest from accredited training providers to deliver a range of activities that will enable individuals in Uist and Barra, who have two or more barriers to employment and who have the potential, to move into sustained employment or self-employment. Training providers must have a successful track record of working with the client group, including the delivery of nationally recognised qualifications. The Employability Challenge Fund is part-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) under the current 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds programmes and offers £136,800 ESF for employability activities up to December 2018. The fund has an intervention rate of 50 per cent so that interested training providers must be able to provide match funding from a non-EU source. Interested parties should request an application form and supporting background information from Angus Murray, corporate policy manager, at angus-murray@cne-siar.gov.uk.



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Caring shop staff make a difference

Residents of Eadar Glinn Care Home will be gifted extra Christmas presents this year thanks to the generosity of staff and friends of McCaig's Warehouse in Oban who are buying, wrapping and delivering mystery gifts for them to open on Christmas Day. Shoppers at the Railway Pier store are also being encouraged to buy small presents from £3-£6 for the care home. Supervisor Kelley Johnston said this is the first year it has run this appeal, which started at the beginning of December and finishes today (Thursday December 22). 'We wanted to do something different,' Kelley said. 'It's a good cause. Some people do not have family, or they are away from their family. We are trying to brighten up their Christmas a bit. People have been very generous. If it is a success, it will be a different charity next year.' Pictured left to right, McCaig's Warehouse staff Amanda Pitts, Kelley Johnston, Elaine Buchanan and Marion Chamberlain.

Oban woman's delight at hamper win

AN OBAN woman couldn't believe it when she received a phone call from *The Oban Times* telling her she had won a competition. Chrissie Thomson correctly answered 'sleigh' to complete the line 'oh what fun it is to ride in a one horse open' to win a Christmas hamper from Lidl worth £150. 'I thought it was a hoax phone call,' said Mrs Thomson. 'It is a lovely surprise. I will make very good use of it because I have a big family. It has made my Christmas. I did not think I would win it.' The mother of three and grandmother of nine almost

didn't enter the competition. She was on her way to her son's house in Falkirk when she was asked if she had entered the competition - she had not. So she had to find a postbox, and quick. The Christmas hamper is packed with festive treats, including a classic Christmas pudding and an assortment of biscuits, as well as bottles of Champagne and wine. Alexander MacLeod, Lidl Oban store manager, said: 'It is a good prize. It is something we like to do for a new shop opening. It is a good chance to provide someone with a treat before Christmas.'



Lidl's Oban store manager Alexander MacLeod presents Chrissie with her hamper.

MSP updated on isles power upgrade



Donald Mackenzie, right, Western Isles generation manager at SSEN, and Alasdair Allan MSP.

NA H-EILEANAN an Iar MSP Alasdair Allan met engineers and staff at Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) depot in Stornoway to hear about its work to upgrade the electricity network across the Western Isles. Mr Allan was updated on the £3 million SSEN is investing in upgrading the electricity network. Work includes a £1.3 million refurbishment of 65kms of overhead lines

on Barra, including new poles and conductors; £250,000 to replace 350 low voltage poles on Lewis and Harris; £240,000 to rebuild the overhead network on Clachan, North Uist; a £560,000 upgrade of the transformer in Pollacher, South Uist and £500,000 on general maintenance and upgrades across the islands. Mr Allan said: 'Electricity is a basic human necessity and living on an island should not mean you have to live with a less reliable connection to the grid. It was reassuring to see the work being done to prevent power outages and to know that, in the event of a loss of power, we have well trained local engineers on hand to bring the power back on as quickly as possible. When I stopped by, 75 per cent of the isles' power demand was being met by wind energy which I found particularly impressive for a typical Monday afternoon.'

Helensburgh

THE innovative Outdoor Museum in Helensburgh's revitalised town centre has been shortlisted for a prestigious Arts and Business Scotland Award. The museum is redesigning over one hundred bollards in Colquhoun Square into plinths displaying objects, images and texts of significance to the town, such as 'the father of steam navigation' Henry Bell's bell from the famous Comet, the Lily Springs and the Comrie & Co. tradition of aerated water manufacture, and John Logie Baird's first TV test subject Stooky Bill. The museum, which launched in June 2015, will be judged in the enterprising museum category - which recognises 'an innovative or entrepreneurial project that has delivered an ambitious high-impact museum experience in 2015-16'. Councillor Ellen Mor-



A replica of the bell from the famous Comet.



A representation of Stooky Bill.

ton, Argyll and Bute Council's policy lead for infrastructure, said: 'It is a real achievement to be shortlisted for the Arts and Business Award and our Austin-Smith: Lord designed project is certainly worthy of inclusion. Many people, including local businesses and residents deserve the recognition for making this project happen and be such a success.'

The council's regeneration of Helensburgh's town centre has already won three other awards - including a Scottish Design Award. The Arts and Business Scotland Annual Awards, which celebrate outstanding collaborations between the business and cultural sectors, will be held in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall on Thursday, March 23.

Loch Lomond

MOUNTAINEERING Scotland is urging Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Park Authority Board to delay the implementation of camping byelaws by a year. David Gibson, of Mountaineering Scotland, said: 'If the proposals are approved, the lack of on-the-ground clarity about camping management zones and

provision could lead to the criminalisation of people who might believe they are camping or resting at night during a journey, which would otherwise be within their rights by complying with the provisions of the Land Reform (Scotland) Acts and Scottish Outdoor Access Code. 'The proposed permit

scheme will also impose costs of £7 per night on people who would otherwise be able to enjoy free access to the outdoors. The park authority is resorting to byelaws which are unnecessary as they, with Police Scotland, already had the powers to act against the limited few who cause nuisance and damage.'

MORVERN lines

Removal of the Stone of Destiny

EVERY year round about Christmas, if national newspaper reporters are stuck for a subject to write about, they usually remind their readers about the four Scottish students who, on Christmas Day 1950, removed the Stone of Destiny from the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey and took it back to Scotland, where it remained for four months. Uproar and outrage followed leading John McAvoy to write a song called *The Wee Magic Stane*, popularised by Robin Hall and Jimmy McGregor, which begins: 'The Dean o' Westminster was a powerful man, he held a' the strings o' the State in his hand, but wi' a' his great business it flustered him nane, when some rogues ran away wi' his wee magic stane. Wi' a too-ra-li-oo-ra-li-oo-ra-li.'

The history of the stone is well known and needn't be repeated here other than to say this year, being the 20th anniversary of its formal return to Edinburgh Castle, there is bound to be more than the usual passing interest. That is if you believe the stone captured in 1296 by Edward 1 as spoils of war and taken south was the real one. Some historians maintain that when King Edward's army was advancing towards Scone Abbey, where the Scottish kings were crowned, its keepers quickly hid it, which is not improbable. After all, during the Second World War when it looked as though the Germans were on the verge of invading the British Isles, the Secretary of State for Scotland took the precaution of ordering the best of our art treasures and national archives to be taken away and hidden around the countryside for safe-keeping.

For example the Registers of the Great Seal and other important state papers were removed from Edinburgh and stored in the Oban Sheriff Court House and Morenish House near Killin until after the war. I have read a number of books on the 1950 incident but nowhere can I find where the idea to remove the Coronation Stone originated. My guess is it came from a book called *The North Wind of Love*, written in 1944, in which the author and co-founder of the Scottish National Party, Sir Compton Mackenzie (1883-1972), sets out the plot. Today, Compton Mackenzie is best known for his books and films *Rocket's Galore*, *Whisky Galore*, *Monarchs of the Glen* and many other amusing dramas set in the Highlands.

The North Wind of Love is the fourth volume of *The Four Winds of Love* which was the overall title for a series of novels, based on the auto-biographical character of an ardent nationalist. Garrulous, rambling and dated, it is largely a novel of Mackenzie's life and times and not an easy read. For all that, it contains many amusing lines, such as, from a Skye man: 'Can't stand the idea of Home Rule. Sooner be ruled by Whitehall than Edinburgh lawyers. You fellows in the Department of Agriculture are bad enough already.' And during a conversation in a bar: 'So much of our nationalist propaganda has been concentrated on telling people that if we manage our own affairs we should manage them more profitably. When you press that kind of nationalist you find he's using a municipal drain-pipe as a telescope for the future. His Scottish Parliament is hardly more than a glorified county council. He's not prepared to sacrifice half a crown, much less imperil his own livelihood.'

Compton Mackenzie converted to Roman Catholicism in 1914. He died in 1972 and is buried at Eoligarry, Isle of Barra. THE FESTIVE season is a time for reading - amongst other activities. Despite social media, there are still a large number of readable, enjoyable books to be had including *A History of South Lochaweside - a Place of Land and Water* by Mary, Lady McGrigor of Upper Sonachan. This lovely book, full of old stories, Gaelic place names and much more, records a past way of life around Loch Awe-side. It first came out in 1969 and appears again by popular demand. I am not surprised. No-one with an interest in the history of Argyll should be without a copy. The same can be said for *It's a far cry to Loch Awe*, which is a historical and nostalgic tour round Loch Awe written by Charlie Mitchell, a former forester who spent much of his life exploring Loch Awe area. After Charlie's untimely death in 2015, the Dalmally Historical Association courageously took on the task of publishing his book as a memorial to him and were successful in obtaining a grant to meet some of the costs. The author started his tour at Glennan, at the south west end of the loch, and included Loch Avich, Glen Orchy, Glen Lochy and other places. The book has a wealth of information about the early days of tourism, the arrival of the railway and the cargo boats which were the life blood of the area. It is profusely illustrated with evocative old photographs and is available for £9.99 at Dalmally Post Office and Shop, Waterstones, Oban, and other local outlets.

Iain Thornber
iain.thornber@btinternet.com



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BBC NEWS

On Friday 9 December 2016 on BBC Television News, the Belgian landowner Baron Dominique Collinet said that the developers needed to demonstrate the quarry would have "...no impact on neighbours or nature..."

What is being said by independent experts and others?

We commissioned independent expert reports that demonstrate there will be very negative impacts. To see the full reports, send an email request to quarryprotest@gmail.com and we will send the reports to you, or view them on our website www.quarryprotest.com

SEPA said **NO** due to flood risk.

Envirocentre said **NO** due to flood risk, noise, road access, protected species and landfill.

Planning experts said **NO** based on local and national planning guidelines.

Sound engineer experts said **NO** based on intrusive and excessive noise levels.

Mineral experts said **NO** on basis of 'no requirement' within the 30-mile radius.

Archaeological experts said **NO** unless their strong conditions were met.

Community have said **NO** with over 1,300 objections

Local Community Councils said **NO**

British and international tourists have said **NO**

MSP government minister Michael Russell said **NO**

MP Brendon O'Hara said **NO**

Local councillors have said **NO**

Prominent 5* and 4* hotels in the area have said **NO**

The three other largest landowners in Glen Creran have said **NO**

Conservation community have said **NO**

Local cycle, walking, diving clubs and others have said **NO**

SNH expressed serious concerns and say they are still waiting for further information from Argyll and Bute Council.

Residents of Glen Creran have said **NO**

Local quarry owner with more than 1,000,000 tons of reserves said **NO**

So... who said YES?

Baron Dominique Collinet, a Belgian landowner resident in Luxembourg, and A&L McRae, who are seeking to gain money from the quarry and landfill.

Can you still object?

Firstly we would like to thank everybody who has placed objections to this so far. The level of protest has been unprecedented in Argyll! Argyll and Bute Council has said that all objections and comments will be accepted right up to the time the application is determined. We ask everybody who has not registered their views about the above to do so now. Please do so via our website below.

www.quarryprotest.com

Highest wave is recorded

THE highest ever wave has been recorded at 19m (62.3ft) by a buoy between the UK and Iceland, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) has reported.

The giant wave was measured on February 4, 2013, following the passage of a very strong cold front producing winds up to 43.8 knots (50.4mph), and beat the previous record of 18.275 meters (59.96 feet) measured on December 8, 2007, also in the North Atlantic.

'This is the first time we have ever measured a wave of 19 meters. It is a remarkable record,' said WMO assistant secretary-general Dr Wenjian Zhang.

Wave height is defined as the distance from the crest of one wave to the trough of the next.

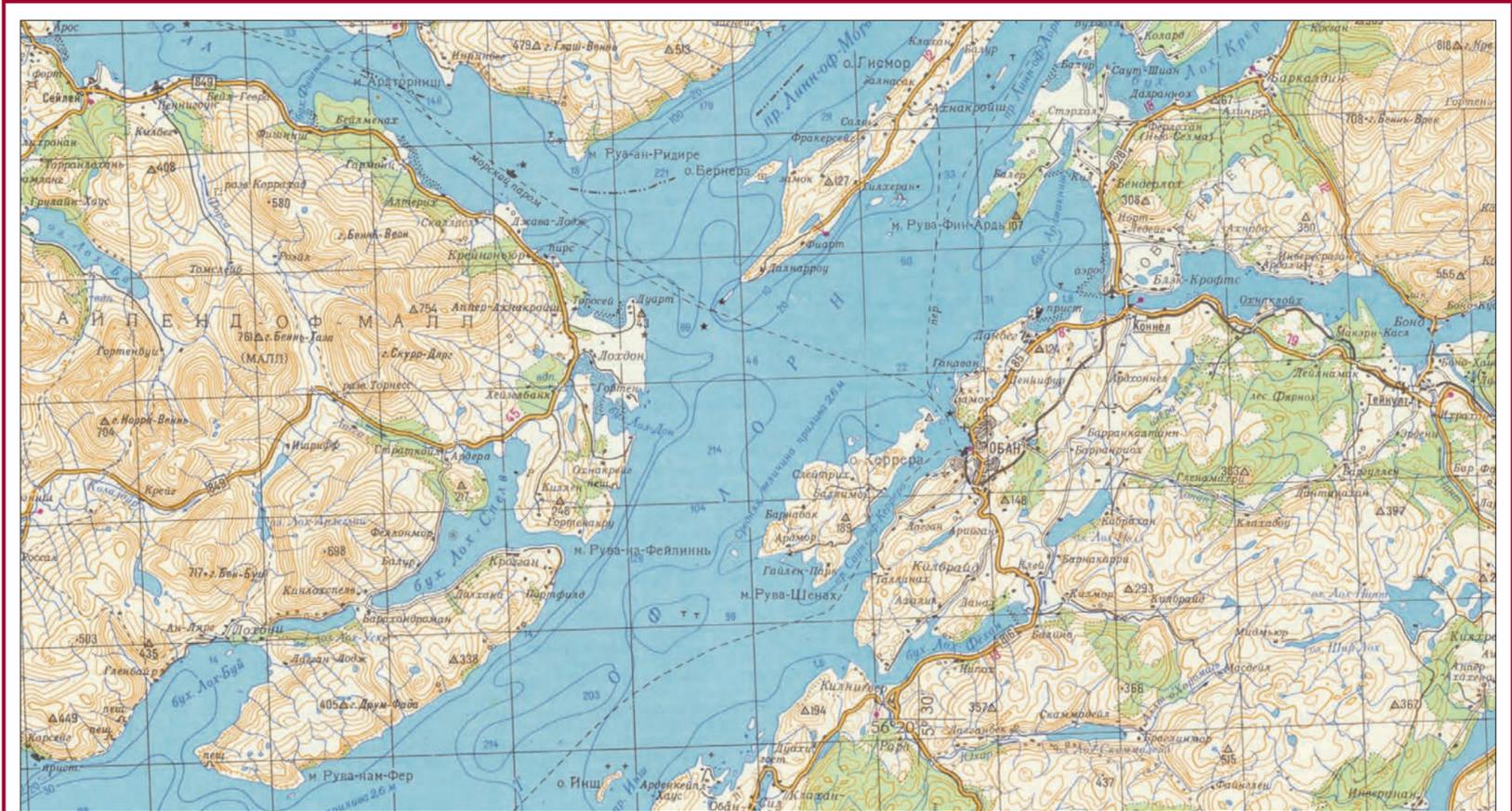
The highest waves typically occur in the North Atlantic, rather than the Southern Ocean. Wind circulation patterns and atmospheric pressure in the North Atlantic in winter leads to intense extra-tropical storms, often so-called 'bombs'.

This means that the area from the Grand Banks underwater plateaus off the Canadian coast around Newfoundland to south of Iceland and to the west coast of the UK, including the Rockall Trough, are prime candidates for wave records.

Argyll people are generous

SHOPPERS in Argyll and Bute demonstrated their generosity this month by donating 2,891 meals to foodbank charity The Trussell Trust and food redistribution charity FareShare for Tesco's neighbourhood food collection.

The neighbourhood food collection runs in all Tesco stores across the country to gather vital essential foods, such as rice, tea, tinned meat and UHT milk for people in need over the festive period.



Map shows Soviet Union Cold War spotlight trained on Argyll

SANDY NEIL
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A SOVIET military map detailing Argyll topography ahead of a possible Russian invasion has been published in a new book of Scottish maps.

Scotland: Mapping the Islands is described as 'the rich and diverse story of Scottish islands from the earliest maps to the most up-to-date techniques of digital mapping.'

The book, written by map experts

Christopher Fleet, Margaret Wilkes and Charles Withers, reproduces 'some of the most beautiful and historically significant maps from the National Library of Scotland's magnificent collection in order to explore the many dimensions of island life and how this has changed over time'.

One map, from a Soviet project to map Britain, published during the Cold War in 1984, shows the coastline and transport network around Oban, Connel, Taynuilt, southern

Mull, Kerrera and Lismore, complete with bridge strengths, road widths and place names in Russia's Cyrillic alphabet.

The book explains: 'During the post-war period, the Soviet Army invested in a massive programme of global military geographic reconnaissance. Perhaps as many as 36,000 staff were employed in military map-making. This 1:200,000 sheet is centred on Oban and the surrounding islands and Scottish mainland.'

'Assembled from a variety of published mapping of different dates, the maps also include information gathered on the spot, including information about width, clearance and the carrying capacity of bridges along major roads.'

'On the back of the sheet is a full written description of the specific area under the headings "Population Centres", "Transport Network", "Relief", "Hydrography", "Vegetation" and "Climate", with a geological diagram.'

The authors continue: 'As miniature worlds, places of outstanding beauty and homes to communities seemingly distant from the bustle of modern life, Scotland's many islands have held an extraordinary fascination for countless people, not least the hundreds of thousands of visitors who travel to them each year.'

'Maps too fascinate, as objects of visual delight and historical importance, and as a means to represent and understand landscapes.'



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REVOLVE

Festive fun at Inverloch school grotto



Fraser Lindsay of primary five meets Santa. Photograph: Abrightside Photography.

INVERLOCHY Primary School's annual Santa's grotto raised more than £1,000.

The money has been donated to school funds which help pay for trips and supplies.

The popular event also included a home-baking stall, face and nail painting, and Christmas crafts.

Depute head teacher Tanya Ross said: 'Our annual Santa's grotto was a huge success. There

was a wonderful atmosphere with everyone having fun and buying the crafts pupils had made. Santa was met with a constant stream of excited children and the canteen was bustling with people. We can't thank everyone enough for their support in helping make this such a great evening, particularly our primary seven class and their teacher Mrs Lees, who did a super job organising the grotto.'

PACKED MEETING HEARS FOUR REFUGEE FAMILIES WILL BE SETTING UP HOME IN VILLAGE

Kinlochleven urged to welcome Syrians

MONICA GIBSON
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'LET'S give them a right ol' Highland welcome' was the closing remark to a packed meeting discussing the impending arrival of four Syrian families in Kinlochleven.

Around 200 people attended the information evening in Kinlochleven High School on Monday night to find out why, when and how many refugees are likely to be relocated to the area.

Councillor Thomas MacLennan chaired the event alongside Gail Ward, a policy officer from the Highland Council (HC), representatives from the health service, education departments, and volunteer groups.

Together they explained the refugees are coming to Kinlochleven as part of a commitment made by the HC to house 25 to 30 Syrian refugee families before 2020.

Five families were resettled in the Inner Moray Firth area last summer and government agencies have since found Kinlochleven to be the next best place to house refugees based on capacity for housing, school-

ing and health care. The four families are due to arrive before the spring and while the actual families and therefore the number of people within each family has not yet been finalised due to screening processes, agencies are already working with the Home Office to make sure the right support is in place.

Learning support posts are to be made available for both the primary school and high school, and extra training is to be provided.

The families will receive money for living costs when they first arrive and language support will be given. This will all be funded by the Home Office via the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme.

Once the families settle, they will be eligible to apply for benefits. They will have a visa for five years, after which time they can apply for an extension or return home depending on the situation there.

Information sheets were available at the meeting and after the presentations by the agencies, attendees were invited to ask questions and raise any concerns.

There was a lot of mixed

feelings towards the plans, with some community members describing it as an opportunity to enrich their own culture, while others wanted to know more about what screening processes are in place.

Ms Ward told the audience that refugees go through a two-stage vetting process and that the VPR scheme prioritises women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture among others.

Councillor MacLennan admitted he had only found out about the plan in the past few weeks and said he had seen a lot of progress in Kinlochleven in the past 20 years and that it would be a shame to do anything to detract from that.

During the evening, some people said it seemed unfair that people from abroad are given priority when there are people born and raised in Kinlochleven who aren't receiving the support they need.

This was refuted by another member of the public who said that while Kinlochleven has its problems, they are minute in comparison to those who have been bombed out of their home.

Frustration was also expressed because the plans were only revealed by letters placed in the bags of school pupils which excluded community members without children or with older families.

The method was described as 'sneaky or underhand', but the HC apologised, saying it was unusual circumstances and that they would consider a door-to-door mail shot in future.

However, a Kinlochleven pupil also argued that it made sense for students to be informed first as they will come in contact with the Syrian children five days a week, far more than most community members.

Flora McKee from Voluntary Action Lochaber (VAL) also took the floor and encouraged anyone able to spare time to help the families integrate and feel welcome to get in touch.

A further meeting is planned for February when it is hoped more details of the families and their arrival dates will be shared.



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Mòd 2016 – Mòd na Cloinne
Mòd 2016 – Children's Mod

An Oidhche ron Nollaig, 7.30f
Christmas Eve, 7.30pm

Siùil air ais air Mòd na Cloinne am bliadhna.
A look back at the Children's Mod 2016.

Taigh Thorcuill – Nollaig | Christmas

An Oidhche ron Nollaig, 10f
Christmas Eve, 10pm

Tha Torcuill MacLaomainn air ais!
Geamannan is fealla-dhà gu leòr gu bhith ann!
Torcuill MacLaomainn is back with his own chat show. Fun, games and music!

Fèis Chiùil Thiriodh Tìree Music Festival 2016

An Oidhche ron Nollaig, 9f
Christmas Eve, 9pm

Siùil air ais gu Fèis Chiùil Thiriodh 2016.
Highlights from the Tìree Music Festival 2016.

Mòd nan Còisirean 2016

Là na Nollaig, 7.30f
Christmas Eve, 7.30pm

Na còisirean aig Mòd Rìoghail Nàiseanta nan Eilean Siar.
The choir competitions at the Royal National Mod 2016.

Balach nam Bàgh The Boy from the Bays

Là na Nollaig, 9f
Christmas Eve, 9pm

Iain Urquhart - Neach ealain, ministear, craoladair, sgrìobhaiche - agus reubaltach. Sgeulachd mu shàr Ghàidheal.
The remarkable story of John D Urquhart, broadcaster, Church of Scotland minister and artist.

Anna Latharna: Aitealan

Dimàirt 27 Dùbhlachd, 9f
Tuesday 27 December, 9pm

Cuairt-chiùil shònraichte a' comharrachadh stòiridh agus beatha iongantach Anna Latharna NicGilliosa.
John Carmichael takes Anne Lorne Gillies on a musical journey.

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The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

As our pages this week amply illustrate, the Christmas spirit is alive and well across Argyll, the isles and Lochaber.

Our pages are full of photographs of people from across our communities celebrating the festive season and carrying out charitable work to try to ensure that the season of goodwill extends to everyone, including those less fortunate.

Among them are the staff at Hope Kitchen in Oban, who will be opening the cafe on Christmas day to make sure that people who otherwise would be alone are able to join in and enjoy a festive meal and all that goes with it. The Hope Kitchen workers will also be handing out

presents to all their guests. It is at time like this that the best of human nature comes to the fore and we want to say a big thank you to all those selfless individuals who give of their time.

We will be publishing as normal throughout the festive season and will have more great pictures over the coming weeks to record all the celebrations across our circulation area, including nativity and Christmas party celebrations from our primary schools, and high school jingles and discos.

In the meantime, *The Oban Times* wishes all its readers, contributors and advertisers the very best wishes for a very merry Christmas.



Days gone by – Argyll Square, 1955

Former Oban man James Arthur, who now lives in Lanarkshire, sent this splendid photograph of his grandfather, John Ferguson, who was the town electrician, putting up the Christmas lights in Argyll Square in 1955. John, his wife Annie and their family lived at 6 Croft Avenue in Oban.

Glasgow Letter

ROBERT ROBERTSON
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Bargain-hunting in the Barras market

AS CHRISTMAS approaches, and the Glasgow shopping centres become even busier than usual with throngs of hungry shoppers, I thought it would be appropriate to share with readers of the Glasgow Letter a true story that I heard from a friend of mine recently.

Twenty years ago, this gentleman's grandmother had travelled from Uist to Glasgow one weekend for the purpose of shopping.

Her market of choice was that legendary Glasgow centre of commerce, the Barras. While browsing, she came across a vase that took her fancy. 'How much is this vase?' she asked the Glaswegian trader.

His quote of £10 (which the island lady deemed overpriced) began a deluge of intensive haggling. 'I only have £3 in my purse, I'm afraid,' said the grandmother.

The Glaswegian was initially adamant that the price was not up for negotiation, but eventually reduced the price reluctantly to £5 after the calibre of negotiator he was dealing with became abundantly clear.

The lady politely reminded him that she only had £3 in her purse and that his reduced offer was still no use.

The haggling continued for many more minutes until eventually the eternal charm and negotiating qualities of the Western Isles won through,

and the Glaswegian agreed with considerable disinclination to do the deal for £3.

No sooner had the pair confirmed the deal by shaking hands over the vase, than the islander went into her purse, pulled out her cheque book, and asked: 'Who do I make it out to?'

After such rigorous negotiation on the price, the look on the trader's face as the cheque book appeared must have been priceless.

Clydebank ceilidh set for the new year

THE Clydebank Highlanders had an excellent céilidh the other week.

The chairman was Mark Wylie (of Drakes of Hazard fame) and the Gaelic singers were Fiona Ross, Catherine Tinney and Colin Fisher.

Scots singer was Angus MacKay and the fiddler was Ossian Green, who made his first appearance at Clydebank. The piper for the evening was Norman MacPhee. Accompanying the performers was Kirsteen Grant.

The next céilidh is on Friday January 13.

Celtic Connections festival on its way

IN THE New Year, I will be writing

a fair a bit about Celtic Connections festival, which will be taking place in January and February.

One event which is sure to be a cracker is the event put on by Ceol is Craic on January 21 at the CCA in Sauchiehall Street.

What's on

Wednesday January 4: Seisean-ciùil Gàidhlig / An Lochran Gaelic music session in the Lismore.

Saturday January 7: Glasgow Skye Association new year family ceilidh in the Crawford Hall.

Friday January 27: The Glasgow Uist and Barra Association new year dance in the Glasgow University Union.

Wednesday February 1: Seisean-ciùil Gàidhlig / An Lochran Gaelic music session in the Lismore.

Thursday February 2: Comunn an Taobh-an-Iar spring concert in the Ellangowan Social Club.

Merry Christmas

I WOULD like to wish all readers of the Glasgow Letter a very merry Christmas. I hope Santa is good to you all.



Jack Low wrote: 'I can see compensation claims starting.'
Audrey Sykes asked: 'Are there no street lights? And why walk so close to a bench? Just asking! Hope they're ok though.'

Charlie Jack condemned: 'They're absolutely lethal. Bad enough to walk into them, but running into them doesn't bear thinking about. Almost impossible to see the danger, especially in the dark.'

Crannog Lane, Lochavullin estate, Oban, PA34 4HB.

We will attempt to resolve your issue in a timely, reasonable and amicable manner. However, if you are unsatisfied with our response, you can contact IPSO, which will investigate the matter. You can

either telephone IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or email inquiries@ipso.co.uk. IPSO is an independent body which deals with complaints from the public about the editorial content of newspapers and magazines. We will abide by the decision of IPSO.

Changes to taxi fares are only reasonable

Sir,
Following on from your taxi tariff article last week, I really felt the need to respond as a small independent taxi operator in Badenoch.

I was at the Highland Council licensing committee hearing on Tuesday December 6 when this was discussed and the proposals for public consultation decided. I was surprised to see how little council officials and elected members knew and understood about how taxi charging and meters work.

I sat back and listened to the debate but had to make some input when it came to the subject of 'outgoing charges' because there was nobody representing rural taxi drivers or companies. Nobody seemed to understand the importance of this to local taxi services in outlying areas.

The maximum allowable charge for this is £8.50 and it comes into play when you have to go more than three miles, and then make your metered journey away from base, meaning the miles to and from the pick-up point are not paid for and are considered 'dead miles' by the trade. Tariff 1 is currently £1.40 a mile, so the £8.50 only actually compensates for an outward journey of up to six miles in daytime. After that, the driver cannot ask for an additional cover charge. This means if you are called a long way from base to do a short metered journey it is just not worthwhile.

We cover the Dalwhinnie, Laggan and Kinlochlaggan areas and most of the East Highland Way (EHW) so it is quite common to get called out to Laggan to do a short journey to a B&B with rucksacks at the end of a long day on the EHW and then return to the stopping point the next morning. This makes it very difficult to justify to us on an economical basis.

My recommendation that was adopted for the consultation was that these dead miles should be chargeable at the equivalent Tariff 1 rate.

The other charge changes were very reasonable and fair.

In summary: soiling charge increased from £60 to £100 to reflect the loss of earnings that can be suffered when cars are being cleaned or out of service after an incident.

Waiting time up from £18 to £25. The rate was too low and few people actually need a taxi on standby so do not have to pay it anyway.

The only charge that will actually affect every client is the Tariff 1 rate increase from £1.40 a mile to £1.50 a mile, which is very reasonable as all other costs keep going up.

I did not understand why Tariffs 2 and 3 were not increased in line with this because the black cabs and six-, seven- or eight-seaters operate only on Tariffs 2 and 3. So the recommended rise only affects saloon cars in daytime and all other rates remain the same.

I was also very interested to learn at the hearing that Highland Council has one of the lowest taxi fare rates in the UK but has the highest rates and charges to the operators and drivers for car and driver licensing, vehicle inspections and meter checks. It is high time that Highland Council taxi drivers were nearer to the Scottish or even UK

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL
ailean@obantimes.co.uk



'S E SUIDHEACHADH glè dhùilich a th' ann gum bheil na ceudan, 's dòcha na mìltean, a tha gun dachaigh a' cadal air sràidean nam bailtean mòra gach oidhche den bhliadhna. Tha iad an cunnart am beatha air caochladh adhbharan, agus ged a tha cuid gun teagamh nan tràillean aig drogaichean neo deoch, tha mòran san t-suidheachadh dìreach air sgàth tuiteamas nam beatha.

Nach usal mar sin an t-amas a chuir an carthannas Social Bite roimhe gus airgead a thional gus taighean simplidh a thogail air làrach bòn ann an Dùn Eideann a bheir fàsadh is dìon dha cuid de na daoine truaigh seo. Thagh iad dòigh inntinneach gus amas a' charthannais fhioilleachadh agus gus ionmhas a thogail aig an aon àm, le cuireadh a thoirt dha ceud neach oidhche a chur seachad nam cadal air an t-sràid. Fhuair iad fada bharrachd taice na bha iad an dùil agus chuir trì ceud seachad oidhche air cabhsair Cheàrnaig Charlotte Dhùn Eideann bho chionn beagan is seachdain air ais. Bha iad fortanach gun robh an aimsir math ach ged a bha

averages for what they pay in fees and are able to earn. Would that not be fair?

**E Ruairidh Ormiston,
Croila Croft, Glendell,
Market Lane, Kingussie.**

Plight of pensioners struggling with bins

Sir,
On Monday last week my wife and I, aged 70 and 75, were alerted at 9.30am by our equally elderly neighbour that our green bins were being emptied a week ahead of the schedule supplied by Argyll and Bute Council.

We live in Breadalbane Mews where the bins have to be taken up a flight of stairs to the street for collection.

There are three pensioner households in the six-house terrace and we are fortunate in having as a neighbour an excellent young man who puts our bins out before he goes to work. On Monday, however, with our neighbour at work, the sight of the elderly struggling to heave their bins up a flight of stairs provided an amusing spectacle for the watching bin men.

A telephone inquiry to council services elicited the explanation that 'some of the lorries had broken down and the boys were catching up'. A week ahead of schedule seems to be a marvellous catching-up, while the offer to have a superior speak to you means listening to bagpipe music for 15 minutes until you give up in disgust.

Had our neighbour not noticed this unscheduled bin collection, the next time the bins would have been emptied would have been January 10 next year.

However, just how reliable is this schedule? Is it now the case that the green bin will have to be on the street every week in the hope that we do not miss other unscheduled collections?

A pretty sight for visitors to Oban.

**Robert H Davidson,
Breadalbane Mews, Oban.**

What is the benefit of Gaelic road signs?

Sir,
I notice renewed interest in the project initiated by the Lib/Dems back in 2003 to erect Gaelic bilingual signs on trunk roads leading to ferry ports, aimed primarily at enhancing the tourist experience.

Acting on instruction from the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland was obliged to take down existing road signs, 90 per cent of which were declared to be in good condition and met its own guiding principles – that is, a commitment to provide the minimum of information for the safe and efficient operation of the road, to provide the least amount of furniture needed to meet functional requirements, to ensure the size of signs is kept to the minimum possible.

The Scottish Government-funded Transport Research Laboratory survey of 2012 found that tourists had to slow down for bilingual signs, found them to be confusing, had taken wrong turnings, had to stop to read the road signs and reported having been involved in near-miss situations owing to the difficulties encountered.

The report further revealed it takes 40 per cent longer to assimilate the bilingual road signs as a consequence of the incorrect language order, and the dominant language should have been placed uppermost in order to minimise reading time.

Transport Scotland's first stated objective is a presumption against new furniture unless there are clear, identifiable benefits. Can the new signs truly be regarded as being of benefit to road users and best use of Transport Scotland trunk road funding?

**Lewis Morrison,
Beregionum, Benderloch.**

Care home embodies the spirit of Christmas

Sir,
If ever I required a much needed reality check on the true meaning of Christmas, then I need have journeyed no further than the Christmas party thrown last Saturday by the staff and residents of the Eadar Glinn care home on Drumore Road, Oban.

To have had the privilege of seeing at first hand the work and effort put in by all was both humbling and an absolute pleasure.

Residents were entertained on the day by local artists from the Oban community, ably led and marshalled by vocalist and compere for the day Freddie McKenzie. Boys in the backing band – and I use the term boys in its broadest sense – were Calum McPhail (fiddle), Ross MacPherson (accordion) and Graham McEwan on the pipes.

Interludes were neatly filled with several young members of the community putting on a fine display of highland dancing with plaudits going to young Daniel and five-year-old Alanna for some excellent pad de bas.

To the staff, I salute you all for the fine spread but more importantly for the time and effort you unselfishly gave to make the event such a success.

Last and by no means least, to those lovely residents. The pleasure and enjoyment on their faces as they sang and tapped along to every tune, song, reel and jig warmed my heart.

To each and every member of staff, local artistes and those wonderful dancers, a personal thank you for opening my eyes.

**James Finlay,
1 Millpark Avenue, Oban.**

Do something to stop nuisance phone calls

Sir,
One really has to bring to the attention of BT the surge of the nuisance caller.

It reached its peak for me recently when I was laid low by the dreaded sickness bug. While cuddling up in my comfort blanket – yes, I have one – sick bucket beside me, the phone rang 17 times, 14 of the calls from a bloke (I refuse to sully the word gentleman), who was selling double glazing.

During the last call at about 4pm, he said he was outside my door. How low can they get?

Nicola Sturgeon, take note and sort it.
**Joyce Vickers,
Erracht Drive, Caol, Fort William.**

Ailean Caimbeul

Social media

THERE was mixed reaction to our story about pensioner who broke his leg tripping over one of the new benches in Oban town centre.

Laura Cook suggested: 'As much as I think that it's unfortunate that somebody has been hurt; I can't help but think that it's not much to ask people to look where they are going. The shelves could easily be rounded off so that they aren't quite as sharp.'

Sian Griffiths posted: 'The seats look

hideous anyway and will look even worse with yellow tape on them! Not in keeping with the style of railings along the front, not comfy to sit on and now it appears they are potentially lethal. I wonder if the designer visited Oban?'

Mark Cardwell said: 'Tell them they should have gone to spec savers.'

Aiilliidhh Caampbell puzzled: 'I was wondering what the yellow tape was for?'

Press policy

WE AT The Oban Times endeavour to ensure that all our reports are fair and accurate and comply with the Editors' Code of Practice set by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). We realise, however, that mistakes happen from time to time.

If you think we have made a significant mistake and you wish to discuss this with us, please let us know as soon as possible by any of the three methods: emailing editor@obantimes.co.uk; telephoning the editor on 01631 568046; writing to the Editor at The Oban Times,

Crannog Lane, Lochavullin estate, Oban, PA34 4HB.

We will attempt to resolve your issue in a timely, reasonable and amicable manner. However, if you are unsatisfied with our response, you can contact IPSO, which will investigate the matter. You can

Your letters

THE EDITOR welcomes letters of approximately 300 words in length for publication on this page. The editor also reserves the right to shorten, to amend or to refuse to print them. Names and postal addresses

must be supplied, including on emails, to indicate good faith. A daytime telephone number is also required for verification.

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

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

POLICE FILES

AROUND 2am on Sunday December 11, a new woollen shawl was stolen from near the entrance door of the Loch Leven Hotel in North Ballachulish.

Police would like to talk to three guests who were seen leaving the hotel around that time.

CLAGGAN residents are being reminded to secure all items of property and keep sheds and outbuildings locked after a man dressed in black clothing was seen acting suspiciously in the Grant Place area of Claggan on the evening of Sunday December 11.

THE CASH box on the vacuum cleaner machine at Ben Nevis filling station on North Road, Fort William, has been broken into and a cash stolen.

The incident took place sometime between 3.30pm on Tuesday December 13 and 3pm on Friday December 16.

Appeal to keep Glenfinnan tidy

A GLENFINNAN resident is urging everyone to take more responsibility for keeping the area tidy.

The business owner contacted *The Oban Times* after single-handedly collecting a 'mountain' of rubbish from a lay-by on the A830 Glenfinnan to Fort William road earlier this month.

The man, who does not want to be named, said the culprits are all ages – he has witnessed an elderly person throwing items out of their car and a young family dispose of their unwanted items.

The Oban Times contacted the Highland Council asking whether more bins could or should be provided, if there are sufficient collections along that road, and for advice on how people can dispose of their rubbish more easily but had not received a response as we went to press.



Smelter deal secures jobs and metal making future

MONICA GIBSON
mgibson@obantimes.co.uk

'THE TIDE on Scottish manufacturing has turned'.

That was the message from an aluminium tycoon as a £330 million deal to save a Lochaber smelter was officially sealed.

SIMEC and Liberty House, of GFG Alliance, have formally bought the UK's last remaining smelter and associated lands from Rio Tinto.

The deal, which was announced last month, includes the hydro-electric station and aluminium smelter at Fort William, the neighbouring hydro-plant at Kinlochleven and more than 100,000 acres of estate land which hosts the water catchment area.

It aims to protect the existing 170 jobs in Lochaber and progressively expand metal manufacturing.

Over the next decade it is thought it will bring up to 2,000 direct and supply-chain jobs to the West Highlands and add



First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was presented with a plaque from Sanjeev Gupta, Liberty House Group, for leaving 'no stone unturned' while the terms for the smelter were being finalised.

around £1 billion to the local economy.

To mark the accord, the companies held a special event at the Fort William plant on Monday morning with First

Minister Nicola Sturgeon guest of honour. Also invited was Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing, MPs, MSPs, community members, smelter employees and representatives from the

alliance. Miss Sturgeon shed light on the firm's plans to manufacture alloy wheels and said the Scottish Government is guaranteeing the power purchases of the smelter.

She agreed the deal heralds a new manufacturing future and told the crowd: 'GFG's ambitious and far-sighted plans would create 300 jobs during construction, an additional 300 after completion and then more afterwards.'

She described the development as a source of pride and pleasure and that it signalled the belief the alliance has in the skilled and dedicated workforce.

Ms Sturgeon also said the possible involvement of East Lochaber and Laggan Community Trust (ELLCT) highlighted the importance of community ownership and how it can help galvanise the future.

Ms Sturgeon also acknowledged the uncertainty that has been created since Rio Tinto announced its intention to put the smelter up for sale, saying

it must have felt like a lifetime for those involved but urged the crowd to have confidence the outcome will bring a vibrant future.

SIMEC chief executive Jay Hambro described the process of how the deal came about as a rollercoaster. He highlighted the Lochaber smelter and surrounding land as a unique asset and said that he was beyond delighted with the development which he and the First Minister believes is fantastic for Scotland and for the Highlands.

Sanjeev Gupta, executive chairman of Liberty House Group and of the GFG Alliance strategic board, said he believes the deal should be considered as the moment the tide on manufacturing turned and that it shows you can have huge industry in this part of the world again. As a nod to his Hindu faith, some of the guests including Nicola Sturgeon, received a bindi on their foreheads and special 'ganes' ceremony was performed as a sign of good luck.

Positive reaction to 'life changing moment for Lochaber'

David Stewart, Labour Highlands and Islands MSP, said: 'It's great to see a new future for the last remaining smelter in the UK. It will be cause for celebration in households across the area this Christmas.'

East Lochaber and Laggan Community Trust: 'The community trust is very pleased with the outcome of the smelter.'

'We now find ourselves able to

discuss proposals around a table. We are encouraged by the First Minister's endorsement of our plans and we now look forward to our meeting with the group early in the new year where we can take our ideas forward.'

Ian Blackford, SNP MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, said: 'This purchase by GFG Alliance is a great outcome for the area, securing the 170 jobs on the Fort William smelter and Kinlochleven Power House

sites. With future investment of £120 million already in the pipeline to upgrade equipment and diversify into new 'added value' products such as aluminium alloy wheels, with a forecast of up to 2,000 new jobs, this is a life changing moment for Lochaber.'

Highlands and Islands Labour MSP Rhoda Grant said: 'I look forward to seeing an aluminum wheel manufacturing facility being created. This is an

exciting project for the region, both for jobs on site and for spin-off jobs in the community.'

Kate Forbes, MSP for Lochaber, said: 'If the sale of the Lochaber smelter shows me anything about this SNP Government, it is that it is determined to deliver for the West Highlands. I hope this sale will be a catalyst for investment and development in Lochaber – to see houses built, roads upgraded and railways improved.'



Organisers pictured holding cheque are, left to right: Betty Campbell, Christine Dennis, Karen MacMillan, with an accident and emergency charge nurse. Photograph: Abrightside Photography

Cafe volunteers raise £5,000 for hospital

HOT DRINKS have helped provide more than just comfort in Fort William as the local hospital's cafe has raised £5,000 from sales of tea and biscuits.

The T Bar presented the cheque last week to medical staff at the Belford Hospital and the money will be used to buy new equipment to benefit patients.

The cafe, based in the Belford's main building, is run by volunteers led by Betty Campbell. The money was raised over two years.

Fiona McGeachan, NHS Highland's business support manager (west), said: 'On behalf of the hospital staff I would like to thank the ladies for this generous donation, for the hard work they do all year round and their continued support.'

'The ladies provide a welcome cup of tea, a smile and a chat to patients and visitors to the hospital. We often see people who have made the trip to hospital having a catch-up over a cup of tea with their friends or relatives.'



Alfonso Iglesias first complained about the flooding outside his house more than a year ago.

Resident fights on over flooding

ONGOING 'high risk' flooding in Fort William may soon be resolved.

Alfonso Iglesias contacted *The Oban Times* regarding a problem outside his Lochaber Road home.

Mr Iglesias said he had been in touch with the Highland Council about a pool of water which gathers in his front garden earlier this year and the previous winter a workman had been sent to unblock a drain.

But the efforts were in vain as the drain is too high to collect the water.

Mr Iglesias said: 'Now winter is here again and thick ice is forming. This has become a high risk for other people and my family. We cannot access our front door or take our rubbish bins out for collection.'

The Oban Times raised the issue again with the Highland Council and a spokesperson said: 'We have arranged for a maintenance officer to come to visit the site to see what works are required.'



Mr Iglesias says the water forms a 'high risk' hazard, especially in the winter.



Gary Innes, right, hands over the defibrillator to Dominic Sargent of the Ambulance Service, with volunteer firefighters at the Spean Bridge fire base and other participants in the project looking on.

Life-saving defibrillators delivered to two villages

LIFE-SAVING equipment has been donated to two rural Lochaber villages.

Following a successful fundraising concert by Mánran accordionist Gary Innes, more than £1,900 was raised for charity Lochaber Heart to enable defibrillators to be fitted in Spean Bridge and Roy Bridge.

Gary held concerts in both villages in November to raise money for the equipment.

On Sunday the defibrillators were fitted to the fire station in Spean Bridge and the Memorial Hall in Roy Bridge.

Gary told *The Oban Times*: 'It's fantastic the defibrillators are there now and they will come in to use some time in the future. It's great to have this life-saving equipment at people's fingertips.'

'The concerts were great fun and it was lovely to be back playing a gig in Spean Bridge.'

Lochaber Heart, which was started by Fort William councillor Thomas MacLennan and Alan Knox, area service manager for Scottish Ambulance Service, has already fitted about 15 defibrillators in Fort William.

Alan said: 'It's absolutely fantastic that these communities will have access to this vital equipment. Working and engaging with the community on this has been a real success. An ambulance is always going to come, but someone could get to this bit of equipment in minutes and help save someone's life.'

Alan thanked Voluntary Action Lochaber and Lucky2BHere from Skye for their help with the project.

Thomas MacLennan said: 'It's great to see more defibrillators fitted in two more rural areas, which could help save a life.'

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Oban, Thursday 19th January 2017, 10.00am-1.30pm

PRICING FOR PROFIT
A workshop to help businesses identify their working capital requirements, understand different pricing strategies, identify break-even point and manage profitability
Oban, Tuesday 24th January 2017, 10.00am-4.00pm

BECOMING AN EMPLOYER
Are you looking to take on your first employee, this workshop will help you understand the process of employing people, your legal obligations and gives you an insight into recruitment good practice.
Oban - Thursday 26th January 2017, 10.00am-1.30pm

FUNDING YOUR BUSINESS
Identify what the funding needs of the business are, what potential sources of funding are available and what the business needs to provide to access these sources.
Oban - Monday, 30th January 2017, 10.00am-1.30pm

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Festive tales and fine rhymes

We recently put out a call to our readers asking you to write a short story or a few lines of poetry on a subject that inspired you, and we have been overwhelmed by your response. Argyll certainly is a creative hub and home to a wealth of hidden talent. Here, you can read the first of the submissions, with more next week. Enjoy! A short story winner and a poetry winner will both be chosen following the publication of all short stories and poems

Unearthed

“... I finally got my orders.
I'll be marching through the morning,
Marching through the night,
Moving cross the borders
Of My Secret Life.”

In My Secret Life, Leonard Cohen. 2001

The day after:
First the incline takes your breath away. Then the view;
with the mighty peaks of Ben Cruachan, Ben Starav,
Buchaille Etive Mor, Ben Trilleachan arcing around in
a northerly panorama. The last snows of spring clinging
on, high up in hitherto hidden crevices. The islands of
Mull, Scarba and, on less misty days, Jura, lining up for
yet another photo opportunity in the west and south.
This time was no different, save for that darned sheep.
Body contorted, head contorted, listing to one side;
unseeing eyes gazing beyond that carefully manicured
4ft by 2ft piece of obviously missing turf to the bluebell-
carpeted corridor, unhindered by passport or reason.
Inert.
“You can't die here!” shouting, vain and selfish.
“You just can't die here! Not now! Not today!”
She moves. Ever so slightly.
No more than a nervous twitch. But it was enough.
“She's alive!”
Trying to get her upright. At least she is alive.
“Come on. Let me help you.” Like she understands.
But her legs aren't for carrying her. Not with this weight.
Lame with lamb. Not a good omen.
Trying to make her comfortable; enticing her with a
carrot (don't ask!).
“Please. You can't die here!”
What if even he finds you? Here?
He's not one for inconvenience, but she's just a couple
of feet from that 4ft by 2ft bare patch of soil, ruffled to
make it look 'natural' amongst a jumbled array of gorse
and bracken and clusters of reeds and course grass.
Even he would think that is odd. Aye right.
“Please. You can't die here!”

Two Weeks (and a bit) before:
“There are lots of options for us to explore,” he said. He
saw something the others had missed; but he's not for
sharing. Just looking at the X-ray, looking at me, looking
at them, looking worried. Looking at whatever it was and
keeping it to himself.

One Week (and a bit) before:
“We are running out of options,” he said.
He saw me, and something hidden inside, something he
was keeping to himself.

The Day before:
“Tomorrow,” they said. Their last act of compassion. But
not their first.
They took me in when they couldn't, took me out when
they could, and when I couldn't they understood.
They gave me comfort (and food) in place of fear.
They gave me freedom and encouragement (and gray
bones) in place of control and subservience.
They gave me love instead of beatings (and cheese and
biscuits, thank you).
They shared their home and their holidays (and treats
from the dinner table; but keep that to yourself!).
Discarding human chattels, we became as one.

Today:
Today is the day that is embossed in our collective
memory.
He was late. But all too soon the overdose was surging
around my veins, then took effect; my head lolled back
and the lights went out.
This is it. I am no more.
But this is where my new secret life began, and I am no
more.
No more vaulting the fence to play hide-and-seek, to the
amusement of the neighbours, and surprise of passing
strangers.
No more chasing the wind as it ripples through the empty
branches of an isolated rowan tree.
No more chasing the moon and the stars as they circle
above us in unquantifiable number.
No more chasing the waves as they gatecrash on the silver
sands of distant memories: of the famous Machrihanish
surf, of the silver sands of Morar, of Traigh Na h-Uidhe,
or the the playful pool of the otters.
No more to the distant Munro's of Ben Chonzie, Lomond,
Wyvis, The Cairnwell, or the Highs of Kinlochleven.
No more playing the experience of innocence.
But this is where my new secret life began, so here it is.

So here it is I repose; in a place not named on any
map, an expanse of unimproved pasture, gorse and
metamorphosed bedrock, known simply as 'the hill'.
So here it is.
Submerged I repose; due south(ish) of the great North

Star, due north(ish) of the great Speckled Cauldron.
So here it is I repose; east of the burial site of kings, but
sheltered in the lea of the Atlantic winds, west of the
rising sun as it bickers over the horizon in the east.

So here it is.
Submerged I repose; cuddled beneath the discretely
planted horse chestnut; protected by the spikey, brittle
branches of decaying gorse, beneath the indiscreet 4' X
2' rectangle of green baize, the gently haunting sound of
the wind rumbling through the pylon stays.

So here it is.
Submerged I repose; beneath the raptors in their
ongoing battle for supremacy of the open skies. Geese
barking directions, bearing northwards for the spring;
oblivious to the buzzards soaring effortlessly; eyeing
each subtle movement for signs of a tasty supper.

So here it is.
Submerged I repose; amongst the curious rabbits,
nervously scurrying about their business, scattering
like a break in a drunken game of pool; the curious and
timid deer, alert to every change on offer; the curious
springing lambs, before their attention is otherwise
disengaged.

So here it is then.
Submerged I will repose; long after the half-empty
cup of sadness turns into the half-full cup of happy
memories; of oft viewed photographs, video and the
inevitable drawing hanging on the wall.
A tear.
A smile.
An ever-present reminder.
Here it is then.
Tongue out, where it will stay until it is no more.
And that's as it should be.

So here it is then.
Submerged in my secret repose.
Not to be disturbed, until by some insignificant chance
the insignificant bracken farmer unearths me.
Here it is then.
Oh, and, sometime known only to herself, the ewe re-
joined her flock and that's as it should be too.

'Jake'.

Destination

Overnight on Christmas the train arrived: red tin,
with the passengers painted on the carriages.
I slotted in the rails, wound the mechanism
and in the dawn the train began its run
looping under the legs of chairs, back again,
and then under a bridge – an aunt's present –
then through a station where the master stood,
a red flag under his oxter. Through a wood
planted only in the imagination.
I rewound it with the silver key,
feeling the tightening of the spring.

Now Christmases are measured in diminishing
tracks: no longer the figures of eight stretching
over the floor, passing the painted herd
staring over a realistic gate, finishing
with the long run across the carpet.
I have difficulty slotting the rails together,
knowing they can't run in loops any more,
under the sideboard and out of the door.
They don't even go in a circle now,
but in a straight line. The signal's
up, red flag raised, but before
the mechanism runs out, the rails will.

Lorn Macintyre

Memory

Hot, fizzing, lemonade at midnight,
You peel an orange in one curly piece,
an apple into boats, new moons.
Table upside down: a raft afloat your kitchen
chaos.
Soft, dark folds in amongst your wardrobe,
Wedding dress satin, bell-bottom trouser suits,
Knee high, suede purple boots.
And your Hollywood glamour smile.
Still smiling now, though the glamour dulled
by jumpers stained with soup and tea; and
breakfast fallen at your feet.
Words tangled and lost in the maze of your
memory.
Same softness; same sharpness competing to win.
But I remember your wellness
Your love, your fun, your crazy commotion
Bubbling up, (like the hot fizzy lemonade.)
in my memory.

For my mum by Maggie Farrell, Appin.

Freedom Song

I shall compare thee
to a somersault
a skipping rope
a merry-go-round
you raise my heart
high as the stars
push it down
low as the ocean floor
your laughter sets me free

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The Reaping of the Barley

I stand upon Ben Hynish and view a baron land
Reaped and raped by strangers to feed the landlords hand
Those left pushed to the shoreline, and thousands more afar
Driven out like cattle, to the wilds of Canada

Spin and lies were used to prise the people from their homes
When that no longer worked, there came more brutal tones
Tripled rents by landlords bent, the world's wealth to keep
Evictions, burning houses, just to clear the land for sheep

Too long our people trodden down had no resisting voice
Made weak by laws of lords because we thought we had no choice
The 1880s saw the change, no longer we'd retreat
And fought for firm tenure on the land beneath our feet

We know how fickle is the world, such ruthlessness we see
These sad but constant truths of life will never cease to be
Grudges held for anger's sake bear no fruit now or then
But learn, and move and never let our corn be reaped again

RSPB and SNH have ever growing powers.
These faceless groups would make Tír na nÓg a land of birds and flowers
If they could they quickly would, fill ships in Hynish bay
"Clear and burn get out get off you're getting in our way!"

Talk of turbines standing high along our western view
Reaping wind to save the world, I do not doubt they'll do
But if our doorstep holds the key for wind or birds or flowers
We must not dance to the strangers tune – they must dance to ours.

Or play parks on the ocean for experimental science
No thought of Milton's fishing fleet, to be killed with forced compliance
Control if stolen yet again, by fickle far off whim
For livelihoods and families - the reaper's scythe is grim

The paradox that change must be a constant by our side
This fact we must embrace because we cannot stop the tide
Sail with the tide but choose our course, show strength in where we steer
And give the children of the grain a future bright and clear

Angus MacPhail

Low hangin' moon o'er Duror

Low hangin' moon o'er Duror,
Your cold glow barely lightin' Loch Linnhe.
And stars like broderie anglaise
Work hard to anchor safe passage
From road to wood for Autumn deer.

Maggie Farrell, November 5 2016

Run The Race

I will not hold the sorrow for the race I didn't run
For shying from the starting blocks and cowering from the gun
The shame to fall a thousand times will never match the pain
The harrowed fret and deep regret of impotent refrain.

Each man he has a race to run and each man's can be found
The ones I'll try before I die I'll know once in the ground
But try I will to climb life's hill, and if I stumble down
Back up I'll get and onward set despite the laughing crowd.

The choice we have to run or watch is not a simple call
To watch the race go by is safe and easy for us all
You'll never lose if you refuse to make yourself join in
The penance though, you'll always know you're never going to win.

To stand upon the sidelines is the often taken choice
To make some fun of those who run with narrow sneering voice
Or even worse the twisted curse that in mankind is found
The secret want, for those in front to fall and hit the ground.

The race it brings on many things that make life more extreme
But depths of low they better show success's golden gleam
To not retreat when nearly beat then fight to reach the front
It gives the soul the furnace coal to flourish in the hunt.

To climb the hill with morals ill, you haven't climbed at all
And further on by ways of wrong, the further you will fall
Attain your goal by truthful soul, integrity and trust
For peace within the life you win, the road it need be just

Think of those who've made no mark, upon the world we know
Who never grasped or followed dreams and have no dreams to show
When comes their way the final day, when death they know they'll face
Near every one will wish they'd run and not just watched the race.

Compare to those who shaped the world, and strived to run the race
Who lived to steer their ship of life, their destiny and place
When they look back along their track, upon their dying day
These giant men would run again along their chosen way.

So follow dreams and see the world, and grab life by the throat
Don't live by dull convention or your life will miss the boat.
Live for love and friendships' glow and chase ambition's taste
We only get one shot at this – don't let it go to waste.

Shoplifter

Shoplifter. Rolling in it
Rolls of the stuff
Staff dignity and worth
Shoplifter:
Media shy, bonus driven
To distraction by
These calls for a living wage
And an end to the living slave
Trade
Shoplifter:
Top of his game guy
Twelve hour a day guy
Foxy with the figures guy
840 grand a year
16 grand a week
Two hundred and sixty six quid an hour
No arrests made
Shoplifted:
Not quite living slave
One whole identity
All respect and dignity
Years of high quality sleep
Fifty long hours a week
Shoplifted
Fitness safety net
A lifetime of bog offs
Multi packs of back pain, depression, insomnia and debt
Trolley loads of goodwill
No arrests made... YET
(To the directors of Farmfoods, Tesco, Morrisons and Sainsbury
by Maggie Farrell.)

The Caserom

A junior reporter, I climbed rickety stairs to the alchemists' den;
the compositor at a giant keyboard, bubbling pot of lead
turned into silver slugs imprinted with names of the dead
I daren't misspell as I checked the galleys. At the stone
tweezers were used to correct an error in In Memoriam,
essentially the same methods for the First Folio, except
there was a difference in quality between Romeo and Juliet
and the lines I scanned for spelling and split infinitives.
'Sleep peacefully in Heaven, our darling Helen.
We will never forget you, and will meet again.'
I moved on to the proof of the beekeepers' meeting,
in the days before wild flowers disappeared, and viruses
decimated the hives. The editor sent for me because
I'd called a leading citizen Kommandant of the Red Cross,
and she'd phoned in to complain it was Oban, not Belsen.
Contrite, I checked the prices for store cattle at Dalmally,
and, when there was a climbing fatality on Cruachan,
I was asked by the editor to write up the story.

Lorn Macintyre

A Ghost

A surfer lives where a bard once wrote, where a piper lived is gone,
Where songs were sung is a strangers tongue, and the native one passed on
A broker stays where cotters starved when driven to the coast
Where the seer saw, has seen the claw, our people are a ghost

An artist lives where land was claimed, by crofters brave and bold
Through war and blight, they stood to fight, and now it's ten times sold
Our culture, language, sense of self is ebbing from our shore
A living race with bond to place, it soon will be no more

There is no malice in my verse, no blame on one or all,
The world's way is here to stay, unless we fight our fall
But if we fade into the past, below the Western Sky
Feel for us who hold the curse to watch our people die

Angus MacPhail

Ice is in the air

The blood-orange of the sun's last kiss has gone
and ice is in the air
against a pale pale-blue sky
the leaves sport all the hues of autumn
and ice is in the air
above a sea of greenish slate
a giant puffball cloud hangs grey and frizzy
on her strong silver wings
the winter daemon rides
across apricot sky
turns on the lathe of
icy air
© 1 November 2016, 16:45-17:10, Oban – MPJ. V2/3: 16/18
December 2016

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Piper Ally Maclean cracks out some jigs for the strip the willow as part of the trad music group at Oban High School. Photographs: Kevin McGlynn

Junior



Guys ready for the dancing.



DJ Stevo Finlayson kept the floor packed as the juniors enjoyed their jingles.



Bringing an end to at Oban High School's night.

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- Across
- Band instrument (4)
 - Group of three dimensional w (8)
 - Assistant (7)
 - Ant (5)
 - Old unit in Germany (8,4)
 - Cook for too long (6)
 - Fish eagle (6)
 - Perfumed toilet water (3,2,7)
 - Bind (5)
 - Spartan (7)
 - where funds are kept (8)
 - One worshipped (4)

- Down
- Pendant gem shape (8)
 - Small and exquisite (5)
 - Irritated (6)
 - To keep your cuppa hot (7,5)
 - One who looks with pleasure (7)
 - Abominable Snowman (4)
 - Partial (3-9)
 - About marriage (8)
 - Analyze (7)
 - Cream cake (6)
 - Avarice (5)
 - Burst of wind (4)

**LAST WEEK'S
SOLUTION**

B	A	B	E	S	C	A	L	L	E			
A	L	B	E	S	C	A	L	L	E			
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M	O	L	A	S	S	S	S	L	A	T		

Jingles



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Friday 23 December – Thursday 29 December

The cinema will be closed
on Sunday 25 December

BALLERINA | U | 119 MIN
Fri: 15:00, Sat: 12:45, Mon: 12:30, Tue: 14:15, Wed, Thu: 15:00

Children's animation. Set in 1879 Paris. An orphan girl dreams of becoming a ballerina and flees her rural Brittany for Paris, where she passes for someone else and accedes to the position of pupil at the Grand Opera house.

MOANA | PG | 133 MIN
Fri: 14:30, Sat: 11:30, Mon, Tue: 12:00, Wed, Thu: 12:30
From Walt Disney Animation Studios comes "Moana," a sweeping, CG-animated feature film about an adventurous teenager who sails out on a daring mission to save her people.

OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY | 15 | 125 MIN
Fri: 19:15, Mon: 16:45, Tue: 18:30, Wed, Thu: 17:00
In OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY, when the CEO (Jennifer Aniston) tries to close her hard-partying brother's branch, he (T.J. Miller) and his Chief Technical Officer (Jason Bateman) must rally their co-workers and host an epic office Christmas party in an effort to impress a potential client and close a sale that will save their jobs.

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY | 12A | 153 MIN
Fri: 20:00, Sat: 14:45, Mon, Tue: 17:30, Wed: 12:00, 18:00, Thu: 15:00
3D: Fri: 17:00, Sat: 14:00, Mon, Tue: 14:30, Wed: 15:00, Thu: 12:00, 18:00
Parent and baby screening: Tue: 11:30
'Rogue One: A Star Wars Story' is the first film in the new standalone movies from Lucasfilm. It tells the story of how a group of unlikely heroes unite to undertake a daring and seemingly impossible mission to steal the plans for the Death Star.

SULLY | 12A | 116 MIN
Fri: 17:00, Sat: 17:30, Mon: 14:30, Tue: 16:15, Wed, Thu: 19:15
On January 15, 2009, the world witnessed the "Miracle on the Hudson" when Captain "Sully" Sullenberger (Tom Hanks) glided his disabled plane onto the frigid waters of the Hudson River, saving the lives of all 155 aboard. However, even as Sully was being heralded by the public and the media for his unprecedented feat of aviation skill, an investigation was unfolding that threatened to destroy his reputation and his career.

THE SNOWMAN (1986) | U | 26 MIN
Sat: 11.30 Entry free
On Christmas Eve, a young boy builds a snowman that comes to life and takes him to the North Pole to meet Santa Claus.

THE SNOWMAN & THE SNOWDOG (2013) | U | 24 MINS
Sat: 12.00 Entry free
A young boy whose dog has just died moves into the house in whose backyard the snowman was built. Finding a photograph of the snowman the boy rebuilds him, fashioning a snow dog out of the excess snow. The trio fly off in a plane to meet Santa, who gives the boy a magical dog collar which will make it the happiest Christmas ever for him.

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE (1946) | U | 131 MINS
Sat: 17:00 Entry free
An angel helps a compassionate but despairingly frustrated businessman by showing what life would have been like if he never existed.



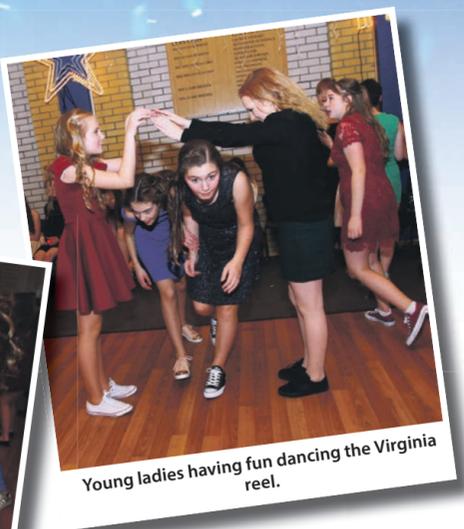
Shall we dance?



Staff and pupils had fun at the junior jingles at Oban High School.



Plenty of sore feet after dancing the night away at the junior jingles at Oban High School.



Young ladies having fun dancing the Virginia reel.



Footloose and Runrig's Loch Lomond were popular.



Strip the willow was a hair-raising dance at the junior jingles at Oban High School.

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MONDAY: 0800 AM on FM, 0810 Breakfast Show, 0900 Monday Morning With Andy and Stephen, 1100 Molly Black, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1700 Drivetime With Marcus, 1900 Rosie's Highland Fling, 2000 John McLuckie's Show, 2100 David Cullen

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

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

THURSDAY: 0800 Morning show, 1100 Molly's Mix with Molly Black, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Gordon Covey, 1700 Drivetime with Stephen, 1900 Christine's Collection, 2100 Ann's Ceilidh, 2200 Margo Till Midnight

FRIDAY: 0800 Jean Ainsley Breakfast Show, 1000 Teeny and Tiny Show, 1300-1500 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 Lavin

SATURDAY: 0800 Breakfast Show, 1000 Saturday Morning Live with Linda Crosier, 1330 CLYDE 2, 1800 Sports View with the Dream Team, 1900 Marcus, 2000 Dave Lewis

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

Your Personal Christmas Greetings

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year to all my relatives, friends and neighbours from Angus MacDonald (Moy) and family North Uist

SEASONS GREETINGS
Archie Simpson 13 Dunmar Court wishes all relatives, friends and neighbours old and new, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

MACPHAIL, CLACHAN, TIREE,
would like to wish all our family, friends and neighbours on the mainland and Tiree a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year to all relatives, friends in Lismore, Appin, Benderloch, Connel, Taynuilt, Lochawe, Dalmailly and Oban.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY
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MUSIC

A brave man of Argyll

CHRISTMAS is my favourite time of the year. I absolutely love the feelings that the combined traditions and jewels of yuletide bring. As excitement, goodwill, festive cheer, relaxation, roaring fires, Christmas carols, crackers, mistletoe, mulled wine, rich food, full bellies and family time fill our thoughts, a piper and ex-soldier from Connel is unjustly being left to rot in an Indian jail. From Campbeltown originally, Billy Irving is familiar in musical circles on the West Coast. He has worked as a steward at Three Music Festival and the Skippinnish Ceilidh House, and is well known in Oban.

The nightmare that began more than three years ago shows little sign of coming to a conclusion, and for Billy and those close to him, Christmas can be nothing more than a stark reminder of the nightmare their lives have been since October 2013. This was when he was arrested after the anti-piracy ship MV Seaman Guard Ohio, on which he was serving, was detained by Indian authorities because of issues relating to the carrying of firearms and refuelling with subsidised diesel.

I remember vividly the night that Yvonne MacHugh, Billy's fiancée,

told me he had been taken into custody. We were at the Watersay Boys concert finishing off the Mod in Paisley. Then, as with all stages of this ordeal, I thought and hoped this would be a temporary situation and once misunderstandings were cleared up, then Billy would soon be back home. Three years and 10 weeks on, after non-stop campaigning, various court cases, charges being dropped, charges being re-instated, appeals and counter appeals, delays leading to more delays, hopes raised and hoped dashed, Billy and his 34 colleagues are no closer to getting back home.

I don't fully understand the complexities of the situation, but a number of things appear to stand out, in as much as is known to the public for diplomatic and/or other reasons.

1. Billy is personally innocent of any wrong doing.
2. AdvanFort, Billy's employer, has done nothing to help and has effectively disappeared.
3. The British Embassy in India has been unhelpful.
4. The UK government has been ineffective with attempted intervention.
5. The men are caught up in a complex political situation on many levels

within the state of Tamil Nadu, within the controls of the Indian government and between the British and Indian governments.

6. The above have combined in a web of crossover and intertwined complications, let-downs, weaknesses and political impotence to create a quagmire of legal tangles that mean there is no clear direction as to how to bring this to an end.

Frustratingly, when the ship was detained, Billy had worked for the company for only two months, had finished his first term and was delayed in getting home by two weeks because of a visa complication caused by a mistake on the part of his employer. So he was merely a passenger on board at the time.

A rare but rich blessing of the situation is that during the time when Billy was released on bail pending the original trial, Yvonne was able to stay with him in the Chennai Hotel where he was based. One of the rays of sunshine of this time together is that the couple now have a two-year old son, William Irving junior. While this is a wonderful outcome on its own and a great source of long-term hope, it can only add to the stress, worry and frustration of the ongoing situation.

William is now two years old and is growing up without his father. This time can never be replaced. Yvonne and both families are under constant emotional and financial strain dealing with this cruelly unfair situation.

Billy has a very positive attitude, is a tough character and, being an ex-paratrooper, will no doubt have gone through some brutal experiences, but the shocking conditions in the jail and the lack of an end in sight would break even the mentally and physically strongest of men. There is no running water, rats infest their food, there are worms and raw sewage in the drinking water and toilets are slop buckets. His brother, Jamie Irving, who visited recently, says Billy has suffered from dysentery, has been malnourished, his teeth are falling out as a result, he has been treated violently by guards and his contact with the outside world is very limited.

He can receive handwritten letters and cards, and can receive food and gift parcels. I spoke to Jamie this week and he said that any written correspondence would be hugely appreciated and would go a long way to lifting Billy's spirits going into the New Year.

For anyone sending parcels, food must be

non-melting, long shelf-life products. Haribo sweets, toothpaste, tobacco and shampoo are the type of items that would be useful. Parcels must contain no glass or sharp implements that could be used as a weapon. The address is:

William Irving
Prisoner 6150
The Office of The Superintendent,
Central Prison 1,
Puzhal,
Tamil Nadu,
Chennai,
India,
600066.

Billy and his family are not the type who to seek financial help from others but, on their behalf, there has been a Paypal account set up for donations. To make a donation, just go to www.paypal.com and enter the email billyirving@hotmail.com to identify where the money is to go. This is very simple and just takes a few minutes.

For those wanting keep up with progress, visit the Bring Billy Back Facebook page.

There is much injustice in the world and we can't solve it all, but this is close to home and, at this time of year especially, any help we can give would make a huge difference to this brave man of Argyll.

Hector Maclean

A new book from Jo Currie

HECTOR Maclean 1751-1812 was a West Highlander who looked to the army for a career beyond the bounds of Scotland, as so many did. He fought in the American War of Independence, where his commanding officer was Murdoch MacLaine (later 19th of Lochbuie). After Hector left the army on half-pay, he became one of the many emigrants and he took advantage of the army land grants to settle in Nova Scotia. This work is a collaborative edition of his diary and letters between Jo Currie and two Canadian academics, Keith Mercer and John Reid. The editors present Hector Maclean's words very much as he wrote them with abbreviations, contracted spellings, nicknames and initials of friends. These last are identified in copious footnotes wherever

possible. The feeling of being transported back into another age is also enhanced by the sympathetic way the book has been produced: the texture of the paper is suggestive of the originals and the diary section is a page for page transcription of short lines, just as Hector Maclean wrote them. It is a very attractive publication.

An introduction at the start of the book gives brief details of the period in which he lived and his own words enable us to follow the ups and downs of the hard work of establishing a Nova Scotian farm. There are also glimpses of his social life: visits to neighbours, dances attended, gossip about who might marry whom. And there was time, too, for some outdoor recreation, such as a sailing expedition and a moose hunt.



On Sunday December 11, 49 adults and 17 youngsters attended a charity lunch at Taynuilt Hotel. An impressive £735 was raised and all proceeds will be distributed to local groups in the near future.

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The Winter Festival Committee would like to thank everyone who contributed to the event and helped to make Festival 2016 such a great success.

Oban Winter Festival 2016

Colin Cooper Photography © 2016

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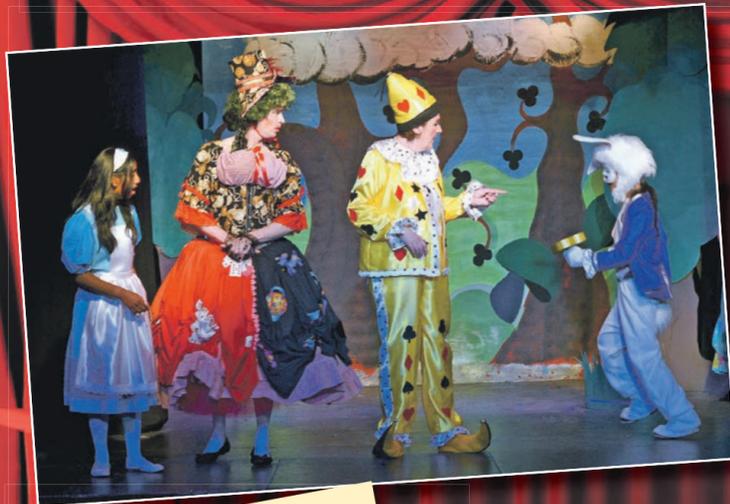
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The Oban Times & WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

Winter Wonderland as panto stars take to Tobermory stage



TOBERMORY'S pantomime *Alice in Wonderland*, under director Barbara Weir, played to packed crowds at the Aros Hall this week. The performances were organised by the North of Mull Amateur Dramatic Society, which has a long tradition of pantomime in Tobermory. This year there were spectacular costumes by Marie Robertson and her team. The 'youthful' cast was led by 13-year-old Satchi Orlichson, who played a faultless lead role of Alice. Cast members also included Kerry Froud, who played a high maintenance Queen of Hearts. Scott Thompson played the classic pantomime villain as 'the knave', while Shona Reade gave a hilarious performance as Wally. The stunning backdrops were designed by Helen and Brian Swinbanks and the music was provided by the Broad Band.



Cailleach

In this series, *The Oban Times'* resident Cailleach (Gaelic: old woman and, by experience, often a storyteller) looks through archive material for articles and pictures that preserve moments from the past. There is always a back story – and sometimes a future one.



Get in touch with your stories at bodach@obantimes.co.uk

Games for a laugh: how we partied as children at Christmas

THE TALK in *The Oban Times* office this week has been about the impending Christmas.

While I am harking back to the days of the good old Sunday School party, others are retelling tales of parties past and of those people who are no longer with us.

Oh, the games we played at the Christmas Eve Sunday School party.

My mum was the Sunday School leader and she had a big book of party games that was taken down from the shelf five minutes before the party started.

There would be the Mars bar game – where on the roll of a dice or otherwise you could miss out on a slice of the caramel chocolate. If you managed to roll a six, you then had to quickly dress up in various pieces of fancy clothing and put on a pair of gloves before trying to cut into the Mars bar and eat as much as possible before the next person rolled a six.

I am sure my brother had a loaded dice as I cannot remember ever getting a bite of that sweetie.

Then there was postman's knock – where I had to kiss the 'smelly' boys from across the road. They were our neighbour's nephews and they were badly behaved (or so my mum said).



See you, Jimmy! Office parties from the 1980s don't look much different from the parties of the 2000s.

They did dangerous things like break into the boat shed in the park and take the pedal boats out. They also misappropriated the mini putting green flags one year and got in a lot of bother from the head gardener.

Other games included heads down, thumbs up, I sent a letter to my love, what's the time Mr Wolf?, port and starboard – they were great fun. I wonder if they are still played?

Christmas is a time for celebration. At this time of the year news can be fairly thin on the ground for reporters, so we are delighted when there is a baby born – or a party to photograph.

My first trip to photograph a new baby was adorable. I drove out to

Ardochattan Priory where the baby's parents lived.

I had on a Christmas outfit (as is befitting of the days between Christmas and New Year) and high heels (no, I don't know why either). Anyway, the gritters had not yet been down that particular road and it was minus four when I arrived. There had been no thaw for the entire day.

I slipped all over the place. It took me almost 30 minutes to walk from my car to the front door.

But I was made so welcome and the mum who had just given birth to the most beautiful baby boy was in finer form than me.

As for Christmas in our household, my daughter thinks all of this is a lot of nonsense. She says that we are over-hyping something that doesn't even celebrate the real time that Jesus was born and that the amount of commercialism is ridiculous.

She just wants to eat cake and watch a Doctor Who special.

No matter how you celebrate Christmas, remember these three things: 1. There is a wonderful story of hope at the centre of the festivities, 2. If life is difficult for you right now – this will pass, 3. Have fun – it is later than you think.



Staff at an Oban Hospital in the 1980s.



Christmas babies as photographed in the archives of *The Oban Times* but no names or dates were recorded on the photographs.



Santa with yet another delighted child sitting on his knee.



A' cur 's a' Buain

Listings for Thursday 22 – Thursday 29 December 2016

DIARDAOIN 22 DÙBHLACHD
THURSDAY 22 DECEMBER
17.00 **Prògraman na Cloinne** – Children's Programming
20.00 **An Là** – News
20.30 **Bonn Còmhraidh** – the original Gaelic Current Affairs service – Episode 5 (rpt)
21.00 **UR | NEW: Scotstar: Teasairginn Èiginn** – Scotstar transfer service – Episode 2
22.00 **Tìre Music Festival 2016** – Highlights
22.30 **Stevie Wonder** – documentary
23.25 **Fraochy Bay** (rpt)

23.30 **Ar Duain** – world music series with Mary Ann Kennedy – Episode 3 (rpt)
DIHAOINE 23 DÙBHLACHD
FRIDAY 23 DECEMBER
17.00 **Prògraman na Cloinne** – Children's Programming
18.35 **Machair** (rpt)
19.00 **An Là** – News
19.15 **Binneas** – Duncan Chisholm (rpt)
19.25 **Is Blàth an Fhuil / The Blood is Strong** – Archive series. Episode 3 (rpt)
20.15 **Torcull's Guide to Being a Gael** – Drink (rpt)
20.30 **An Lot** – back on the croft with Donald MacSween – Episode 2 (rpt)
21.00 **An Lüib nam Boireannach** – a look at comedic male actors dressing up as women (rpt)
22.00 **Opry an Iuir** – Country Music from Newry (rpt)
23.00 **Ceòlmhor@Piping Live** – piping Episode 2 (rpt)
23.30 **Tìre Music Festival** – 2016 highlights (rpt)

DISATHAIRNE 24 DÙBHLACHD
SATURDAY 24 DECEMBER
16.00 **Prògraman na Cloinne** – Children's Programming
19.30 **Mod na Cloinne 2016** – Children's Mod 2016 (rpt)
20.30 **Leugh Mi** – guests and their favourite books (rpt)
21.00 **Feis Chiùil Thiriodh** – Tìre Music Festival - Highlights (rpt)
22.00 **UR | NEW: Taigh Thorcuill: Nollaig** – Torcuill and guests celebrate Christmas
22.45 **Fraochy Bay** (rpt)
22.50 **An Oidhche ron Nollaig** – Christmas in verse and music (rpt)
23.00 **UR | NEW: Ciùin an Oidhche** – A Christmas Eve celebration from Invergordon
24.05 **Fonn Fonn Fonn** – music quiz (rpt)
24.45 **An Oidhche ron Nollaig** (rpt)

DIDÒMHAICH 25 DÙBHLACHD
SUNDAY 25 DECEMBER
16.00 **Ciùin an Oidhche** – Christmas celebration from Invergordon (rpt)
17.05 **Prògraman na Cloinne** – Children's Programming
18.30 **UR | NEW: Na Saboteurs** – Dean and Magaidh's sabotage her dad's date!
18.45 **The Boy in the Bubble** (rpt)
19.30 **UR | NEW: Mòd nan Còisirean** – A look back at the successful Mod 2016 Chòirs
21.00 **UR | NEW: Balach nam Bàgh** – the story of John D Urquhart
22.00 **Fonn Fonn Fonn** – music quiz (rpt)
22.45 **Ceòl bho Perthshire Amber 2016** – Blazing Fiddles (rpt)
22.55 **Ball-coise/Football: Kilmarnock v St. Johnstone**
23.55 **Ball-coise/Football** – Dundee v Hearts
DILUAIN 26 DÙBHLACHD
MONDAY 26 DECEMBER
17.00 **Prògraman na Cloinne** – Children's programming
19.00 **An Là** – News
19.05 **Ceòl bho Perthshire Amber** (rpt)
19.30 **UR | NEW: An Lot** – Donald

MacSween and his crofting life – Episode 3
20.00 **UR | NEW: A Bhladhna** – News Review 2016
21.00 **UR | NEW: Trusadh: Seachdain a' Mhòid** – a look behind the scenes at the Mod!
22.00 **Hamish** – documentary film about Hamish Henderson (rpt)
23.25 **Ceòlmhor@Piping Live** – music from the Piping Live festival (rpt)
DIMÀIRT 27 DÙBHLACHD
TUESDAY 27 DECEMBER
17.00 **Prògraman na Cloinne** – Children's programming
17.45 **Na Saboteurs** (rpt)
17.55 **UR | NEW: De a-nis?**
19.00 **An Là** – News
19.25 **Fraochy Bay** (rpt)
19.30 **UR | NEW: Leugh Mi** – Guests and their favourite books
20.00 **UR | NEW: Spors na Bliadhna** – Sports Review 2016
21.00 **UR | NEW: Anna Latharna NicGilliosa** – a musical journey with Anne

Lorne Gillies
22.00 **Trusadh: Seachdain a' Mhòid** – a look behind the scenes at the Mod (rpt)
23.00 **Tìre Music Festival** – 2016 Highlights (rpt)
DIARDAIN 28 DÙBHLACHD
WEDNESDAY 28 DECEMBER
17.00 **Prògraman na Cloinne** – Children's programming
18.00 **Mod na Cloinne 2016** – The Children's Mod 2016 from Stornoway (rpt)
19.00 **An Là** – News
19.05 **Ceòl bho Perthshire Amber** (rpt)
19.25 **Bonn Còmhraidh** – Episode 6 of the original Gaelic Current Affairs series (rpt)
19.55 **Alba Rioghail** – The Royal Family in Scotland
21.00 **UR | NEW: An Dara Teud: Na Trads** – Highlights of the Trad Awards 2016 (rpt)
22.00 **Taigh Thorcuill** – Parties (rpt)
22.45 **Ceòl bho Perthshire Amber** (rpt)
22.55 **Scotstar: Teasairginn Èiginn** – the Scotstar Transfer Service

at work – Episode 2 (rpt)
DIARDAIN 29 DÙBHLACHD
THURSDAY 29 DECEMBER
17.00 **Prògraman na Cloinne** – Children's Programming
18.00 **De a-nis?** (rpt)
19.00 **An Là** – News
19.05 **Ceòl bho Perthshire Amber** (rpt)
19.25 **An Lot** – Episode 3 – chickens and cattle arrive (rpt)
19.55 **Leugh Mi** – guest discuss their favourite books (rpt)
20.30 **Ceòlmhor@Piping Live** – music (rpt)
21.00 **UR | NEW: Scotstar: Teasairginn Èiginn** – Scotstar transfer service – Episode 3
22.00 **An Dara Teud: Na Trads** – Highlights of the Trad Awards 2016 (rpt)
23.00 **Ball-coise/Football: Aberdeen v Hamilton Accies**
23.55 **Ball-coise/Football: Partick Thistle v Dundee**

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NFUS urges action over CAP payments

NFU Scotland has called on the Scottish Government to ensure that 2017 sees a step change in delivery of CAP support.

For almost every farmer and crofter, 2016 will be remembered as a year when the Scottish Government's flawed IT system failed to deliver CAP payments.

Lobbying from the NFUS, including a demonstration outside the Scottish Parliament in March, secured loan schemes to the value of £500 million that plugged the gap in the rural economy. And November saw the Scottish Government agree to an NFUS request to repeat the loan scheme arrangement,



Allan Bowie.

delivering more than £265 million into farm and croft accounts.

However, frustration and anger with the system remains

high. Further recent IT failures saw overpayment to some loan scheme applicants, and money requiring to be clawed back, while some loan scheme offers were incorrectly issued as they had failed to take an applicant's hill ground into consideration.

NFUS is adamant that 2017 must see the Scottish Government draw a line under the long-running payment debacle.

NFUS president Allan Bowie said: 'The level of frustration and lack of trust in the Scottish Government's ability to properly deliver payments across all schemes in a timely manner remains unprecedented.

'We want to see 2017 bring a

step change in the Scottish Government's delivery and a return back to a more normal situation.

'On the positive side, there was a marked improvement in the scheme application process. We need that improvement to continue when 2017 online applications go live next spring.

'But where the Scottish Government must improve is in setting a clear timeline for all 2017 payments so that farmers can manage their cash flows. And when payments are made in 2017, we must see those followed by information to claimants, clearly stating what they have been paid and how it has been calculated.'

Around the markets



The Suffolk champion and reserve, below.

DINGWALL, Dingwall & Highland Marts Ltd (December 14) sold 98 MV accredited pedigree females at its annual show and sale.

The judge, Mr S Sutherland, Sibmister, Thurso, awarded the Texel champion to an Aman Vyrnwy-sired gimmer, carrying a single to Glenside Wild Boy, from Mr R H Wilson, Milnbank, North Dorliathies, Turriff, realising 2,100gns. Reserve in the Texel section went to a Stainton Vigilante daughter carrying a single to Knap You're The Man, consigned from Mr K Jarvie, Duncryne, Cherryfield, Muthill, realising 3,700gns.

Beltex champion was awarded to an Ayrilland Sovereign-sired gimmer carrying twins to Clary Bandit, consigned from Mr D Douglas, Beechcross, Braes of Coulmore, North Kessock, realising 350gns. The reserve Beltex award went to Messrs J Scott & Partners, Fearn Farm, Tain, with a Kingdore Rebel-sired gimmer carrying twins to Loandhu Wallas, realising 300gns.

In the Suffolk section, champion went to a Balquhain Bargain-sired ewe, carrying twins to Lakeview Looks The Part, from the dispersal of Didcot flock consigned by K Hourston, Skelbister, realising 1,000gns. The reserve



award went to a Muirton One Direction-sired gimmer carrying twins to Lakeview No Limits, consigned by Messrs J C Innes & Sons, Strathbogie, Duncroft, Huntly, realising 1,000gns.

In lamb gimmers: Texel sold to 3,700 from Duncryne. Beltex sold to 400gns from Bharangyne. Suffolk sold to 1,000gns from Strathbogie.

In lamb ewes: Beltex sold to 300gns (twice) from Fearn Farm. Suffolk sold to 1,000gns from the Didcot dispersal.

Ewe lambs: Suffolk sold to 400gns from Marian, Evanton. Texel sold to 250gns (twice) from Weston, Buckie.

Other leading prices:
Texel: In-lamb gimmers – Milnbank, 2,100gns; Strathbogie, 800gns; Deveronvale, Inchbruch, 700gns.

Beltex: In-lamb gimmers – Fearn Farm, 320gns; Runachloie, Gruids, 300gns; Beechcross, 250gns.

Suffolk In-lamb gimmers – Bardnaclaven, 620gns; Strathbogie & Binhill, Banff, 400gns.

Suffolk In-lamb ewes – Didcot, 900gns; Binhill, 700gns; Bardnaclaven, 650gns.

Beltex In lamb ewes – Fearn Farm, 200gns.

Suffolk ewe lambs – Binhill, 150gns.

Union expands crofting activities

NFU Scotland has said its engagement with the crofting sector continued to expand during 2016, with a strong direction for 2017 thanks to a growing membership.

As well as launching a new branch in the Western Isles, the union also met senior politicians on a number of occasions to put forward the key priorities for the sector.

In autumn, NFUS surveyed its crofter members to find out

their priorities going into 2017.

Alongside this, NFUS submitted both verbal and written evidence to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee (RECC) on the need for crofting law reform. The Scottish Government has recently formed a Crofting Bill team which NFUS will work with.

NFUS met Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity, to highlight its involvement in

crofting, and Kate Forbes MSP, vice-convenor of the cross-party group on crofting, Edward Mountain MSP, convenor of the RECC, will attend the next meeting of the Crofting Highlands and Islands Committee in February.

Following the issues raised earlier in the year on the management of common grazings and the role of grazings committees, NFUS called for the Crofting Commission to

update its grazings regulations template and issue guidance for grazings committees.

NFU Scotland is involved in two groups promoting the creation of woodland crofts and the establishment of crofter forestry schemes. It has been lobbying Scottish Government to allow woodland crofts to be eligible for Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme (CAGS) support, which they are currently excluded from.

Legislation aims to smooth commission elections

The Scottish Parliament has approved legislation that will help ensure next year's Crofting Commission elections run smoothly.

Covering the election of commissioners – the regulatory body for crofting – the approved legislation covers who should be able to stand for election, absent and proxy votes, the maximum amount and process for election expenses, and the process of appointing a new commissioner, should a vacancy

arise before 2022. Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity Fergus Ewing said: 'Electing commissioners has helped give crofters a stronger say in how they are regulated.

'Elected members can bring valuable local knowledge and experience, and are needed to help safeguard a strong and vibrant future for crofting.

'We want to see the commission focus on building on successful developments in crofting, refocusing attention on be-

ing an effective regulator and delivering an excellent service to crofters.

'To do this, we need people who care about the long-term future of crofting to stand for election, or re-election, next March.

'It is vital that all crofters make their voices heard by voting in next year's election to ensure that the Crofting Commission represents and reflects the interests and diversity of our crofting communities.'

COLIN KENNEDY,
Convenor of the Crofting Commission, is wishing crofters everywhere a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.
Colin would like to take this opportunity to thank all the crofters for their support over the year. He is available throughout the festive period please contact
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West Coast PROPERTY GUIDE

✔ LETTINGS ✔ COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ✔ SALE ✔ PROPERTY REVIEWS ✔ PROPERTY NEWS ✔ LOCAL ESTATE AGENTS

CIH Scotland comments on draft Scottish budget



The Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland has commented on the draft Scottish budget for 2017-18, presented on December 15 to the Scottish Parliament by Scottish Finance Secretary Derek Mackay.

CIH Scotland executive director Annie Mauger said: 'We understand the ongoing budgetary challenges the Scottish Government currently faces. In that context, we welcome its commitment to continue to prioritise funding for key housing priorities such as affordable housing supply, energy efficiency, delivery of enabling infrastructure and measures to offset the worst impacts of UK welfare reform. The commitment to maintain funding for local authority budgets next year will also be welcomed by the housing profession as helping to safeguard the delivery of essential front-line housing services.'

'Today's reconfirmation of £3 billion of funding to support the delivery of 50,000 new affordable homes over the lifetime of this parliament is welcome. As we work towards

meeting that challenging target, we are keen to ensure in particular that the quality of new homes being built is also maintained. £140 million in funding for energy efficiency next year is also welcome, albeit with home energy efficiency now officially identified as a national infrastructure priority. We would like to see funding commitments go still further with the aim of achieving the step change needed to tackle fuel poverty.'

'We have consistently raised concerns about the impact of UK welfare reform on the housing sector. Most recently, we highlighted the negative impact of the new reduced benefit cap on around 6,700 families across Scotland. In that context, we welcome the Scottish Government's ongoing commitment to offset the worst effects of welfare reform and will continue to work with the government on the design of a new social security system for Scotland that treats people fairly and with respect.'

CIH Scotland will be hosting a special budget briefing in Glasgow on January 31, 2017, looking at implications for the housing sector.



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Top five winter property issues

Landlords can often find that winter is the busiest period of the year, largely because tenants may experience the most problems. Many of the problems that will arise at this time of the year will be quick fixes, or even things you can deal with in advance, but as a landlord, it's important to know what's likely to go wrong. Here, we take a look at the five most common problems that tenants might face in the colder weather.

Frozen pipes
The biggest issue with frozen pipes is that they have the potential to lead to much larger problems when they thaw, exposing cracks caused by the ice and leaving homes flooded. The best course of action is to advise tenants how having the heating on regularly can help to avoid this issue in advance.

Draughts
Draughts are particularly problematic in the winter months thanks to the wind chill factor, and the fact that tenants will see their heating bills creep up, so it can be a good idea in advance to put insulating strips around the windows and doors before the cold weather really kicks in.

Boiler breakdowns
Boilers never seem to break down throughout the year, but when winter comes and people need them most, they always seem to

decide that it's time for a little TLC and a repair. This can be infuriating and frustrating for tenants, but as a landlord, you can help by having someone qualified on call to help them get their heating back in working order as soon as possible.

Roof problems
Another problem that is exacerbated by winter weather is loose roof tiles. When leaks occur, it's absolutely vital to get them patched as soon as possible.

Trees
It's always a good idea around winter to just trim trees back a little and make sure they are in good condition for withstanding some of the worst weather.

Properties for sale LET PROPERTIES NEEDED - LANDLORDS GET IN TOUCH WITH OUR EXPERT TEAM TODAY - NOW FULLY MANAGING OVER 150 RENTALS IN ARGYLL & LOCHABER

<p>Kintore, Benderloch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spacious Detached House 4 bedrooms / 3 bathrooms Open plan lounge, kitchen and dining area Large garden Integrated double garage and private parking EPC Rating - C70 <p>NEW TO MARKET OIRO £440,000</p> <p>Kintore: A modern 4 bedroom detached house in a popular residential area close to the village of Benderloch. Built in 2006, Kintore is a bright and spacious house enjoying a rural position and views across fields and hills to the North.</p>	<p>Comraich, Tobermory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spacious Detached House 3 Bedrooms All En-Suite High Standard Fixtures & Fittings Private Well Maintained Garden Potential B&B/Holiday Rental EPC Rating - C75 <p>OIRO £300,000</p> <p>A spacious 3 bedroom detached house located above the town of Tobermory on the Isle of Mull. Built 8 years ago by the current owners the accommodation comprises a spacious hallway, large lounge, dining room, kitchen/diner, utility and master bedroom with en-suite bathroom.</p>	<p>33 Combie Street, Oban</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top Floor Flat 1 Bedroom / Shower Room Central location Excellent rental investment EPC Rating - F33 <p>REDUCED PRICE OIRO £59,000</p> <p>33 Combie Street- A compact 1 bedroom top floor flat close to Oban town centre. This flat comprises a lounge, small bedroom, kitchen and shower room. The property is decorated in neutral colours and benefits from double glazing throughout.</p>	<p>Combie Lane, Oban</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Floor Flat 1 Bedroom / 1 Bathroom Town centre location In need of modernisation Attention Investors! EPC Rating - E40 <p>OIRO £80,000</p> <p>7C Combie Lane is a well-appointed one bedroom flat situated in a quiet yet central location in Oban town centre. The flat comprises a central hallway leading to the bedroom, lounge and bathroom. The hallway boasts a large storage cupboard housing the water tanks and hot water cylinder.</p>
<p>Ardconnell Villa, Oban</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spacious Ground Floor Apartment 3 bedrooms & 1 study 1 bathroom & 1 additional WC Popular Residential Area Communal Garden & Private Area EPC Rating - D64 <p>UNDER OFFER OIRO £185,000</p> <p>A deceptively spacious three bedroom ground floor apartment, one of four apartments within a traditional stone villa, located in a popular residential area close to Oban's many amenities and attractions.</p>	<p>Scarinish, Tobermory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern detached house 3 Bedrooms / 2 Bathrooms Large garden Open plan lounge/kitchen Communal room with conversion potential EPC Rating - C78 <p>UNDER OFFER OIEO £250,000</p> <p>Scarinish is a modern architect designed 3 bedroom detached house in Tobermory on the Isle of Mull. Scarinish provides spacious family sized accommodation with conversion possibilities to increase the number of bedrooms, create a self contained flat or to have a large living area.</p>	<p>Tarbat House, Bunessan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detached House 4 Bedrooms / 2 Bathrooms Far reaching views Established Holiday Let Low maintenance garden EPC Rating - D68 <p>OIRO £210,000</p> <p>Tarbat House - a spacious 1 storey 4 bedroom detached house with far reaching views near the village of Bunessan. Built 12 years ago by the current owners, the property is currently run as a holiday let averaging 25 weeks per year.</p>	<p>Atlantic House, Isle Of Treen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended 1 storey croft house with granny flat. 5 Bedrooms / 2 Bathrooms Currently sub divided into 2 self-contained holiday Panoramic sea views EPC Rating - C73 <p>OIEO £375,000</p> <p>Atlantic House an extended 1 storey croft house situated on the stunning Isle of Treen. The property is currently divided into two self-contained holiday lets, one 3 bedroom and one 2 bedroom and 1 bedroom detached granny flat.</p>

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PLANNING

These applications listed below together with other related documents may be inspected between 09:00-12:30 - 13:30-16:00 hrs Monday to Friday at Municipal Buildings Albany Street Oban PA34 4AW, 1A Manse Brae Lochgilphead PA31 8RD, at the alternative locations detailed below during their normal opening times or by logging on to the Council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013 REGULATION 20(1) ADVERT STATEMENT

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

Ref. No.	Proposal	Site Address	Location of Plans
16/03297/PP	Change of use from dwelling to guest house	Tigh Nan Unuig Upper Kichattan Isle of Colonsay Argyll and Bute PA61 7YR	Sub Post Office Isle of Colonsay
16/03260/PPP	Demolition of former creamery and erection of flatted development.	Former Creamery Site Mossfield Drive Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4EN	Oban Area Office
16/03261/LIB	Internal and external alterations including: changes to internal layout, erection of rear extension, conservatory and external covered walkway to form smoking shelter.	Tigh An Truith Hotel Clachan Seil Isle of Seil Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4QZ	Sub Post Office Balvicar
16/03181/PP	Installation of replacement roof covering from cement tiles to slates	34 Bay View Port Wemyss Isle of Islay Argyll and Bute PA47 7SU	Sub Post Office Portnahaven
16/03262/PP	Alterations including: erection of rear extension, conservatory and external covered walkway to form smoking shelter.	Tigh An Truith Hotel Clachan Seil Isle of Seil Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4QZ	Sub Post Office Balvicar
16/03240/PP	Change of use of land for the siting of 2 accommodation pods, installation of sewage treatment plant and associated works	Land South West of Starchmill Farm Glen Road Bridgend Isle of Islay Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Bridgend
16/02512/PP	Erection of 6 dwellinghouses	Land East of Baliscate Industrial Estate Tobermory Isle of Mull Argyll and Bute	Tobermory Area Office
16/03275/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse with detached garage, installation of septic tank and air source heat pump.	Land South of Bremlen House Arduin Isle of Mull	Sub Post Office Bunnass Isle of Mull
16/02606/PP	Erection of telecommunications equipment compound with 15 metres high lattice tower and associated works	Land North West of Garroron Farm Kilmelford Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Kilmelford
16/03236/PP	Erection of 6.4 metre pole (overall structure height 7.6 metres) and associated works	Land North West of Oronsay Farm Isle of Colonsay Argyll and Bute PA61 7YS	Sub Post Office Isle of Colonsay
16/02449/PP	Erection of polytunnel	Land South of 34 Rhuvaal Road Oban Argyll and Bute	Oban Area Office
16/03290/PP	Renewal of planning permission reference 13/02529/PP - Improvement of existing access	Junction at Airds Bay Road and The A85(T) Airds Bay Taynuilt Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Taynuilt
16/03277/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse	Plot 5 Land East of Mill Farm House Barcaldine Oban Argyll and Bute PA37 1SE	Sub Post Office Connel
16/03239/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse with adjoining residential annexe	Land West of The Museum Port Charlotte Isle of Islay Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Port Charlotte

Written comments can be made to the above address or submitted online <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/find-and-comment-planning-applications> within 21 days of this advert. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence. Any letter of representation the Council receives is considered a public document and will be published on our website. Anonymous or marked confidential correspondence will not be considered. A weekly list of all applications can be viewed at all Area Offices, Council Libraries and on the Council's website.

Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES **Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES** **Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES**

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REFUSE ARRANGEMENTS

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR 2016/2017

Oban - Moleigh Recycling and Civic Amenity Site
Moleigh Recycling and Civic Amenity Site will be closed on 25th/26th December 2016 and 1st/2nd January 2017.
Tuesday 27th December 2016 open 10:00am - 2:00pm
Wednesday 28th December 2016 normal hours resume
Tuesday 3rd January 2017 open 10:00am - 2:00pm
Wednesday 4th January 2017 normal hours resume

Mull - Glegorm Recycling and Civic Amenity Site
Glegorm Recycling and Civic Amenity Site will be closed on 25th/26th December 2016 and 1st/2nd January 2017.
Tuesday 27th December 2016 normal hours resume
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Tiree - Gott Bay Recycling and Civic Amenity Site
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Wednesday 28th December 2016 normal hours resume
Wednesday 4th January 2017 normal hours resume

Information is also available on the Council website and from your local office.

www.highland.gov.uk



**The Highland
Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

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 online at <http://wam.highland.gov.uk> or electronically at your nearest Service Point. You can find your nearest Service Point via the following link https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory/16/a_to_z

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
16/05007/FUL	Land 1160M NW of Strongarbh,	Aberchalder, Invergarry	Placement of six glamping cabin with associated car parking and bin storage area, siting of septic tank and soakaway, natural landscaping around the cabins with planting of native screens of hawthorn & cherry
16/05243/FUL	Land 160M North of Glen Rowan Farm,	Morar	Erection of new 1/5 storey house (Renewal 13/02938/FUL).
16/05283/FUL	Land 50M NW of Mehalah,	Tirindrish, Spean Bridge	Erect 10(no) dwellings (including 2(no) affordable houses) and farm shop/cafe
16/05315/FUL	1 Old Cottages,	Invergarry	Erection of extension and alterations
16/05378/FUL	Kismet Villa, 4 Hillside Estate,	Fort William	Formation of house site
16/05427/FUL	Inverskilavulin,	Glenloy, Banavie, Fort William	Erection of house
16/05506/MS	Ford Cottage, Badabrie,	Corpach, Fort William	Erection of one dwelling house
16/05529/FUL	Land 150M NE of Aldersyde,	Gairloch, Spean Bridge	Erection of 6no. visitor accommodation pods and services building (renewal of 13/04649/FUL)

Time period for comments is 21 days. For application 16/05315/FUL, time period ends on 19 January 2017.
ePlanning Centre, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX
Email: eplanning@highland.gov.uk

Carnach or Carnoch Common Grazings

Formal Intimation under the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993

Notice is hereby given that Williamina Isobel McFadzean has applied to the Scottish Land Court for an Order authorising resumption of approximately 0.084 acres (0.034 hectares) of the common grazings of the township of Carnach or Carnoch. The purpose of resumption is to regularise the position whereby the area described has been used for many years as part of the site of the dwellinghouse and garden ground known as Braehed Cottage, Tigh A Phuir, Glencoe, PH49 4HN, in order to allow the sale of the whole property.

On 9 December 2016 the Court appointed this intimation by newspaper advertisement and ordered the Applicants to send to the Clerk to the Grazings Committee copies of the Application, associated productions and the Court's Practice Note No. 4 (which emphasises the need for crofters to protect their own rights). The Court ordered any shareholder or other person having a legal interest who opposes the Application or who wishes to claim compensation or a share in value of the land to be resumed, to lodge Answers, including details of any such claim, with the Principal Clerk, George House, 126 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4HH within twenty-one days from the date of the final advertisement. Copies of the Application, productions and Practice Note have been sent to Simon J Nadin, Mountain Way, 13A Carnoch, Glencoe, Ballachulish, PH49 4HS and these documents may be inspected either there, at the Court's offices in Edinburgh, or at the offices of the Agents. Copies of the Practice Note may also be obtained from the Principal Clerk (Tel: 0131 271 4360). It should be noted that any further Orders of the Court, including the Final Order, will be intimated to those persons who have lodged answers to this advertisement and to the Clerk to the Common Grazings Committee. Copies of any further Orders may be obtained from the Principal Clerk upon request.

McIntyre & Company, 38 High Street, Fort William, Inverness-shire, PH33 6AT
01397 703231 Agents for Applicants

MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 RELOCATION OF VARIOUS MOORINGS, OBAN BAY, FIRTH OF LORN, OBAN

Notice is hereby given that Argyll and Bute Council, as agents for the applicants listed below, have applied to the Scottish Ministers of the Scottish Government, under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, in respect of the relocation of various existing moorings to:

Location	Oban Bay, Firth of Lorn, Oban
Applicant	
Northern Light Cruising Co.	£1229 56° 25.003' N 5° 28.669' W
NW Marine	£7990 56° 24.978' N 5° 28.740' W
NW Marine	£1440 56° 25.002' N 5° 28.806' W
Coastal Connection	£541 56° 25.043' N 5° 28.672' W
Tom Watson	£2115 56° 25.056' N 5° 28.734' W
Majestic Line	£2115 56° 25.068' N 5° 28.788' W
Hebrides Cruises	£1410 56° 25.020' N 5° 28.740' W
Argyll Sea Tours	£541 56° 25.074' N 5° 28.620' W

(WGS84)

Plans showing the position of the works may be inspected at **Oban library, 77 Albany Street, Oban, PA34 4AL**

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 to: MS.MarineLicensing@gov.scot, quoting reference:
MCMS No. 06111 Argyll and Bute Council, Agents for MCMS No. 06236 Northern Light Cruising Co
MCMS No. 06235 NW Marine
MCMS No. 06204 Coastal Connection
MCMS No. 06205 Tom Watson
MCMS No. 06207 Majestic Line
MCMS No. 06206 Hebrides Cruises
MCMS No. 06208 Argyll Sea Tours

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL NOTICE OF PROPOSED ORDER TO EXEMPT LAND FROM ACCESS RIGHTS THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL (GORTENEORN- ARDNAMURCHAN) ORDER 2017

Notice is hereby given under section 11(2) (b) of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 ("the Act") that Highland Council proposes to make The Highland Council (Gorteneorn - Ardnamurchan) Order 2017 ("the Order") under section 11(1) of the Act.

The effect of the Order will be to exempt a 2.14km² area of land (headland and forested area) at Ardnamurchan Estate, Ardnamurchan from the access rights which would otherwise be exercisable in respect of the land by virtue of Part 1 of the Act. A map of the exempted area can be viewed at the Highland Council Service Point, Lochaber House, High Street, Fort William and online at www.highland.gov.uk/access/exemptionorders

The purpose for which the Order is being proposed is to film a TV series and all purposes related thereto including privacy, safety and security of participants, personnel and equipment.

It is proposed that the Order will take effect from 0001hrs on 21 March 2017 and shall expire at 2400hrs on 21 March 2018 unless revoked earlier.

Objections or representations in respect of the proposed Order may be made to the Council for its consideration at the address given below by Friday 20 January 2017. These should be made in writing (quoting ref: L/PDPL14787) and, in the case of objections, the grounds on which they are made should be stated. As the proposed exemption is for six or more days, the Order will require confirmation by Scottish Ministers before taking effect.

Stewart D Fraser, Head of Corporate Governance
The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road
INVERNESS IV3 5NX

Muirshearlich Common Grazing.

Appointment of Grazing Committee.

District of Kilmallie.

The Muirshearlich Township and Sheep Stock Club AGM will be held at 7.30pm on 11th January 2017 at Corie Nan Runan, 13 Muirshearlich, Banavie, Fort William PH33 7PB at which a new Grazing Committee will be elected.

First Registration of a Croft

Mr David Hugh Bennett has registered his croft Auchnacraig, Pennygown, Auchnacraig, Pennygown & Torosay 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 21st August 2017. Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.rps.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C3317

Proposed Assignment of a Croft

Donald Campbell is applying to the Crofting Commission for consent to assign the tenancy of the croft at 72 +73 Camaghael, Kilmallie to Ewen Campbell of Steall, 74 camaghael, Fort William

If you consider you have a relevant interest in this application, you may submit comments in writing to the Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW or email info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk within 28 days from the date of publication of the advert.

Please note that any comments you provide are part of an open process and will be made available to interested parties. Your comments would also be released under a Freedom of Information enquiry.

CROFTING COMMISSION COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD DECROFTING APPLICATION

Mr P B Campbell
80 & 81 Lochyside,
Kilmallie
0.150 ha - Proposed site for a new dwelling house
74978

Written comments from any member of the crofting community within the locality of the croft may be sent to the Crofting Commission by 20 January 2017 - Crofting Commission, Leachkin Road, Inverness, IV3 8NW, info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk

Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES
Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES
Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES
Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES

MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING WATER MAIN PIPE, LOCH EATHARNA, ISLE OF COLL

Notice is hereby given that Scottish Water has applied to the Scottish Ministers of the Scottish Government, under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, in respect of the replacement of an existing water main pipe at:

Location	Latitude Co-ordinates	Longitude Co-ordinates
Tributary river to Loch Eatharna, Isle of Coll	56° 38.053' N 56° 38.087' N	006° 31.786' W 006° 31.751' W

(WGS84)

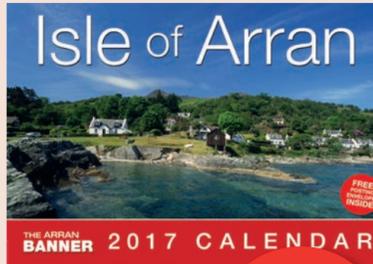
Plans showing the position of the works may be inspected at An Cridhe & Coll Bunkhouse, Arinagour, Isle of Coll, Argyll, PA78 6SY.

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 to: MS.MarineLicensing@gov.scot, quoting reference:
**MCMS No. 06213
Scottish Water**

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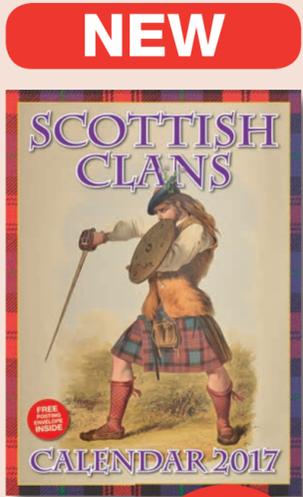
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PERSONALS

Linda Hunter

Missing you as always Especially at Christmas

Monica, Brian, Emma, Steven, Danielle and Sarah
 xxxxxx



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DEATHS

MACLEOD - Donald Angus. Peacefully, at St. Vincent's Hospice, Howwood, on Monday December 19, 2016. Angus (Gus), beloved husband of Sheena, much loved dad of Alison and Linsey. Proud "Papa Gus" of Callum, Cara, Archie and Ronnie and beloved brother and uncle of all the family. Funeral service, to which all family and friends are respectfully invited, at Woodside Crematorium, Paisley, on Thursday December 29 at 12.00pm. Family flowers only please. A collection will be taken on retreat for St Vincent's Hospice.

RUSSELL - Peacefully after a short illness, at Lorn and Islands Hospital, Oban on December 17, 2016, aged 64 years, Dennis James Russell, beloved husband of June, much loved dad of Sandie, Nicola & Gina and a loving granddad.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BEATTIE - The family of the late Janice would like to thank all the Lochgilphead medical staff, both nursing assistants and the district nurses, who made Janice's end of life that bit more comfortable. Special thanks to Dr Claire Harris and Dr Jeremy Phillips who went above and beyond with their care for Janice. Thanks also to family and friends throughout Argyll for the kindness, thoughtfulness, love and support during Janice's two year illness. Thank you to the Rev David Caruthers for his comforting service, everyone's attendance at Janice's funeral was much appreciated.

MACFADYEN - The family of the late Angus MacFadyen would like to thank everyone for their kind expressions of sympathy received on the death of a much loved dad and devoted granddad and great granddad. Thank you to Rev Ken Ross for a moving service and to those who travelled from near and far to support us. To Ian of D & A Munn for efficient services and help. To Falls of Lora for a great buffet. A sum of £1,501.64 was raised.

MEMORIALS

BIRRELL - Al, December 26, 2010. You live on in our thoughts, in our dreams, in our actions, in our life. Missed so much every day Dad. - Love Lisa, DI & your precious granddaughters Annie & Flora xx

CAMERON - Treasured memories of my dear sister and our loving Aunt Morag, who passed away December 25, 2013. Time passes Memories stay Quietly remembered every day. - Inserted by Chrissie and family, Caalmojo, Kilmory.

CAMPBELL - Treasured memories of Iain Matheson a loving husband, dad and gen, also wee Iain a precious son, brother and uncle. Along the road to yesterday That leads us straight to you Are memories of happy days Together we once knew Always in our hearts. - Seonaid, Annmarie, Marion and families.

CAMPBELL - In loving memory of my dear wife Liz, who passed away so suddenly on December 26, 1998 aged 43. Loved and remembered always. - Cammie, Fort William.

CAMPBELL - Remembering Liz who died so suddenly on December 26, 1998. Gone but never forgotten. - Love Simmo. x

CARMICHAEL - Very special memories of Kate who died December 20, 2013. Always in our thoughts. Forever in our hearts. - All the family x

CLARK - Kirsty. This Christmas we quietly remember a wonderful mum and granny who passed away on December 22, 2012. Also Graham, a beloved dad and grandpa who passed away on August 7, 2006. So greatly missed by us all. Such happy memories. - Alison, Rhuairdh, Katie and Coll.

CLARK - Kirsteen (MacGregor), passed away December 22, 2012, a much loved sister. - Alice and John.

CLARK - In loving memory of a dear husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather Alexander (Tom) who passed away December 26, 2012. Sadly missed by all the family.

DOUGAL - In loving memory of Morag, who died December 18, 2015. A dear mum and sister. Our hearts still ache with sadness Secret tears still flow We miss you so much no-one will ever know. - William, Cameron, Fiona and Donna

FERGUSON - Treasured memories of my beloved husband Charles, who passed away December 27, 2015. A heart of gold stopped beating Two willing hands lie still The one who did so much for me Is resting at God's will. Loved and remembered always -Dadie

FERGUSON - Treasured memories of our wonderful father, father-in-law and papa, Charles John Ferguson, taken suddenly on December 27, 2015. Our hero. Love always, Charles, Fiona, Lorna, Andrew, Cameron, Ewan, Holly and Anna xxx

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

JAMIESON - In memory of my friend Helen, who passed away on December 28, 1999. Always remembered. - Inserted by Marleen.

MACALLISTER - David Mercer. In loving memory of David who died December 21, 2004. Fondly remembered. - Rosemary, Fiona, Alex and David.

MACCOLL - Archie (Kilmoinvaig). Daonan Na Mo Chridhe - June Anne and David xx Miss and love you grandpa - Archie, Jessie, Kate and Freddie xxxx

MACGILLIVRAY - Christina. In memory of my granny who passed away on Christmas Eve 2009. Thought of daily with fond memories and happy times Missed very, very much. Look after mum. - Paul.

MACKINNON - Treasured memories of a dear mum, granny and great granny Flora, who passed away on December 21, 2015. Also remembering loved ones gone before. Kind was your nature, true were your ways We will treasure those memories for the rest of our days. - Angus, Lachie, Margaret, Christine, Fiona, Linda, Alastair and all their families.

MACKINNON - Treasured memories of a dear auntie Flora, who passed away on December 21, 2015. Also remembering loved ones gone before. Kind was your nature, true were your ways We will treasure those memories for the rest of our days. - Inserted by Murdoch, Eilidh and family and Ann and Allan, Tiree.

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. Goodbye is not forever Goodbye is not the end It simply means I'll miss you Until we meet again. - Jean x Tiree

Every day in some small way Memories of you come our way. - May, Irene and families, Oban and Tiree

MACQUARIE - In loving memory of my dear wife Jessie who passed away on December 29, 2013. Remembered every day - Adie

MAITLAND - In loving memory of James, a dearly loved husband, dad and Shenair who passed away December 23, 2012. James you're in my thoughts every day and in my heart forever Death has no power over love - Teeny.

MAITLAND - In loving memory of our dear dad James, who passed away December 23, 2012. Your life was a blessing Your memory a treasure You're loved beyond words And missed beyond measure. - Marie, Ross and families.

MAITLAND - In loving memory of a dear brother-in-law and uncle James, who died December 23, 2012. Treasured memories of days gone by. - Love Lorraine, Paul, Jill and Kyle.

MAITLAND - In loving memory of James a dear brother and brother-in-law, who passed away December 23, 2012. Loved and remembered always - Catherine and Alasdair

McKIERNAN - In loving memory of a special Dad, Jim, who died December 21, 2007. Always in our hearts. - With love Catherine, Diane and Alan.

McTAGGART - Remembering at Christmas and always our dear mum, dad, nana and papa, Mary and John. Loved and missed dearly. - Ian, Christina and family

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WEDDING



TINDALL - WALLACE
Married at Appin Parish Church on October 7, 2016, Iain, son of Frank and Helen, Oban and Fiona, daughter of Ian and Lorna, Appin. Reception took place at Brander Lodge, Taynuilt.

Oban Congregational Church
CHRISTMAS SERVICES

CHRISTMAS EVE 11.30pm
Watchnight Candlelight Service
Followed by tea/coffee, non-alcoholic mulled wine and mince pies

CHRISTMAS MORNING 11.00am
Short Thanksgiving Service
(bring one of your gifts for us to admire)

Find us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/obantimes

Thought for the week

Matthew 28: 20 - "surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Christmas is coming - we remember and see the wonderful nativity scenes, the shepherds and the angels praising God and the Christ child in the stable, the Magi who travelled far, following the star to see the Christ child.

We always see this through our childlike eyes, possibly after watching the nativity on TV or seeing it re-enacted in the schools, and we remember our own memories when we were young.

We should always remember that Bethlehem was just the start of a long journey to a cross and a risen Saviour, where Jesus died to save us from our sins.

Such was God's love for us that first Christmas, a love which lasts not only for Christmas but every day of the year, no matter what is going on in our lives.

The wonderful truth is that Jesus sits at God's right hand and hears all of our prayers brought in his name.

Look at those wonderful words of Jesus in Matthew's gospel - "surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

May you have many blessings this Christmas and in the year to come, remembering that in all the events of our lives His promise is there - "Surely I am with you always."

God bless you and all your family.

Festive greetings



Right Reverend Dr Russell Barr, Church of Scotland Moderator

THE BIBLE'S Christmas story is about people at risk and on the edge of things.

It is a story about men and women who were far from being the movers and shakers of their day, and a stressful and unwelcome journey taken under duress by a heavily pregnant woman to a government registration point.

Tragically, it ends with children being massacred and a family forced to flee as refugees ... and it all sounds painfully contemporary and familiar.

The challenge is to let the real Christmas story lead us to a deeper appreciation of life's meaning and purpose.

The real Christmas story invites us to see that even in the most awful circumstances, something is coming to birth which will change everything.

In a Bethlehem stable, God demonstrates that grace and mercy will not be defeated.

The way God does it is as simple as it is profound - in the painful cries of a mother labouring and the precious cry of a child newly born.

And if you hear in this story a message of hope for the world, and a message of love for yourself, it will come as a blessing and a gift.



Lochaber Women's Aid

AS A feminist organisation, Lochaber Women's Aid works to end domestic abuse and violence against women, children and young people by tackling the root cause, which is gender inequality. We believe in the equality of the sexes.

During 2016, we have so far supported 98 women and 33 children and young people. These figures clearly demonstrate that sadly there is still a need for a specialist service to support those affected.

In 2017, we wish that everyone acknowledges that an issue exists.

Throughout many societies, women are still the more vulnerable, legally disadvantaged and less-empowered gender.

Our wish for the year to come is for a world where women, children and young people can live free from fear and free from domestic abuse.

We wish for a 2017 where sons and daughters are treated equally, with equal importance and respect granted to the activities of both males and females.

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us throughout the year with fundraising and donations, and we wish everyone a happy and safe festive season.

The board of Lochaber Women's Aid.



Ella Gill, Moderator for Lochaber Presbytery

'PEACE on earth and good will to all' has to be the message for this Christmas. These words as wishes or prayers can resonate with us all, whether we are affiliated with a particular faith or not, especially this year.

Christmas time is quite mixture. There is the celebration of the winter solstice as well as celebration of the birth of Christ. A combination of religious carols, Santa songs and traditional winter festival songs abound. No wonder there can be some confusion when these are all lumped together in a busy week.

In keeping with tradition, all the decorations have to be down on January 6, as it is twelfth night - all stored away until next year. This is where the problem and confusion can lie.

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the message he brought us - to love God and to love our neighbours as ourselves. But if we are not careful, in the tidying up after Christmas, Jesus and his message can be stored away with the Christmas decorations.

Remember, Jesus and his message is for life, not just for Christmas. I wish you all a good Christmas and every blessing in 2017.

Apology

IN THE obituary published last week for Colin Galbraith, it was said he was born in 1942 when in fact he was born in 1943.

The report also said he is survived by his son

Robert and grand-daughter Sinead. He is in fact survived by his sons Paul and Dean, and other family members.

The cremation took place on Thursday December 1

and not the Wednesday November 30. He was born at home in Langamull, Isle of Mull, to Neil and Christina.

We apologise for the errors and for any distress caused.

First woman moderator to receive one of Scotland's top honours

DR ALISON ELLIOT OBE, already one of the most decorated people in Scotland, has become only the third person to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award in the Scottish Public Service Awards.

The church elder and academic was the first woman to serve as moderator and she chaired the Scottish Government's Land Reform Group.

The prestigious award was presented to Dr Elliot in a ceremony on Monday in the Scottish Parliament.

Dr Elliot said following

the presentation: 'I think the award itself will be one of the things I am most proud of because it is for public service.'

'That is really the heart of what I've been trying to do for the past 30 years and I feel hugely privileged to have found myself in positions where I can exercise that.'

'And I've been very lucky with the family and with my husband, who has been fantastic all these years.'

The award is also, she says cheerfully, 'a bit premature, I hope'.

At 68, Dr Elliot has al-

ready achieved so much. She already has five honorary degrees and an OBE. As associate director at the Centre for Theology and Public Issues in Edinburgh University's School of Divinity, Dr Elliot has been at the forefront of Scottish civic life.

The centre has been credited with bringing together people from higher education, government and the third sector to shape public policy through a theological lens.

Read the full report at www.obantimes.co.uk.

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Festive frustration as Saints bow out of the West of Scotland Cup

'I just wonder what would have happened if a we had a few more players available'

East Kilbride	1
Oban Saints	0
West of Scotland Cup - 4th round	

OBAN SAINTS' final match of 2016 was a tough away trip to the familiar surroundings of the excellent K-Park, East Kilbride, but, with no fewer than 12 players making themselves unavailable for selection for various reasons, but mostly due to Christmas nights out, it meant the Oban side had to travel with a much depleted squad.

With no recognised central defenders available, manager Alex Craik had to play at the back alongside Matty Kelly, David McArthur and Scott Maitland. The midfield consisted of Paul Kerr, Brian MacKay and Myles McAuley, thrown in at the deep end after being out for weeks with an ankle injury. Up front was Ross Maitland, Martin Bonar and Fraser MacFarlane, with young Jay Cooper and coach Peter MacCallum on the bench.

Saints opponents in Saturday's West of Scotland Amateur Cup fourth round tie were Central Scottish League high fliers, and old friends, East Kilbride.

With only two defeats in 18 competitive fixtures, East Kilbride were in a rich vein of form which sees them currently sitting in fourth place in the Central Scottish Premier Division as the league's only unbeaten team besides runaway leaders Colville Park.

East Kilbride were knocked out of the Scottish Cup two weeks ago by another of Saints great friends, Greenock High School Former Pupils. After

a 1-1 draw in Greenock, East Kilbride failed to capitalise on home advantage, tumbling out of the cup after a goal in each half from the men from the tail o' the bank so the home side were desperate for a victory over Saints in this West of Scotland Cup tie.

Saints and East Kilbride have a friendship going back many years, with the South Lanarkshire boys regular pre-season visitors to Oban.

Deflection

The home side came flying out of the blocks and had Saints pinned back in their own half and they took the lead in only four minutes when a poor clearance from Saints keeper Thomas McCulloch landed at the feet of Scott McKean, who slipped a clever ball inside to Kevin McLean to fire a shot goalwards. Unfortunately for the big Saints keeper, the ball struck Dougie Ryan and took a wicked deflection with the ball ending up in the back of the net - just the start the Oban side were dreading.

The Saints defence appealed that Ryan was offside when the ball hit him but the goal was allowed to stand.

East Kilbride were dominant in the early exchanges and things weren't looking too good for the overworked Saints defence but after 15 minutes the Oban side began to get to grips and played themselves back into the game with some excellent football.

Both full backs, Matty Kelly and Scott Maitland, who were superb all afternoon, began to push forward and support the attack.

Football

After the early onslaught, Saints were pressing forward and David McArthur, who was excellent at the heart of the Saints defence, connected with a Ross Maitland corner but his header went over the bar.

Saints were now right back in the game and were pushing forward at every opportunity although it was difficult at times for striker Martin Bonar, ploughing a lone furrow up front, to hold the ball up long enough to allow his team-mates to get forward.

Brian MacKay was causing the home defence problems with his strong running from midfield and, in the 31st minute, created a great chance when he broke clear and squared to Ross Maitland but Ross's shot hit the side-netting.

The makeshift Saints side were battling for every ball and not giving the East Kilbride players an opportunity to settle.

The home side had a good chance as half-time approached when Scott Gillespie fired in a great cross from the right but Dougie Ryan fired over the bar from six yards - a let off for Saints.

Half-time arrived with no more scoring but credit should go to the spirited showing from the visitors.

Manager Alex Craik asked for more of the same in the second half and this is exactly what he got from his hard-working squad.

Paul Kerr, Brian MacKay and Myles McAuley were starting to dictate play in midfield



Scott Maitland had an outstanding game at left back for Saints. Photo: Derek Black

threading passes though the middle or out to the wide men.

Both teams were going at it hammer and tongs with no quarter asked or given, and Saints probably just edging the territorial advantage in the sec-

ond half. The Oban side were starting the majority of their moves from the back, passing the ball about confidently, not playing the long ball out of defence unless absolutely necessary.

David McArthur made a telling run forward to get his head on the end of a cross but was ruled offside by referee Ross Holms who controlled a hard-fought cup tie well. Saints introduced young Jay

Cooper to the attack, replacing Fraser MacFarlane, and the youngster showed up well in his first appearance in a game of this magnitude.

With 10 minutes remaining, Saints were awarded a free kick at the edge of the home side's penalty area. Ross Maitland fired in a tremendous shot but East Kilbride keeper Scott Henderson made a great save diving to his left to deny Saints an equaliser.

At the other end, Thomas McCulloch made a fine save, touching a David McKean pile-driver over the bar.

With time running out, young Jay Cooper made a great run down the left before firing a tantalising ball across the East Kilbride six-yard box but unfortunately just out of the reach of the onrushing Martin Bonar and Ross Maitland.

This was the last action of an enthralling cup tie, with East Kilbride just edging home with the only goal of the game.

Manager Alex Craik was gutted at the result but very proud of his team's performance. He said: 'The boys who travelled today were tremendous. Everyone of them worked their socks off for the club against one of the top teams in the country.'

'It's amazing to think we had 12 players unavailable but still managed to field a team.'

'I just wonder what would have happened if we had a few more players available.'

Saints next fixture will take place on Saturday January 7 when they take on Westdyce from Aberdeen in the fifth round of the Scottish Amateur Cup. The match will take place at Glencruitten with a 2pm kick-off. Referee in charge was last season's Scottish Cup final official Kevin Nolan.

The players will now take a festive break before preparing for the Scottish Cup tie against Westdyce.

The club would like to wish their sponsors and supporters a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Lochnell Football Club hosted a successful coach education course which attracted a large turn out of coaches from clubs throughout the Oban and Lorn area. The trainees were put through their paces at the North Connel pitch by Argyll and Bute Football Development Officer Martin Rae and after a rigorous but enjoyable day were awarded with their Scottish Football Association Level 1 Early Touches Coaching certificate.

Fort William table tennis season under way



Marie Cocouac in action at Fort William and District Table Tennis Club.

THE FORT William and Districts table tennis season is now under way with a number of league matches in division one being played.

Last year's winner, Steven Crook, is already looking very strong after recording 3-0 wins over nearest rivals Monte Bleasdale and John Grant.

Monte and John also locked horns recently with Monte coming out on top 3-0, though he had to hold off a spirited challenge from John in the third game, which he took 12-10.

However, John had to rely on his experience to hold off newcomer Fiona Clark, who is improving week by week, in order to record a 3-1 victory.

Jim Hinchley, newly promoted as last year's division two winner, is finding life in the top flight a little difficult as

Table tennis

he awaits to record a victory. The open singles knock-out was played recently, which produced a surprise result in one of the semi-finals when Fiona Clark defeated John Grant 3-0. Fiona, however, found last year's winner Steven Crook too strong as Steve won comfortably and thus retains his title.

New members are always welcome at the club and it is not too late for newcomers to participate in the leagues. Table tennis will take a festive break and return on January 9.

In addition, friendly matches are played every week alongside league fixtures. For further information see the club's website at <http://tabletennis-fortwilliam.org.uk/>.

Plenty to celebrate at Craignish Boat Club prize-giving and social event

CRAIGNISH Boat Club had plenty to celebrate at its annual prize-giving and social.

The event saw cadets and members awarded for personal achievements and hard work on Saturday December 10.

Scottish Canoe Association representative Grant Dolier was there to present the club with the SCA Club of Year award which gives a good indication of how well the club is doing in its 25th year.

The kayaking section of the club has gone from strength to strength in recent years, in large part thanks to the efforts of club member and coach Diane Oliver.

Pleased

Kayaking instructor Eoghan Condie was pleased to accept the award on behalf of the club in Di's absence.

Cadet sailing also continues to be very successful with 42 cadets, aged six to 17, signed up this year for Monday night sessions.

Special thanks were made to Tony Tucker, and David and Carol Graham for all their work with the cadets over the past 20 years.

Thanks were also given to long-serving member Clive Brown for 25 years of volunteering for the club.

Guy Neville stood down this year as commodore after six and a half years in the role. He was pleased to be presented with a special commodore's board which will be erected at

Boating

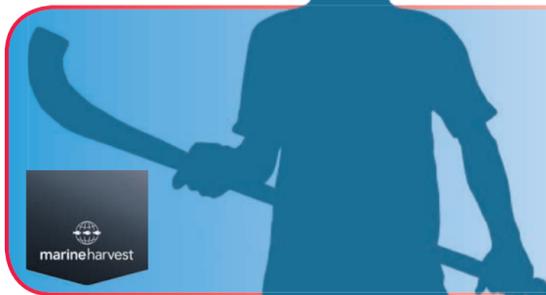
the club's new Eilean Traighte site. Guy will stay on the committee as the sailing captain.



Grant Dolier presented the SCA Club of the Year award to Eoghan Condie.



Craignish Boat Club kayakers.



SHINTY

Marine Harvest Media Award winners 2016

Best for all shinty news, results and fixtures

Artemis Macaulay Cup draw 2017

THE 2017 Artemis Macaulay Cup draw was made live on Oban FM on Saturday December 17.

Shinty supporters from across the country tuned in to hear Macaulay Association stalwarts Davie Hamilton and Gussie Campbell make the draw.

The top eight placed teams in the north and the top eight sides from the south at the end of the previous season's league campaigns took their places in the regional draw - a unique format which guarantees a north versus south final.

The teams competing for the 2017 trophy are the same as this year.

Kinlochshiel are the current holders, having beaten Inveraray 5-3 in the 2016 final at Mossfield.

The south section of the first round draw kept apart what are traditionally viewed as the top four teams - Glasgow Mid Argyll, Inveraray, Kyles Athletic and Oban Camanachd.

Oban Celtic are muscling their way into that grouping and were drawn against Inveraray at the Winterton. Both sides will play in the Marine Harvest National Division next season following Oban Celtic's promotion.

There are likely to be one or two changes at Inveraray with a couple of the older players expected to hang up their camans.

These changes, coupled with Oban Celtic's zest following a successful 2016, should ensure an interesting tie.

Oban Camanachd were hugely disappointed to fall at the first hurdle in this tournament last season when they lost 3-2 to Inveraray at Mossfield. However, even minus 2016 captain James MacMillan who has moved abroad for 12 months, they should prove too strong for Marine Harvest South Division 1 side Ballachulish with the teams drawn to play at Mossfield.

The winners will travel to take on the victors from the Inveraray/Oban Celtic tie which raises the possibility of an Oban derby in the quarter finals.

Firm favourites

Glasgow Mid Argyll head for Silver Sands to face Aberdeen in their first round tie. With GMA newly promoted to the Premiership and Aberdeen two leagues below, the Glasgow side should be firm favourites. Aberdeen continue to progress though, as was evidenced by their second place finish in Marine Harvest South Division 1 last season.

A second spot finish in the 2016 Marine Harvest Premiership makes Kyles Athletic one of the favourites for the 2017 Macaulay Cup.

They crashed out to Inveraray

at the semi-final stage last year and should be too strong for neighbours Bute in their tie at the Meadows.

The sides met in the 2016 Gregor Cameron Glasgow Celtic Society Cup with Kyles running out convincing 12-0 winners. The winners will have home advantage against Aberdeen or Glasgow Mid Argyll in the quarter finals.

In the north half of the draw, holders Kinlochshiel have been given a home tie with 2015 Camanachd Cup winners Lovat, who are yet to appoint a new manager, the visitors.

The sides met in the semi-finals last year with Shiel winning 3-0 against their understrength opponents. It's not clear yet whether this tie will be played at Kirkton or at Kinlochshiel's new pitch at Balmacara which is nearing completion.

Kingussie and Lochaber are no strangers, having met last season in the Camanachd and RBS MacTavish cups as well as their double-header in the league. Lochaber won two of these games, Kingussie, another club still to confirm their new management team, won once whilst the other game was a draw. This is a reflection on just how close their tie at the Dell could be. Whoever comes out on top will have home advantage against Kinlochshiel or Lovat in the



Kinlochshiel won the Macaulay Cup last season defeating Inveraray 5-3 in the final. Photograph: Kevin McGlynn.

next round. Newtonmore went down to a shock 2-1 defeat to Lovat in the 2016 last-eight of the competition. They open this year with a trip to Portree to play Skye. The sides met four times last season - twice in the league and in the Camanachd and RBS MacTavish cups. More won all four games, with Skye running them closest in

the Camanachd Cup tie before going down 4-2 at the Eilan. It would be a major surprise if Newtonmore didn't progress against their Marine Harvest National Division opponents and the game will be a very good test for new Skye co-managers Willie Cowie and Peter Gordon and their charges. The other north tie brings together

Marine Harvest National Division side Fort William and Glenurquhart from the Marine Harvest Premiership at An Aird. New Glenurquhart boss Iain MacLeod will know that although the Glen won both league matches in 2016, they were by narrow margins - 3-1 at Blairbeg and 2-1 at An Aird. Both sides will be keen to make

a good start to their respective league campaigns and Fort William, like Skye, will compete in four cup competitions this coming season - the Camanachd Cup, Artemis Macaulay Cup, RBS MacTavish Cup and Balliemore Cup. The team which wins the An Aird tie will travel to play Skye or Newtonmore in the quarter finals.

Kilmallie miss out on Macaulay spot

Kilmallie are unhappy at missing out on a place in the 2017 Artemis Macaulay Cup draw which took place last weekend.

The main criteria for teams taking part in this regional competition is their finishing league position the previous season.

With there already being eight north teams in the 2016 Marine Harvest Premiership, there was no place for the Canal Parks club who won last season's Marine Harvest National Division and promotion to shinty's top league.

To make matters worse for Mark MacPherson's side, their Premiership status means they are ineligible for the 2017 Balliemore Cup which they also won last year.

Therefore their only cup participation will be in the Camanachd Cup and the RBS MacTavish Cup.

On the other hand, relegated north clubs Skye Camanachd and Fort William will also play in both these cup tournaments as well as the Macaulay and Balliemore competitions.

It's understood Kilmallie have written to the Camanachd Association listing their concerns but it's not clear whether they will propose a rule change.

Oban Camanachd annual meeting

The annual general meeting of Oban Camanachd Club was held at Cuan Mor on Wednesday December 14 when the following appointments

were confirmed for season 2017: president: Alan Dunning; vice president: Duncan MacMillan; treasurer: Fiona Livingstone; secretary: Christopher Eccleston; first team manager: Ian Hay; second team manager: Gareth Evans; under 17 coaches: David MacCuish, Scott Buchanan and George Easton; under 14 coaches: to be confirmed; lotto convenor: Duncan MacMillan; club chief: Iain MacIntyre; honorary vice president: Nigel Evans; first team captain: Garry Lord; second team captain: Michael MacQueen.

The club has had one of its best seasons for a long time and this was highlighted in team manager Ian Hay's report.

The senior team reached the Scottish Cup final losing by 1-0 to Newtonmore in a close game.

The team finished second equal in the premier league and Daniel Cameron and Lorne Dickie were selected to play in this year's shinty/hurling international. Daniel MacVicar and Ross MacMillan selected at Under 21 level.

Ian also noted the players' commitment to training nights during the season and with the exception of 2016 team captain James MacMillan the squad remains the same. Everyone at the club is looking forward to season 2017.

Lochside Rovers team manager Gareth Evans reported that whilst the team did not reach the heights of the previous season, they finished third in South Division One in a league made up of one team clubs and reserve sides. He was pleased to see Daniel MacVicar

and Ross MacMillan establish themselves in the first team.

There is much to look forward to next season with the talented Lewis Buchanan, Daniel MacCuish and Craig Kilpatrick having gained valuable experience playing at this level.

The Under 17s had a successful season winning the MacQuiston Cup and the Marine Harvest MacMaster Trophy defeating Inveraray and Skye to become Scottish Champions at that level.

Coach David MacCuish said: 'Our season started in March and finished in November and we feel that is something the association needs to look at. Because of lack of opposition in the south we played most of our games against north opposition, although there was reluctance by some teams who chose not to travel to Oban to complete their fixtures.'

'The team performed very well though and managed to keep their focus and complete a successful season.'

The Under 14 team, managed by Stephen Sloss and Brian Logan, also had a good season, just missing out on cup success.

In his report, Stephen expressed his disappointment at the Camanachd Association's decision to change the age at which players can participate at this level, given that the present squad which has been put together over the last three years would have been in a position to offer a real challenge at this level.

Due to the rule change some players could be lost to the game because they will not get into the Under 17 squad and with little or no support for

the club's motion at the Camanachd Association annual general meeting to defer the decision for a year, Stephen has decided to step down from the Under 14's but will continue in a new role within the club for season 2017.

In drawing the meeting to a close, chairman Gareth Evans commented on the commitment and hard work of treasurer Fiona Livingstone and secretary Christopher Eccleston which ensured the smooth running of the club.

With Oban Camanachd on a sound financial footing and with new sponsors The Oban Inn on board, the club is in good shape looking forward to season 2017.

Gareth also thanked Nonnie MacInnes at Coasters for his support over the years and spoke for the club in wishing Nonnie all the best.

Strathglass move to national league

The Camanachd Association has approved a request from Strathglass to play in the Marine Harvest National Division this coming season.

Strathglass finished second in Marine Harvest North Division 1 last term, behind champions Newtonmore seconds. Strathglass were the only non-reserve team to compete in the league and had they finished in top spot, the Cannich club would have been eligible for a play-off against south winners Oban Celtic to see who would replace Ballachulish in shinty's second tier.

However they made a special application to the Camanachd Association to move up a division. The game's governing body consulted the other participating clubs and, with no dissenting voices, the move has been given the green light.

The Marine Harvest National Division will now become a nine-team league next season - six of whom will be based in the North - as Bute, Inveraray and Oban Celtic join Beaulieu, Caberfeidh, Fort William, Inverness, Skye Camanachd and Strathglass.

A further sign of the progress made at Cannich sees Strathglass also reintroduce their second team in Marine Harvest North Division 2 following increased activity at youth level

over the last couple of years. This will be the first time since the 2013 shinty season that the Strathglass seconds have featured in the league.

Club's successful fundraising drive

Strathspey Camanachd have raised £731 in a number lottery, part of a fund raising drive after a fire destroyed all their shinty equipment.

The lottery, along with local donations and support from the shinty community, has meant the club has been able to replace all the damaged equipment.

Fort's Boxing Day sixes competition

Fort William will host their third Annual Boxing Day Shinty Sixes competition at an Aird.

The tournament will start at noon and all participating teams should consist of three male players and three female players.

There will be a social evening to follow when the on-field action is complete.

Entry is free and interested teams should confirm their participation by emailing info@fwsshinty.com.

The Lochaber club have confirmed a tough pre-season programme ahead of the 2017 season.

First up is a meeting with Aberdeen at Silver Sands on Saturday January 28 2017.

Fort William then welcome Kyles Athletic to An Aird on Saturday February 4 to contest the annual Drew Ferguson Trophy. Kyles are the holders, having won last year's encounter 3-1.

After the match, Drew Ferguson's mother Sheila Ferguson presented the Drew Ferguson Memorial Trophy to Kyles captain John Whyte.

Next up for Fort William is the Glenmor Cup game against near-neighbours Lochaber on Saturday February 11. The game is scheduled for Spean Bridge but could be switched to An Aird if necessary.

Fort William head west to play Kinlochshiel at Kirkton on Saturday February 18.

Finally, with just seven days to go until the start of the new season, Lovat will visit An Aird on Saturday February 25.

Kilmallie gear up for premier return

Kilmallie first team manager Mark MacPherson has wasted no time in putting together a pre-season programme in preparation of his side's return to the Marine Harvest Premiership.

Kilmallie will travel to the Bught Park on Saturday February 11 to play Marine Harvest National Division side Inverness.

A week later, the Blues head for Oban to take on another Marine Harvest National Division outfit, Kenny Wotherpoon's Oban Celtic.

Kilmallie round off this series of friendlies with the Annual BSW Cup match.

This year Beaulieu have been invited to the Canal Parks to take part.

Lochaber reveals pre-season plans

Lochaber are the latest club to announce their pre-season plans.

The Spean Bridge side's first team have set themselves a difficult opener as they travel to the Eilan to play Newtonmore in the first match of a two-leg meeting on Saturday February 4.

Fort William are the opponents a week later as they come to Spean Bridge to compete for the Glenmor Cup. This match will be switched to An Aird if necessary. The second meeting with Newtonmore takes place at Spean Bridge on Saturday February 18.

Lochaber complete their pre-season fixtures against Inverness at the Bught Park on Saturday February 25.

Lochaber start their pre-season training on Monday January 9.

Countdown to 2017 Lovat Cup

The 2017 Lovat Cup match between Beaulieu and Lovat

Artemis Macaulay Cup draw

Artemis Macaulay Cup (South) - first round
Oban Camanachd v Ballachulish
Inveraray v Oban Celtic
Aberdour v Glasgow Mid Argyll
Bute v Kyles Athletic

Artemis Macaulay Cup (North) - first round
Kingussie v Lochaber
Skye Camanachd v Newtonmore
Fort William v Glenurquhart
Kinlochshiel v Lovat

South - quarter final
Inveraray/Oban Celtic v Oban Camanachd/Ballachulish
Bute/Kyles Athletic v Aberdour/Glasgow Mid Argyll

North - quarter final
Skye Camanachd/Newtonmore v Fort William/Glenurquhart
Kingussie/Lochaber v Kinlochshiel/Lovat

South - semi final
Inveraray/Oban Celtic/Oban Camanachd/Ballachulish v Bute/Kyles Athletic/Aberdour/Glasgow Mid Argyll

North - semi final
Skye Camanachd/Newtonmore/Fort William/Glenurquhart v Kingussie/Lochaber/Kinlochshiel/Lovat

The 2017 Artemis Macaulay Cup Final will take place at Mossfield Stadium, Oban, on Saturday August 19 2017.

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Oban Sailing Club hands out the prizes

OBAN Sailing Club's successful prize-giving dinner dance saw Billy Forteith's First 31.7 Shadowfax winning top yacht of the year.

RYA regional development representative Robin Nicol was a guest at the occasion when his contribution to helping the club's development over the past few years was recognised.

Colin Crawford's Nimrod finished second in the points series, with Eric and Irena Chapman's Amber Haze third. Second and third positions were reversed in Series 2. Iain Campbell's Zarifa won the slow handicap points series 1 with Hot Toddy second and Seal third. Hot Toddy won the second series with Zarifa second and Seal third.

Ian Gibson, the club's long-standing senior RYA instructor, was awarded the Endeavour Trophy recognising exceptional achievement on the water and for the sport gener-

ally. Derek Grier was presented with the Willie Buchanan Trophy for his powerboating contribution, with Jamie Peden lifting the junior member of the year. Jamie made a significant contribution to assisting, promoting and participating in the junior section of the club over the season. Fraser MacDonald, social secretary, won the Skrat Trophy awarded for any act of 'foolishness, poor seamanship or other notoriety'.

Both Leonie Woolf and Mandy Peden were recognised for their immense input to the club.

Mandy, as secretary, was pointed up for her dedication across the board in always being there to help and encourage others. Leonie was recognised as volunteer of the year for her contribution to the vitality and progress of the club.

Young brothers Ruari and Finlay Cottier picked up the

Sailing

Rowan Cup for the best cruising log from the recent season. They sailed with their mother and father Liz and Finlo Cottier to France in their Sadler 32 and have left Alican there to sail in 2017.

Keelboat winners:
Minots Light - Nimrod; OSC Challenge Cup - Shadowfax; Branra Rock Race - Hot Toddy; Royal Highland Yacht Club Cup - Amber Haze; Hot Toddy Trophy - Amber Haze; Crews Cup - Ben Miller Shadowfax; Donald Sutherland Challenge Trophy - Hot Toddy; Billmeir Trophy - Shadowfax; Forteith Trophy - Nimrod; Victoria Cup - Amber Haze.

Dinghy winners:
Icicle Shield Fast - 1 Andrew Chapman, 2 Jessica Mitford, 3 Chris Dowd. Slow - 1 Ruby Howard, 2 Colum Garvin, 3



Oban Sailing Club members pictured with their trophies.

Euan Shearer. Spring Series Fast - Alex Stewart Quaich - 1 James Chapman, 2 John Forbes, 3 Andrew Chapman. Slow - Ben Doran Cup - 1 Euan Shearer, 2 Liam Campbell, 3 Iain Campbell.

Summer series: Fast - Airdenny Cup - 1 Andrew Chapman, 2 John Forbes, 3 James

Chapman. Summer - Slow Mirror Class Shield - 1 Euan Shearer, 2 Freddie White, 3 Tim McIntyre

Autumn series: Frostbite Shield Slow 1 Sinclair Hennessey. Port Beag Cup and Plate - Euan Shearer. Senior Plate Andrew Chapman. Gillespie Trophy Andrew Chapman,

Freddie White, Euan Shearer. Double Hander A Chapman and J Mitford 2 A Chapman and Ben Miller, 3 Euan Shearer and Freddie White.

Dinghy Orienteering - 1 A Chapman and J Mitford, 2 Chris and Euan Dowd, 3 Colum Garvin and Liam Campbell. Best Topper/Pico Forteith

Refrigeration Trophy - Euan Shearer
Best Laser Scotwest Windows Trophy - Andrew Chapman.

Winning the most improved junior novice was Calum Warnock, lifting the Malcolm MacKillop Decorator's Quaich. The most improved novice adult sailor was Adam Hughes.

Oban Lorne launch new youth academy

OBAN Lorne RFC has launched a new youth academy to plug a vital gap in resources and support for young rugby players.

A £2,000 cash grant from Scottish Sea Farms will help to keep young players engaged with the sport during the vital years from late teens to early twenties.

The new academy is being established by Oban Lorne to

create a link between players leaving high school and starting to play senior rugby. This is a period when many talented players often lose contact with the sport.

Volunteers

Oban Lorne is a community club run by volunteers. Murray Hamilton is the youth convener and is the principal teacher of PE at Oban High school.

Murray said: 'The idea behind

the academy would not just be for students who leave school, we would also like to tackle the drop-off in players from ages 15 to 21.

'There is currently a rugby programme at the high school which has been a great success between S1 and S3, and as a club we feel we need to do our bit to address the development of young players beyond this.

'We hope to provide support

Rugby

and opportunities for young players aged 15 and over to reach their full potential in the sport, and indeed encourage new players to take up the sport for the first time. This would not be possible without the support of Scottish Sea Farms.

'Given our rural location, we feel it is important that we try to offer our players the same opportunities as those in the central belt, and the Scottish Sea Farms grant is making this possible.

'We are always looking for local coaching support and adult volunteers to be involved with rugby development in the Oban area and I would encourage anyone who is interested to get in touch with me directly.'

Specialised

The Scottish Sea Farms Heart of the Community funding will help to provide specialised coaching sessions, strength and conditioning programmes, cover some travel costs and assist with new kit and equipment.

Jonathan Sayer, an environmental scientist with Scottish Sea Farms based at South Shian, has been involved with the Oban Lorne RFC as fundraising convener and said: 'This will really help young people stay active and involved with the sport of rugby and means we will have an increase in young players entering the senior squads.'

'It's really good news for the area and I have been delighted that Scottish Sea Farms has been able to help with the Heart of the Community funding.'



Top quality coaching for Saints youngsters

Pictured above are the Oban Saints 2002's football team with SYFA development officer Brian Sproul. Brian is an elite academy coach at Kilmarnock Football Club. And, as part of his role with the Scottish Youth FA, he travelled to Oban to deliver a fantastic training session for the local lads which will help them with their development. The players took a great deal from the session, and Oban Saints coaches in attendance. As well as a great two-hour session, Brian gave the boys an informative talk about the dedication required to reach the top level in the game. Brian was full of praise for the young Saints players who attended the session.



The Scottish Sea Farms Heart of the Community Logo now takes pride of place on the side of the Oban Saints minibus.

Oban Saints receive £3,000 to help repair team minibus

OBAN SAINTS Amateur Football Club is a community club run by volunteers and the engine on the team minibus had to be replaced recently.

A grant of £3,000 from Scottish Sea Farms Heart of the Community will go towards the repairs for the bus and will also help pay for match pitch hire, training pitch hire and fuel costs.

Youth teams

As well as the senior team the club's various youth teams travel to the central belt in the bus to

Football

play away games and without transport this would become almost impossible.

David Buchanan, club secretary of Oban Saints said: 'We are delighted to receive this funding as it comes at such an important time for the club. The minibus repairs are in excess of £5,000 so receiving this £3,000 from Scottish Sea Farms is just fantastic.'

Sandy slog to beat Boxing day blues

A GOOD way to start burning off excess Christmas calories is Slog in the Sand.

Campbeltown Running Club's annual 10 kilometre run, from Westport on Tuesday December 27, sees athletes run along



Running through the surf on last year's slog. 25_c01slog01

Athletics

the surf on the beach. Last year they savoured sparkling sun.

Registrations open on the day from 10am with a juniors 3k race at 10.30am.

Entry is £5 for adults and £2 juniors with refreshments for everyone and prizes for the top three finishers.

SPOT THE SHINTY BALL

THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT £650

LAST WEEK'S SHINTY BALL WAS HERE. . .



This week's nearest the ball winners, who each receive £25 are:

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J MacAulay Bishopton Road Lohcgilhead

We have removed the shinty ball from the photograph opposite. Now look carefully at the position of the players and use your skill and judgement to place a cross at the exact point where you think the centre of the ball was. You may have a maximum of 20 attempts on this coupon at a cost of £1. If you wish to have more attempts, you must enter on separate coupons.

Easy to enter
Cut out your completed coupon and put your entry plus £1 per 20 attempts into a sealed envelope and post it to 'Spot the Shinty Ball' Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB by 12noon Tuesday. No refunds will be given for entries received after the deadline. 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

The game starts with a jackpot of £500 and will increase by £50 per week until it is won outright. To win the jackpot, the centre of your cross must be in the exact centre of the ball. If the crosses overlap the entry will be void. If no correct entry is received, two 'near miss' prizes of £25 will be awarded. When the jackpot is won, no other prizes will be awarded that week.

competition and no correspondence will be entered into. The final decision rests with the Company. In the event of more than one correct entry, the jackpot will be shared equally between all winning entries. Any decision regarding the awarding of a prize is entirely at the discretion of the Company. The Company reserves the right to declare the competition null and void at any time, subject to its discretion and to make full refund of the price of the coupon to any person who has entered the competition at that time. Employees of Wyvex Media, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

Please remember to enclose £1 for 20 crosses. The maximum number of attempts on this coupon is 20, but you may enter on separate coupons as many times as you wish. No photocopies allowed. You agree to abide by the rules. How to enter: Mark your crosses using a ballpoint pen. Twenty crosses may be put on this coupon for £1. Send to 'Spot the Shinty Ball' Competition, The Oban Times, P.O. Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB



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Magnus comes back to his roots

A SCOTTISH international rugby player paid a visit to his home town of Oban last week, when he helped coach a training session at Oban High School.

Magnus Bradbury made his Scotland debut earlier this year against Argentina and became the first player from Oban Lorne to gain a national cap.

The 20-year-old donated two shirts to Oban High School and helped train a large group of S2 and S3 pupils.

He then sat down with them and answered a series of quick-fire questions such as how to become a professional player, which Magnus answered: 'Just stick at it.'

'It is always good to be back and



Magnus and Murray Hamilton with the two strips.

Rugby

see how the boys are getting on,' the former Oban High School pupil said. 'I have a few days off from training, so I thought I would come up and when I am back I let Murray [Hamilton] know.'

Speaking about playing for his country, Magnus said: 'It was amazing. Ever since I picked up a rugby ball, it is something I have wanted to achieve.'

Magnus believes that anyone can follow in his footsteps. 'There is nothing here that is holding you back.'

'You have the coaching and the facilities to do what you need to do. Don't let it hold you back that we are out of the way.'

Murray Hamilton, head of PE at Oban High School, added: 'It's great that he is back. The kids are buzzing.'

'They appreciate that he does not have a lot of time off from training since getting called up to the international squad. And it is lovely that he thinks to get in touch with us when he does have time off.'

Mr Hamilton said that Magnus helps to inspire the pupils. 'His [Magnus's] motto is, "It does not matter where you come from - if you are willing to work hard, you can make it".'



Magnus took time out of his busy schedule to do some coaching at Oban High School last week.



Oban High School 51 boys and girls teams pictured at Coatbridge.

Double up for Oban High School

OBAN High School S1 boys' and girls' teams travelled to Coatbridge High School last Thursday to take part in friendly fixtures organised by School of Rugby teacher and Oban Lorne youth convener Greg Fairbairn.

The Oban teams impressed on the day with the girls running out comfortable winners against

the hosts. All of the Oban girls put in a great performance running in several tries.

In the boys' game, Oban out winners by six tries to four in a competitive contest. Stand-out performances from Craig Campbell Roberts, John Douglas and Fergus MacIntyre added to a very good showing from the whole team.

School rugby

All of the players involved on the day are part of Scottish Rugby's School of Rugby programme with the players receiving curricular sessions of rugby every week, along with afterschool rugby sessions delivered in partnership with Oban Lorne RFC.

Gold medal for Argyll athlete

AN ARGYLL-BORN athlete has claimed athletics gold down under.

As part of the Great Britain team, Claire Thompson won individual gold and team silver at the 2016 World Masters Athletics Championships, held in Perth, Western Australia.

Among a strong field of 13, Claire won her gold medal in the W40 2,000 metre steeplechase in a time of 7:25.49 at the Western Australia Athletics Stadium in Mt Claremont.

The team silver medal was won in the eight kilometre cross-country held at Perry Lakes Reserve.

Athletics

Claire led her team home in a time of 31 minutes, 19 seconds.

Claire narrowly missed out on a bronze medal in the 1,500 metres but slashed her personal best time by a brilliant five minutes.

Claire is originally from Ardrishaig and attended Lochgilphead Primary and Lochgilphead High School. Her athletics career began as a junior member of the Mid Argyll Athletics Club.

Heavy defeat for Oban Lorne away to the league leaders

Newton Stewart	49
Oban Lorne	5
BT West Division 1	

OBAN Lorne travelled away to league leaders Newton Stewart on Saturday with a threadbare team missing some regular key starters. Second row Lorne MacLachlan missed the trip due to a recurrent hand injury. Also missing for Oban Lorne were twins Cammy and Struan Smith, MacLachlan's fellow second row Andy MacDougall and centre Dave McCabe.

The match started evenly and it set the tone that retention of the ball would win the game. Newton Stewart opened the scoring down the left flank. Oban replied shortly after with a try from Tommy Sutherland making good of captain Craig Wright's decision to take the scrum five meters out instead of points.

The try was eventually awarded after some protest from the home side by fellow Oban-based referee Dave Mathias.

The game was played at a high tempo with Newton Stewart, benefiting from Oban not having had a game since November 5, looking much sharper.

Up until the half-hour mark, the match was 5-5 and was contested pretty evenly. However, three tries in 10 minutes saw the home side go in at the break with the bonus point. One conversion was added and Oban were behind 22-5.

Half-time came and coach Corrie Louw opted to give second row Jonathan Sayer his second debut for the club having

been away at university in Wales for a few years.

The second half was a one-sided affair, with it being attack against defence. Oban were on the receiving end of a bit of a rout from Newton Stewart, the home team showing it's no fluke that they are top by putting together a solid display.

There are some positives for Oban to look back on this match with fondness though: the back lines defence being one, covering a lot of ground for a tiring pack all day.

The scrum seemed to be Oban's only way into the match, constantly turning the scrum against the head and forcing penalties from familiar face Mathias.

The final score was 49-5 but a special mention has to go to winger Steven Parr for stepping up and staking a claim for the winger's jersey, never backing out of a tackle and looking dangerous with the ball in hand. He was a shining light on a dull day for Oban.

Saturday's result against the league leaders leaves Oban Lorne in ninth place with the team struggling to find any momentum this season due to a break in the leagues schedule and a constant upheaval of the starting XV each week.

Oban Lorne get back to action in 2017 with a crucial home game against mid-table side Annan RFC. The game will be

Rugby

played on Saturday January 7 at Glencruitten. Kick-off 2pm.

BT West Division 4 Argyll and Bute P Cowal P

Argyll and Bute's fixture on Saturday was postponed as Cowal RFC from Dunoon were unable to travel north for the fixture. The game will be rescheduled by the West Regional committee for later in the season.

Argyll's next game is away to Hyndland at Scotstoun on January 7.



Oban Lorne player/coach Corrie Louw

Scottish AFL results and fixtures

Football

LAST Saturday's result: West of Scotland Cup, 4th round - East Kilbride 1, Oban Saints 0.

The SAFL will now take a two week break before resuming on Saturday January 7.

Oban Saints youth results and fixtures

Youth football

LAST weekend's result - Renton v Under-13s, postponed due to a waterlogged pitch.

Saints youth teams will now take a well-earned festive break, returning in January with the following fixtures - Under 13s v Singer Community; Giffnock SC Reds v Under 14s; Under 15s v Dumbarton United; Broomhill SC v Under 16s; Under 17s v Loch Lomond.

Over 35s League Indoor football

Latest scores:
Coasters 5, D&K Lafferty 1.
Clements 3, Coasters 3.
Taynuilt 9, D&K Lafferty 2.

League table:	Played	Points
Coasters	3	7
Taynuilt	2	6
Clements	2	4
D&K Lafferty	3	3
Emergency	2	0
Teachers	2	0

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WEATHER

Thursday Light rain
Winds moderate westerly
Temperatures 4°C to 5°C.

Friday Heavy rain
Winds strong south south easterly
Temperatures 5°C to 9°C.

Weekend Cloudy on Saturday
Heavy rain on Sunday
Winds strong westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 9°C.

FRIDAY

Stop Press: New pontoons at Ulva and visitor moorings installed at Lochaline by North West Marine Ltd

TIDAL INFORMATION
Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday December 22, 2016** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour) BST)

Date	am					pm				
Thur	05.49	1.6	12.06	3.1	19.12	1.9	***	**		
Fri	01.21	3.0	06.52	1.7	13.40	3.1	20.26	1.9		
Sat	02.21	3.1	08.01	1.8	14.39	3.2	21.21	1.8		
Sun	03.08	3.2	09.06	3.2	15.22	3.4	22.02	1.6		
Mon	03.49	3.4	09.57	1.6	16.01	3.5	22.37	1.5		
Tues	04.28	3.6	10.39	1.5	16.40	3.7	23.10	1.3		
Wed	05.06	3.8	11.18	1.4	17.19	3.8	23.44	1.2		

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

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**Festive fun at
Inverlochty
school grotto**

Fraser Lindsay of primary five meets Santa. Photograph: Abridgeside Photography.

INVERLOCHTY Primary School's annual Santa's grotto raised more than £1,000. The money has been donated to school funds which help pay for trips and supplies. The popular event also included a home-baking stall, face and nail painting, and Christmas crafts. Depute head teacher Tanya Ross said: 'Our annual Santa's grotto was a huge success. There

was a wonderful atmosphere with everyone having fun and buying the crafts pupils had made. Santa was met with a constant stream of excited children and the canteen was bustling with people. We can't thank everyone enough for their support in helping make this such a great evening, particularly our primary seven class and their teacher Mrs Lees, who did a super job organising the grotto.'

PACKED MEETING HEARS FOUR REFUGEE FAMILIES WILL BE SETTING UP HOME IN VILLAGE

Kinlochleven urged to welcome Syrians

MONICA GIBSON
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'LET'S give them a right ol' Highland welcome' was the closing remark to a packed meeting discussing the impending arrival of four Syrian families in Kinlochleven.

Around 200 people attended the information evening in Kinlochleven High School on Monday night to find out why, when and how many refugees are likely to be relocated to the area.

Councillor Thomas MacLennan chaired the event alongside Gail Ward, a policy officer from the Highland Council (HC), representatives from the health service, education departments, and volunteer groups.

Together they explained the refugees are coming to Kinlochleven as part of a commitment made by the HC to house 25 to 30 Syrian refugee families before 2020.

Five families were resettled in the Inner Moray Firth area last summer and government agencies have since found Kinlochleven to be the next best place to house refugees based on capacity for housing, school-

ing and health care. The four families are due to arrive before the spring and while the actual families and therefore the number of people within each family has not yet been finalised due to screening processes, agencies are already working with the Home Office to make sure the right support is in place. Learning support posts are to be made available for both the primary school and high school, and extra training is to be provided.

The families will receive money for living costs when they first arrive and language support will be given. This will all be funded by the Home Office via the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme. Once the families settle, they will be eligible to apply for benefits. They will have a visa for five years, after which time they can apply for an extension or return home depending on the situation there.

Information sheets were available at the meeting and after the presentations by the agencies, attendees were invited to ask questions and raise any concerns. There was a lot of mixed

feelings towards the plans, with some community members describing it as an opportunity to enrich their own culture, while others wanted to know more about what screening processes are in place. Ms Ward told the audience that refugees go through a two-stage vetting process and that the VPR scheme prioritises women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture among others.

Councillor MacLennan admitted he had only found out about the plan in the past few weeks and said he had seen a lot of progress in Kinlochleven in the past 20 years and that it would be a shame to do anything to detract from that. During the evening, some people said it seemed unfair that people from abroad are given priority when there are people born and raised in Kinlochleven who aren't receiving the support they need.

This was refuted by another member of the public who said that while Kinlochleven has its problems, they are minute in comparison to those who have been bombed out of their home.

Frustration was also expressed because the plans were only revealed by letters placed in the bags of school pupils which excluded community members without children or with older families. The method was described as 'sneaky or underhand', but the HC apologised, saying it was unusual circumstances and that they would consider a door-to-door mail shot in future.

However, a Kinlochleven pupil also argued that it made sense for students to be informed first as they will come in contact with the Syrian children five days a week, far more than most community members. Flora McKee from Voluntary Action Lochaber (VAL) also took the floor and encouraged anyone able to spare time to help the families integrate and feel welcome to get in touch.

A further meeting is planned for February when it is hoped more details of the families and their arrival dates will be shared.



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Groups submit town canopy plan

FORT WILLIAM could see a £95,000 canopy installed in Cameron Square next May with hopes it will then be used to help attract more people to the town.

Fort William Marina and Shoreline Company (FWMSC) and the Fort William Town Team submitted an application for the High Street structure to Highland Council last week.

Sarah Kennedy from FWMSC said: 'There is no covered public area in Fort William. People have to pay the council £500 to use Cameron Square [for events], but that isn't great when you could pay and still get wet.'

'It's the perfect location for a canopy. Hopefully it would attract more people to the town who would then spend money. When the last cruise ship came in,



The proposed canopy.

the Highland dancers got very wet and we had to put up a gazebo, which is not a great advert for Fort William.

'I will be applying to the Highland Council discretionary capital fund among others for the funding. My target is to have the canopy in place by May 10, 2017 in time for the next cruise ship coming

into Fort William. We have been round the shops in Cameron Square and everyone seems really positive about the plans.'

Colleen Barker, manager of the West Highland Museum, told *The Oban Times*: 'I personally think it's a really good idea, but the main problem for us is that visitors come in because they can see us. If they can't see us, they won't come in. When we ask people how did you find out about us, the majority of people say they came in because they saw the museum. Anything that stops visitors seeing us is obviously a concern.'

Fort William councillor Bill Clark said: 'I am not against anything that will improve Fort William but I will need to see what is being proposed and any comments on the plans.'

Meeting discusses ferry crisis

A CRISIS meeting has been held to find a way forward for the Mallaig to Armadale ferry in 2017.

Following a summer season of 'unparalleled disruption' on the ferry route, Caol and Mallaig councillor Allan Henderson, called for a meeting between interested parties this month.

Members of the Road to the Isles Marketing Group, tourism providers, business owners, three Road to the Isles community councils, the Sleat Transport Forum, a representative from Storas Uibhist, three island community councils, Better Ferries for Lochboisdale, community interest groups, and a local councillor were all in attendance at the meeting on December 9, while MSP Kate Forbes contributed by phone.

The group asked Ms Forbes to facilitate the meeting of key representatives with the Transport Minister, Transport Scotland and CalMac officials, following unanimous agreement that the level of service in 2016 was 'abysmal'.

With no indication of vessels or a timetable for summer 2017 and a 'complete deficit of community engagement from the operator' the group are urging for the MV Coruisk to be returned.

Ms Forbes said: 'In recent days I have heard of two tour operators who are now reconsidering their options for the summer on the back of this year's shambles. If companies decide to withdraw - based on the ferry disruption - that will have disastrous consequences for the economy. The only sensible solutions appear to be returning the MV Coruisk to the route it was built to serve, or recruit another vessel from elsewhere.'

Council seeking training providers

COMHAIRLE nan Eilean Siar is launching an Employability Challenge Fund (ECF) in Uist and Barra.

The council is seeking expressions of interest from accredited training providers to deliver a range of activities that will enable individuals in Uist and Barra to move into sustained employment or self-employment.

Interested parties should request an application form and supporting background information from Angus Murray, corporate policy manager at Angus-murray@cne-siar.gov.uk.

MSP slams budget that could mean end of HIE

ELLIE FORBES

eforbes@obantimes.co.uk

A £7.5 million budget cut for Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) is 'further evidence that the SNP government plans to strip HIE altogether', said MSP Rhoda Grant.

The Scottish Government has allocated the agency, which is currently in the process of having its board centralised, £67 million for 2017.

Ms Grant said: 'Not content with trying to dismantle Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) board, the Scottish Government is now cutting the budget to this important organisation.'

'This cut, added to the £8.7 million of cuts already imposed since the SNP came into government, shows us clearly that as well as

dismantling of the board, that the Scottish Government intend to do away with HIE altogether.'

And Conservative MSP Donald Cameron has slammed finance secretary Derek Mackay MSP for slashing the by 10 per cent.

He said: 'I am astounded that Derek Mackay was able to stand up in the Scottish Parliament and talk about supporting Scottish businesses and the rural economy, yet his budget today hits Highlands and Islands Enterprise hard.'

'This is further evidence that the SNP is abandoning HIE, and working against business development in the Highlands and Islands.'

SNP MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, Kate Forbes, said: 'As I've repeatedly made clear, I'm of the strong opinion

that HIE must continue to have the resources, authority, independence and accountability to constructively work with, and serve, Highlands and Islands communities.'

In October, the Scottish Government released phase one of its review of Scotland's enterprise and skills agencies.

Phase two, which will include more detailed consultation with stakeholder groups, is expected to take six months before the government concludes on the way ahead.

Ms Forbes added: 'In this second phase of the review, I believe that the new strategic board should operate on a travelling basis, holding meetings in different locations in the Highlands, and around Scotland.'

'The secretariat, however,

should be permanently based in Inverness or the Highlands, with a sound knowledge of, and background in, these communities.'

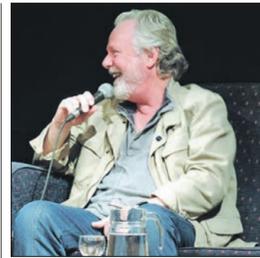
Highland Council leader, Margaret Davidson, tabled a motion at a full meeting of the council last Thursday saying: 'The council is very disappointed at the proposal from the Scottish Government to abolish the Board of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, believing that such an approach is not in the best interests of the Highlands and Islands and calls on the Scottish Government to reconsider their plans for a National Strategic Board.'

Reacting to how the budget will effect the council budget leader, Bill Fernie, said: 'Disappointingly, our worst predictions are realised in that there has been a

real cash cut to councils of £350 million. The devil will be in the detail, but an early analysis equates this to a significant cut in the grant to our core budget. Further clarification is being sought on the extent of this.'

'A cut to our budget on this scale will mean cuts to services and difficult decisions to be made. We will also need to increase our income and this may include increased charges and proposals to raise local council tax.'

Ms Davidson added: 'The Scottish Government settlement effectively hands us money with one hand and takes it away with the other. At least we now have a better idea of where we stand and where we stand is over a big hole in our budget, which will undoubtedly mean stopping or reducing some services.'



Best-selling author Peter May's evening was a sell-out.

Book fest is a hit with fans

A HIGHLAND book festival has closed on a happy note after receiving plaudits from top sponsors and authors.

The Skye Book Festival has been running each autumn for five years. Based in Portree, the event has been hailed as one of the best by leading writers. Organisers say the praise is a testament to the level of support given to the festival, both financially and creatively.

Author of 'the Lewis trilogy', Peter May, headlined the 2016 event. He said: 'The Skye Book Festival offered a wonderful welcome and a terrific event packed with enthusiastic book lovers. Everyone was very welcoming, and the event was excellent.'

Joanne Harris came to the Skye Book Festival to launch her new psychological thriller, *Different Class*. Responding to her experience, the Cambridge-educated author commented that she enjoyed 'a delightful, well-run festival, in stunning surroundings'.

Adding: 'I had a marvellous time and would recommend it to anyone.'

Managing director of host organisation the Aros Centre, Donald MacDonald said the growing range of sponsors is proof that well-organised and supported events can bring valuable endorsements.

'Creative Scotland has been very supportive from the beginning and we have worked hard to add local backers to our efforts,' he said.

Mr MacDonald added that it was 'tremendously encouraging to find big players in Skye's tourism economy, such as Dunvegan Castle, also supporting us financially.'

'All the support has enabled us to attract top authors who want to come to the Skye Book Festival to launch and promote their books.'

The 2017 Skye Book Festival will be held from August 31 to September 2, 2017.



Mallaig pupils were, left to right, Jenna MacDonald, Kirstie Ann Duncan, Melissa Mackenzie, Emily Bran, Jennifer MacPhee, David Buick and Kayleigh Macmillan, while, inset, Hannah Newsom, Tammy Cooper and Jo Shepton from Kinlochleven's Mugaunised picked up the prize for sustainability on the day for their forward planning for products for Valentine's Day and Easter.

Youngsters show they are the real deal at business event

PUPILS tried their hand at selling and embraced the season at the same time setting up a festive market.

Mallaig's Tailored to Tartan team and Mugaunised from Kinlochleven High School joined schools from across the Highlands and Moray to set up stalls in

Inverness selling products they had handmade themselves at the annual Young Enterprise Christmas trade fair.

The Young Enterprise Scotland (YES) company programme for Highland and Moray runs in partnership with schools to encourage young people to experience

the challenges of running a business. Linda Thomas, chairwoman of YES Highland and Moray, said: 'Once again this year our judges were immensely impressed by the high quality of the stalls and products for sale, and the resourcefulness of the teams taking part.'

'The trade fair is a great way for young people to learn about marketing and selling their products. This year's teams were amazing and had a very professional approach. Their smiles and enthusiasm lasted all day - we hope they are all very proud of their businesses.'

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POLICE FILES

AROUND 2am on Sunday December 11, a new woollen shawl was stolen from near the entrance door of the Loch Leven Hotel in North Ballachulish.

Police would like to talk to three guests who were seen leaving the hotel around that time.

CLAGGAN residents are being reminded to secure all items of property and keep sheds and outbuildings locked after a man dressed in black clothing was seen acting suspiciously in the Grant Place area of Claggan on the evening of Sunday December 11.

THE CASH box on the vacuum cleaner machine at Ben Nevis filling station on North Road, Fort William, has been broken into and a cash stolen.

The incident took place sometime between 3.30pm on Tuesday December 13 and 3pm on Friday December 16.

Appeal to keep Glenfinnan tidy

A GLENFINNAN resident is urging everyone to take more responsibility for keeping the area tidy.

The business owner contacted *The Oban Times* after single-handedly collecting a 'mountain' of rubbish from a lay-by on the A830 Glenfinnan to Fort William road earlier this month.

The man, who does not want to be named, said the culprits are all ages – he has witnessed an elderly person throwing items out of their car and a young family dispose of their unwanted items.

The Oban Times contacted the Highland Council asking whether more bins could or should be provided, if there are sufficient collections along that road, and for advice on how people can dispose of their rubbish more easily but had not received a response as we went to press.



Smelter deal secures jobs and metal making future

MONICA GIBSON
mgibson@obantimes.co.uk

'THE TIDE on Scottish manufacturing has turned'.

That was the message from an aluminium tycoon as a £330 million deal to save a Lochaber smelter was officially sealed.

SIMEC and Liberty House, of GFG Alliance, have formally bought the UK's last remaining smelter and associated lands from Rio Tinto.

The deal, which was announced last month, includes the hydro-electric station and aluminium smelter at Fort William, the neighbouring hydro-plant at Kinlochleven and more than 100,000 acres of estate land which hosts the water catchment area.

It aims to protect the existing 170 jobs in Lochaber and progressively expand metal manufacturing.

Over the next decade it is thought it will bring up to 2,000 direct and supply-chain jobs to the West Highlands and add



First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was presented with a plaque from Sanjeev Gupta, Liberty House Group, for leaving 'no stone unturned' while the terms for the smelter were being finalised.

around £1 billion to the local economy.

To mark the accord, the companies held a special event at the Fort William plant on Monday morning with First

Minister Nicola Sturgeon guest of honour. Also invited was Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing, MPs, MSPs, community members, smelter employees and representatives from the

alliance. Miss Sturgeon shed light on the firm's plans to manufacture alloy wheels and said the Scottish Government is guaranteeing the power purchases of the smelter.

She agreed the deal heralds a new manufacturing future and told the crowd: 'GFG's ambitious and far-sighted plans would create 300 jobs during construction, an additional 300 after completion and then more afterwards.'

She described the development as a source of pride and pleasure and that it signalled the belief the alliance has in the skilled and dedicated workforce.

Ms Sturgeon also said the possible involvement of East Lochaber and Laggan Community Trust (ELLCT) highlighted the importance of community ownership and how it can help galvanise the future.

Ms Sturgeon also acknowledged the uncertainty that has been created since Rio Tinto announced its intention to put the smelter up for sale, saying

it must have felt like a lifetime for those involved but urged the crowd to have confidence the outcome will bring a vibrant future.

SIMEC chief executive Jay Hambro described the process of how the deal came about as a rollercoaster. He highlighted the Lochaber smelter and surrounding land as a unique asset and said that he was beyond delighted with the development which he and the First Minister believes is fantastic for Scotland and for the Highlands.

Sanjeev Gupta, executive chairman of Liberty House Group and of the GFG Alliance strategic board, said he believes the deal should be considered as the moment the tide on manufacturing turned and that it shows you can have huge industry in this part of the world again. As a nod to his Hindu faith, some of the guests including Nicola Sturgeon, received a bindi on their foreheads and special 'ganesh' ceremony was performed as a sign of good luck.

Positive reaction to 'life changing moment for Lochaber'

David Stewart, Labour Highlands and Islands MSP, said: 'It's great to see a new future for the last remaining smelter in the UK. It will be cause for celebration in households across the area this Christmas.'

East Lochaber and Laggan Community Trust: 'The community trust is very pleased with the outcome of the smelter.'

'We now find ourselves able to

discuss proposals around a table. We are encouraged by the First Minister's endorsement of our plans and we now look forward to our meeting with the group early in the new year where we can take our ideas forward.'

Ian Blackford, SNP MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, said: 'This purchase by GFG Alliance is a great outcome for the area, securing the 170 jobs on the Fort William smelter and Kinlochleven Power House

sites. With future investment of £120 million already in the pipeline to upgrade equipment and diversify into new 'added value' products such as aluminium alloy wheels, with a forecast of up to 2,000 new jobs, this is a life changing moment for Lochaber.'

Highlands and Islands Labour MSP Rhoda Grant said: 'I look forward to seeing an aluminum wheel manufacturing facility being created. This is an

exciting project for the region, both for jobs on site and for spin-off jobs in the community.'

Kate Forbes, MSP for Lochaber, said: 'If the sale of the Lochaber smelter shows me anything about this SNP Government, it is that it is determined to deliver for the West Highlands. I hope this sale will be a catalyst for investment and development in Lochaber – to see houses built, roads upgraded and railways improved.'



Organisers pictured holding cheque are, left to right: Betty Campbell, Christine Dennis, Karen MacMillan, with an accident and emergency charge nurse. Photograph: Abrightside Photography

Cafe volunteers raise £5,000 for hospital

HOT DRINKS have helped provide more than just comfort in Fort William as the local hospital's cafe has raised £5,000 from sales of tea and biscuits.

The T Bar presented the cheque last week to medical staff at the Belford Hospital and the money will be used to buy new equipment to benefit patients.

The cafe, based in the Belford's main building, is run by volunteers led by Betty Campbell. The money was raised over two years.

Fiona McGeachan, NHS Highland's business support manager (west), said: 'On behalf of the hospital staff I would like to thank the ladies for this generous donation, for the hard work they do all year round and their continued support.'

'The ladies provide a welcome cup of tea, a smile and a chat to patients and visitors to the hospital. We often see people who have made the trip to hospital having a catch-up over a cup of tea with their friends or relatives.'



Alfonso Iglesias first complained about the flooding outside his house more than a year ago.

Resident fights on over flooding

ONGOING 'high risk' flooding in Fort William may soon be resolved.

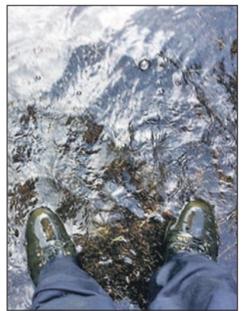
Alfonso Iglesias contacted *The Oban Times* regarding a problem outside his Lochaber Road home.

Mr Iglesias said he had been in touch with the Highland Council about a pool of water which gathers in his front garden earlier this year and the previous winter a workman had been sent to unblock a drain.

But the efforts were in vain as the drain is too high to collect the water.

Mr Iglesias said: 'Now winter is here again and thick ice is forming. This has become a high risk for other people and my family. We cannot access our front door or take our rubbish bins out for collection.'

The Oban Times raised the issue again with the Highland Council and a spokesperson said: 'We have arranged for a maintenance officer to come to visit the site to see what works are required.'



Mr Iglesias says the water forms a 'high risk' hazard, especially in the winter.



Gary Innes, right, hands over the defibrillator to Dominic Sargent of the Ambulance Service, with volunteer firefighters at the Spean Bridge fire base and other participants in the project looking on.

Life-saving defibrillators delivered to two villages

LIFE-SAVING equipment has been donated to two rural Lochaber villages.

Following a successful fundraising concert by Mánran accordionist Gary Innes, more than £1,900 was raised for charity Lochaber Heart to enable defibrillators to be fitted in Spean Bridge and Roy Bridge.

Gary held concerts in both villages in November to raise money for the equipment.

On Sunday the defibrillators were fitted to the fire station in Spean Bridge and the Memorial Hall in Roy Bridge.

Gary told *The Oban Times*: 'It's fantastic the defibrillators are there now and they will come in to use some time in the future. It's great to have this life-saving equipment at people's fingertips.'

'The concerts were great fun and it was lovely to be back playing a gig in Spean Bridge.'

Lochaber Heart, which was started by Fort William councillor Thomas MacLennan and Alan Knox, area service manager for Scottish Ambulance Service, has already fitted about 15 defibrillators in Fort William.

Alan said: 'It's absolutely fantastic that these communities will have access to this vital equipment. Working and engaging with the community on this has been a real success. An ambulance is always going to come, but someone could get to this bit of equipment in minutes and help save someone's life.'

Alan thanked Voluntary Action Lochaber and Lucky2BHere from Skye for their help with the project.

Thomas MacLennan said: 'It's great to see more defibrillators fitted in two more rural areas, which could help save a life.'

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£50,000 boost for school project

MONICA GIBSON
mgibson@obantimes.co.uk

A REMOTE community's ambitious plans to build its own school have received a £50,000 boost.

Strontian Community School Building (SCSB) Limited, the company campaigning to buy a plot of land on the Ardnamurchan peninsula, has secured £50,825 from the Scottish Land Fund (SLF).

The purchase is part of SCSB's innovative proposal to build a community-owned asset that it will lease, in the short term, to Highland Council as a new primary school.

Donald McCorkindale, chairman of SCBC, said: 'We are delighted the Scottish Government, through the Scottish Land Fund, has made this grant.'

'It is a huge boost, not only in financial terms but in the confidence placed in this ground-breaking initiative.'

'We are proud to be the first community benefit society supported by the SLF and we look forward to progressing and delivering outcomes in collaboration with partners, including the Highland Council and the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust.'

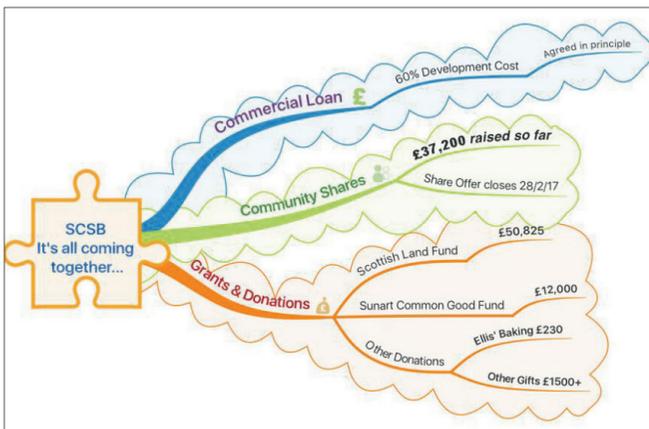
John Watt, of the Scottish Land Fund Committee, said: 'One of the many strengths of the Scottish Land Fund is its ability to help provide solutions to both immediate and long-term community needs.'

'In Strontian, local people have spoken and decided that they want to purchase land on which to build a new community-owned asset, in this case a primary school.'

'This unique proposal has both community and public sector support and includes a longer term plan that will see the community-owned building designed



The Strontian board has been given a massive cash boost. Photograph: Anthony McMullan



Grants, donations and loans are part of the puzzle helping SCSB towards its goal of £100,000, which is the figure when it believes the project becomes viable.

tion and forward thinking. This project reaffirms my belief that local communities must play a pivotal role in deciding their own futures.'

The grant is a big step towards the £100,000 SCSB believes makes its project viable.

As reported by *The Oban Times* earlier this month, the company announced a share launch and held a special fundraising ceilidh. SCSB members were overwhelmed that £27,000 in shares was raised over the first weekend. That figure has now risen to £37,200 so, combined with £12,000 from the Sunart Common Good Fund and other donations, SCSB believes its goal is 'all coming together'.

SCSB Limited is one of four community-led organisations sharing in the latest round of

Scottish Land Fund awards totalling £394,435.

Ailsa Raeburn, head of community assets at Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), said: 'It's really exciting to see the range of projects communities are involved in across Scotland.'

'The awards today show the ambition and reach of community groups who are looking to make a real difference in their local area.'

'HIE has been working with Strontian Community and Westray Development Trust over a number of years, supporting it with developing its ideas and helping them take forward its ambitious plans.'

'We look forward to seeing the positive impact the funding will have on the four communities which have received awards.'



Cash raised from shares is on the rise.

Dedicated Lochaber nurse wins award

A LOCHABER student has been presented with an award for his dedication to community nursing.

Tony Clapham, 47, received the award for outstanding student who promotes excellence in community nursing from the Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland. Tony, who lives in Roy Bridge, works as a community learning disabilities nurse with NHS Highland in Fort William and is also studying for a MA health and well-being with the University of the Highlands and Islands at Lewis College UHI.

He was presented with a Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland certificate and a cash prize by Rachel Erskine, the university's programme leader for its MA health and wellbeing, in Inverness last month.

Tony said: 'Receiving this award was an unexpected honour. A core part of my role is to identify and find ways to resolve the sometimes unexpected additional healthcare needs that my patients are more likely to experience. My studies have helped me to look into these challenges to their health in greater depth and to share that knowledge with others. I am grateful for the encouragement I have received from teaching staff at the University of the Highlands and Islands.'



Tony receives his award from Rachel Erskine.

Christmas hamper winner

Christmas came early for a Fort William shopper when she won a festive food hamper in a competition run by *The Oban Times* and Lidl. Wilma Moynihan from Corpach won £150 worth of food and drink. Ms Moynihan was unable to collect her hamper from Lidl this week, but her daughter Eilidh picked up her prize. Eilidh is pictured receiving the prize from Fort William Lidl team member Graham Webber.



Photograph: Abridgeside Photography.

View from the Chamber



LAST Friday saw Lochaber Chamber of Commerce hold a well-received business showcase at Innseagan House Hotel in Fort William.

Linda Aitken, general manager of the hotel, took the opportunity to showcase the improvements she had made to the business since taking over earlier in the year.

There has been incredible demand from Lochaber Chamber of Commerce membership to see more of these business showcase events happen.

A business showcase not only

provides an opportunity for you to tell other members about your business, but there is also an opportunity for building connections with other local business people.

The 2016/17 programme of events for Lochaber Chamber of Commerce members is presently being finalised, and it is anticipated that there will be a total of six business showcase sessions over the 12 months, with space for two businesses to present at each event.

The driving goal of Lochaber Chamber of Commerce is to develop and improve the economic environment for all businesses across Lochaber.

There has never been a better time to join up and have your



Linda Aitken, left, Fiona McCormick.

voice heard. If you want to find out more, please contact Fiona McCormick, membership and

events officer on 01397 705765 or by email membership@lochaberchamber.co.uk.

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Festive greetings to our readers



Rebecca Machin, head teacher, Kinlochleven High School

'THEN the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. 'Maybe Christmas,' he thought, 'doesn't come from a store.'

How the Grinch Stole Christmas - Dr Seuss.

Christmas is a wonderful time of the year when we celebrate faith, family and the tradition of giving gifts to our loved ones.

Take time during the rush of the holidays to enjoy the things in life that really matter. It is a time for reminiscing as well as for looking forward but also to be thankful for the things we have and mindful of those less fortunate than ourselves.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas.



Thomas MacLennan, Fort William and Ardnarmurchan councillor

IN 2017, I hope Fort William and Lochaber builds on a successful 2016.

There has been solid progress creating new affordable homes at Tweedale and Belhaven, new student accommodation at An Aird and the new council offices are now under way at the old school site in West End. As well as this, new pontoons have opened creating real opportunities in the marine tourism and cruise liner industries. Completion of Fort William school projects and more retail choice at the long-awaited site on North Road bringing Aldi, Home Bargains and Marks & Spencer Simply Food to the area is all good news. In wider Lochaber, there are innovative projects in hydro and community school building in Strontian, more progress on a new playing field for Acharacle and a major swimming pool upgrade in Mallaig.

But the real game changer for this area is the exciting development which sees Liberty House Group buying the Lochaber Smelter and Hydro power station at Kinlochleven and the estate lands. This safeguards the existing jobs and creates the opportunity for many hundreds of new manufacturing jobs to supply aluminium components to the automotive industry. Several hundred new homes will need to be built to accommodate the new workforce. If Fort William is going to be a major manufacturing base it urgently needs a 21st century road infrastructure in the town and improved A82 links. The next few years could transform this area. Everyone on the Lochaber Area committee wishes you a Merry Christmas and a very prosperous New Year.



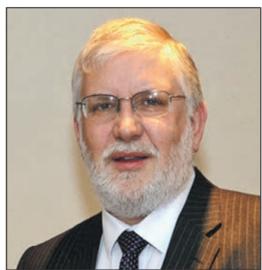
Kate Forbes, SNP MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch

OVER the course of this year, I've heard many people make the joke that '2016' will be the answer to nearly every modern history question for the children of 50 years hence.

It has been a busy, unexpected and, for some, a sad year. For Lochaber, the year is bookended by announcements regarding the Lochaber smelter. We started with the strategic review, and end with the official handover of the smelter to a new owner whose business plans will safeguard every job and create hundreds of new ones. My hope for Lochaber is that this is a catalyst for upgrading roads, building houses and improving the railway.

On a broader level, I have high hopes 2017 will answer a lot of the questions that 2016 has thrown up. What will come of the Brexit vote? Will fighting in Syria cease? Will Scotland's economy pick up?

Lastly, and more personally, I am looking forward to settling into a routine of parliamentary and constituency activities. In wider Lochaber, there are innovative projects in hydro and community school building in Strontian, more progress on a new playing field for Acharacle and a major swimming pool upgrade in Mallaig.



Jim Sutherland, head teacher, Lochaber High

MY WISH for Lochaber High in 2017 is that our school continues to improve its performance, building on significant successes to date.

I hope all our young people achieve their potential in a caring, supportive but challenging learning environment and that we work with our partners in the community to ensure our young people are prepared for the next stage of their lives, moving on to positive destinations in work, training or education, having some fun along the way.

To help achieve this, it would be good to see all of our current vacancies filled.

I am also wishing/hoping that all the snagging and finishing touches needed to conclude the Lochaber 21 refurbishment and rebuilding programme, which has transformed our working surroundings, will be completed before the year is out.



Ian Blackford, SNP MP for Skye, Ross and Lochaber

FIRST of all I wish you compliments of the season as we all look forward to Christmas.

I have been following the news from Aleppo and find it disturbing to watch. Man's inhumanity to man is dreadful. Just like last Christmas, the pain and suffering of so many people in Syria, Iraq and Sudan is on-going.

I have had a busy year in Parliament speaking in the House of Commons on many issues relating to the Highlands and Islands, as well as in my capacity as SNP pensions spokesperson.

Your needs are never far from my mind and I have held surgeries in centres of population and the Small Isles, Ardnarmurchan, Raasay and Gairloch, to name but a few, and plan to continue

with these. Looking to the future, one of the major issues which will have a direct effect on this area is the proposed boundary changes. I look forward to the challenges of the new year and doing all I can to represent your views.



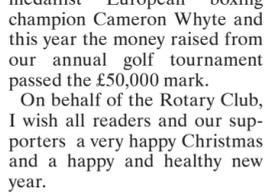
Paula Ross, president, Rotary Club of Lochaber

I AM GRATEFUL for this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported our projects and events this year.

Through your contributions, the Rotary Club has helped so many good causes in Lochaber.

These include the hugely successful Christmas Festival, the inter-schools young chef programme, local children's autism music therapy support, setting up a new Brownie group, funding the Plantation senior citizens' Christmas lunch, supporting the Kinlochleven PoW event, underpinning the local disability access panel, travelling expenses for silver medallist European boxing champion Cameron Whyte and this year the money raised from our annual golf tournament passed the £50,000 mark.

On behalf of the Rotary Club, I wish all readers and our supporters a very happy Christmas and a happy and healthy new year.



Donald Cameron, Highlands and Islands Scottish Conservative and Unionist MSP

OVER Christmas and New Year, I'll be reflecting over what has been in many ways a historic, memorable and unexpected year. For the first time since devolution, we saw three Scottish Conservative MSPs returned to serve the Highlands and Islands. I am immensely proud to represent this area in Parliament and will do my bit to ensure people in this area are represented properly at Holyrood.

It was a memorable year because of the many great things

that have happened across our region.

From the plans to redevelop Stornoway's port to the exciting news the Lochaber smelter will be saved, there are lots of positive news stories in a world that can all too often be portrayed in a negative light.

It was also an unexpected year. A victory for Donald Trump in the US elections, Brexit and the deaths of so many influential people and the changing political landscape have earmarked 2016 as a year that won't be forgotten.

I hope 2017 will be a fruitful year and wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year.



Rhoda Grant, Highland and Island Labour MSP, and David Stewart, Highland and Island Labour MSP

CHRISTMAS is a time to be at home with family and friends and I hope everyone has a relaxing time.

Workers at the aluminium smelter will no doubt be raising a glass or two to the good news there.

However, I'd like to spare a thought for those who are lonely or disadvantaged this Christmas and hope friends and relatives can rally round to help them have a happy time.

Here's to a warm fire, a meal shared around the table and the joy of hearing children playing with their presents.

THIS Christmas I'd like to pay tribute to those who have to work over the festive season, from front-line staff in our hospitals, to fire-fighters, ambulance crews, police and electricity and council workers who deal with emergencies.

There's no doubt Christmas is a time for family and I'll be with mine, like so many other families across the area, to give thanks for what we have.

My favourite film is *It's a Wonderful Life*, featuring the late American actor James Stewart. I've watched the film about 21 times.

To me it sums up the real joy of Christmas. As Bing Crosby once said: 'Unless we make Christmas an occasion to share our blessings, all the snow in Alaska won't make it white.' All the very best to you all.



Allan Henderson, Caol and Mallaig councillor

AS AN Independent Councillor for Caol and Mallaig ward, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous, healthy New Year.

Lochaber certainly has had a great Christmas present this year. After the long drawn out review by Rio Tinto the end result is an exciting new future for the smelter under its new management.

I look forward to sustainable ferry services at affordable prices, with vessels fit for purpose.

I really hope and wish for the traffic problems and roads infrastructure through Fort William to be improved.

I also look forward to maximising the use for business and leisure industries on Loch Linnhe, from the landing developments in Fort William, to the marina and port improvements at Corpach.

With the BA road end development finally under way, I look forward to the Blar Mor taking shape with a new hospital leading the way.



Christopher Millar-Craig, head teacher, Ardnarmurchan High School

TO ALL our pupils, staff, parents and community partners, a huge thank you to everyone for the support, volunteering of time and fundraising which help make Ardnarmurchan High School the fantastic place it is for learning and wider achievement.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year Nollaig Chridheil agus Bliadhna mhath ur.

WHAT'S ON

GIVE the gift of life this festive season by donating to the blood bank.

ScotBlod will be in the Nevis Centre on Thursday December 29 from 1.30pm to 4pm and from 5pm to 7.15pm.

LOCHABER Santa 'n' Elves fun run will take place tonight, Thursday December 22.

Entry costs £5 per adult, which includes a hot drink and mince pie.

Organisers will be raising money for Lochaber Mountain Rescue on the night.

Juniors can run for free, with gifts and a medal presented by Santa.

Head torches will be essential for adults.

Registration for the run will be tonight (Thursday) at 5pm in the parade.

FUNDRAISING events to help support the families of three Lochaber children who have been diagnosed with cancer will take place in the new year.

A New Year raffle is being held on Sunday January 1 at the Commando Bar, Spean Bridge, to raise money for all three children's family.

With great prizes to be won, tickets can be bought from Cabin Food Stop, Corpach, The Bridge Café, Spean Bridge, and Unique Hair and Beauty, Fort William, or by calling Shona MacDonald on 07717 488117.

The Body Shop will be the focus for a fundraising event for Emily, Eirwyn and Ryan on Friday January 6 at Caol Community Centre at 7pm.

THE LAST postal collection for Santa's letters at the Mooring's Hotel is tomorrow (Friday December 23) at 5pm.

Take the children along to the hotel where they can post their letter to Santa and pick up a gift from his sleigh while they are there.

CARE Lochaber and Caol Primary School are running free computer skills work shops in the New Year.

If you want to learn more about creating documents, email, Skype and Google searching on the internet then book a place by calling Laura on 01397 701222.

The sessions will start on Tuesday January 10 from 1.30pm to 2.30pm for six weeks.

Free transport can be provided, but spaces are limited.

THE BUZZ PROJECT will be holding its Christmas party tonight (Thursday December 22).

Festivities start at 7.30pm and will be open to Buzz Project members.

New young people are always welcome.



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FW

Plockton

THERE was four inches of rain during November in Plockton, with 11 dry days. The warmest day was 14°C and coldest night was -1.6°C.

SEVENTY EIGHT senior citizens attended the annual Christmas party in Plockton hall on Friday December 2. They came from Achmore, Ardnarff, Achnandarach and Plockton and everyone enjoyed an excellent meal provided by the Plockton inn.

Young Alastair Sharp welcomed the company with tunes on the pipes and, after the meal, Santa Claus arrived with presents.

Dancing followed with music by the Glenelg dance band. Several of the guests even sang.

THE LOCHALSH branch of Legion Scotland held its annual general meeting in the Lochalsh hotel, Kyle, on November 28.

Treasurer Terry Grant provided a satisfactory report, despite an expenditure of £2,539. It was reported there was 64 paid up members and that 21 parcels will be distributed locally at Christmas.

Local poppy collections totalled £4,485.62 and £100 was donated to the Earl Haig fund.

Office bearers were re-elected. Secretary Charlie M Macrae wished to retire but was persuaded to carry on for his 30th year in the post.

PLOCKTON hall held its annual general meeting in Plockton hall on December 7.

Ten people attended with Kally Leiper, treasurer, giving a satisfactory report, despite expenditure of £9,199.51.

All the office-bearers were elected with Mairi Mcghee added to the committee.

FOR THE first time since the millennium, there will be no dance at Hogmanay this year. The bonfire and fireworks will still be held.

THE HALL committee is delighted Highland Council has agreed to extend the library lease, which began in 1996, until 2021.

PIPER Fred Morrison played in Plockton hall on Monday December 5 to an appreciative audience as part of his winter tour.

A COFFEE morning in Plockton on Saturday December 3 raised more than £500 for Plockton Drama Club funds.

THE LOCHALSH community was saddened by several deaths in the last few weeks.

In Kyle, Ruby Macrae and Jean Easter died. In Plockton, Ian Mackenzie and Eileen Allan passed, and at Dronie Jessie Carter and Deirdrie Matheson died.

Sympathy is expressed to all sorrowing relatives.

PLOCKTON and District Horticultural and Arts and Crafts Society held a wreath-making workshop in Plockton hall on December 8.

Thirteen people enjoyed the evening which was led by Donnie MacKintosh.

Lochaber

SCHOOL pupils in Lochaber will get to enjoy the silver screen in their own schools thanks to a small group's big efforts.

Lochaber Cinema Group (LCG) was set up with the aim of eventually bringing a permanent cinema in Fort William.

LGC has made some headway in finding premises but until things can be finalised and money raised, the group is reaching out to schools and halls which may be suitable to screen films over the festive period.

Mallaig, Kinlochleven, Caol, Lochside and Lundavra primaries have all signed up, with showings of *Elf* and other family favourites scheduled in the coming weeks.

The group has already secured equipment but has set up a crowdfunding page to help cover additional costs which would allow films to be screened a few times a year for children.

A LCG spokesman said: 'We would like to be ambitious and have all schools in the area as members so we can come along and screen movies for the school children.'

Membership cards would be £1, available next year. Anyone interested should contact LCG via their Facebook page.



Banavie pupils entertained residents of Moss Park nursing home.

Pupils on song with festive cheer

PUPILS sang and eyes sparkled in Caol last week as schools performed carol services at care homes.

Youngsters from Banavie Primary School entertained residents at Moss Park nursing home on December 14.

Manager Libby McKee said the home tries to organise something every day to keep the residents entertained and that they particularly love when the children come round. She added: 'The singers

were so enthusiastic and the residents just love the visits. Seeing and hearing the children singing makes Christmas for them - their eyes light up and their toes tap and it's just lovely. 'We had our Christmas

party on December 7 and Presto Panto came and performed as well so it's been great.'

Pupils from Upper Achintore also visited last Thursday and St Columba's pupils sang their tunes yesterday.

Housing and forestry in Spean Bridge spotlight

SPEAN Bridge Community Council held a meeting on Tuesday December 6.

Susan Hunter of Highland Small Communities Housing Trust and Jamie McIntyre, a freelance forestry advisor to the Woodland Trust, gave a presentation.

Susan opened by giving an overview of the work of the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust, a registered charity formed in 1998 to help rural communities secure long-term solutions to their local housing needs.

Jamie then spoke about woodland crofts and outlined what was planned for the 40-hectare site at Bohenie,

where it is envisaged there will be three woodland crofts offering families an opportunity for a sustainable life and to build a house.

The chairman thanked Susan and Jamie for interesting presentations.

Highland Council: The Leanachan road has been worked on and surfaced dressed. Work to carry out permanent patching are listed, but not yet instructed as there is a backlog of drainage issues with standing water on the carriageway that need to be addressed before the onset of winter. The council will try to get something done with the pot holes in Altour Road as soon as possible.

The tree causing a visibility problem at the junction of the A86, although a trunk road issue, is obstructing the watercourse so it will be removed.

The blocked culvert on the B8005 will be examined.

LEADER funding: Kimonivaig Parish Church had submitted an application to LEADER for the upgrade of their hall.

The church was fortunate to have the match funding, but is looking for support from the community. It was agreed the secretary would draft a letter and the treasurer would forward it to the LEADER development officer.

Christmas shopping can boost school funds

PARENTS, pupils and staff from Kinlochleven are urging Christmas shoppers to get their last-minute gifts the 'easyfundraising' way and help boost cash for the school.

'From travel to toasters', easyfundraising receives commission on purchases from 3,140 shops and sites. The organisation then turns that into a donation and gives it to cause selected by the user.

In the build up to Christmas, Kinlochleven High School Parent Teacher

Friend Forum are asking festive shoppers to choose them, believing it is a great way to help pay for the many extra curricular activities and trips which are such an important part of the school's ethos.

The group said: 'Join easyfundraising and you can collect free donations for us every time you buy something online. It won't cost you a penny extra so please help us to raise funds.'

Every penny is reinvested into extra-curricular activities for our youngsters.

Morvern and Caol awarded grant cash

LOCHABER Local Area Partnership has made its first two LEADER funding approvals.

Morvern Community Development Company was awarded £34,173 for the expansion of pontoons at Lochaline Harbour.

Angus Robertson, from Morvern Community Development Company, said: 'LEADER funding will contribute towards expanding the berthing facilities to accommodate another seven boats of 12 metres and over.'

LEADER funding of £25,000 will contribute towards Caol Regeneration Company's plans to establish a community-owned marina and public slipway adjacent to the southern outlet of the Caledonian Canal. Donald Corbett, chairman of Caol Regeneration Company said: 'LEADER funding will support project management services to oversee the development of the project. We hope the marina will open in spring 2019 if capital funding can be raised.'

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On October 20 2016, the Boundary Commission for Scotland published initial proposals for a 12-week consultation period which runs until January 11 2017.

A CONSULTATION session took place last Wednesday (December 14) in Kilmallie Community Centre.

Members of the community were invited to see plans and discuss proposed parliamentary boundary

Kilmallie

changes, in which the current constituencies in Scotland are to reduce to 53 in time for the next general election in 2020

The Kilmallie Community

Council is concerned about the proposals, believing they would create a division not only in Kilmallie and are urging people to get informed submit comments to The Boundary Commission for Scotland by January 11 2017.

Long-serving sea cadet trio move on

LOCHABER Sea Cadets have said farewell to three people who have given huge amounts of time and effort to the unit over the years.

Leading Cadet Hannah Calder, the first Lord Lieutenant's Cadet, has left to go to university in Edinburgh where she joined her local Sea Cadet Unit as a member of staff.

Petty Officer cadet Tricia Mathieson left to take up a new job in the central belt and has transferred to the Grangemouth unit.

Hannah's older sister Denise has also left the unit to start a new life in the north east of England and has joined the South Shields unit.

A sea cadets spokesman said: 'We wish all three of them the very best of luck in the future. We'll miss you. Our loss is the gain of your new units. This now leaves us with no adult female staff, so we'd really like to hear from any ladies over 18 years of age who have a few hours to spare us each week.'

MORVERN

lines

Removal of the Stone of Destiny

EVERY year round about Christmas, if national newspaper reporters are stuck for a subject to write about, they usually remind their readers about the four Scottish students who, on Christmas Day 1950, removed the Stone of Destiny from the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey and took it back to Scotland, where it remained for four months.

Uproar and outrage followed leading John McAvoy to write a song called *The Wee Magic Stane*, popularised by Robin Hall and Jimmy McGregor, which begins: 'The Dean o' Westminster was a powerful man, he held a' the strings o' the State in his hand, but wi' a' his great business it flustered him nane, when some rogues ran away wi' his wee magic stane. Wi' a too-ra-li-oo-ra-li-oo-ra-li.'

The history of the stone is well known and needn't be repeated here other than to say this year, being the 20th anniversary of its formal return to Edinburgh Castle, there is bound to be more than the usual passing interest.

That is if you believe the stone captured in 1296 by Edward I as spoils of war and taken south was the real one.

Some historians maintain that when King Edward's army was advancing towards Scone Abbey, where the Scottish kings were crowned, its keepers quickly hid it, which is not improbable.

After all, during the Second World War when it looked as though the Germans were on the verge of invading the British Isles, the Secretary of State for Scotland took the precaution of ordering the best of our art treasures and national archives to be taken away and hidden around the countryside for safe-keeping.

For example the Registers of the Great Seal and other important state papers were removed from Edinburgh and stored in the Oban Sheriff Court House and Morenish House near Killin until after the war.

I have read a number of books on the 1950 incident but nowhere can I find where the idea to remove the Coronation Stone originated.

My guess is it came from a book called *The North Wind of Love*, written in 1944, in which the author and co-founder of the Scottish National Party, Sir Compton Mackenzie (1883-1972), sets out the plot.

Today, Compton Mackenzie is best known for his books and films *Rocket's Galore*, *Whisky Galore*, *Monarchs of the Glen* and many other amusing dramas set in the Highlands.

The North Wind of Love is the fourth volume of *The Four Winds of Love* which was the overall title for a series of novels, based on the auto-biographical character of an ardent nationalist. Garrulous, rambling and dated, it is largely a novel of Mackenzie's life and times and not an easy read.

For all that, it contains many amusing lines, such as, from a Skye man: 'Can't stand the idea of Home Rule. Sooner be ruled by Whitehall than Edinburgh lawyers. You fellows in the Department of Agriculture are bad enough already.' And during a conversation in a bar: 'So much of our nationalist propaganda has been concentrated on telling people that if we manage our own affairs we should manage them more profitably. When you press that kind of nationalist you find he's using a municipal drain-pipe as a telescope for the future. His Scottish Parliament is hardly more than a glorified county council. He's not prepared to sacrifice half a crown, much less imperil his own livelihood.'

Compton Mackenzie converted to Roman Catholicism in 1914. He died in 1972 and is buried at Eoligarry, Isle of Barra.

THE FESTIVE season is a time for reading - amongst other activities.

Despite social media, there are still a large number of readable, enjoyable books to be had including *A History of South Lochaveside - a Place of Land and Water* by Mary, Lady McGrigor of Upper Sonachan.

This lovely book, full of old stories, Gaelic place names and much more, records a past way of life around Loch Awe-side.

It first came out in 1969 and appears again by popular demand. I am not surprised. No-one with an interest in the history of Argyll should be without a copy.

The same can be said for *It's a far cry to Loch Awe*, which is a historical and nostalgic tour round Loch Awe written by Charlie Mitchell, a former forester who spent much of his life exploring Loch Awe area.

After Charlie's untimely death in 2015, the Dalmally Historical Association courageously took on the task of publishing his book as a memorial to him and were successful in obtaining a grant to meet some of the costs. The author started his tour at Glennan, at the south west end of the loch, and included Loch Avich, Glen Orchy, Glen Lochy and other places.

The book has a wealth of information about the early days of tourism, the arrival of the railway and the cargo boats which were the life blood of the area. It is profusely illustrated with evocative old photographs and is available for £9.99 at Dalmally Post Office and Shop, Waterstones, Oban, and other local outlets.

Iain Thornber
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Getting up steam for a cruise on Loch Awe about 1880.

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Public praised for role in hunt for missing Crystalla

LOUISE GLEN
lglen@obantimes.co.uk

THE COMMUNITY response to help find a woman missing from Oban has been 'outstanding', said the co-ordinator of a number of volunteer searches throughout the area.

Darrel Williams, the manager of the St Columba Hotel in Oban, put out a call on Friday night after hearing that his colleague's mum had gone missing and he and many others wanted to help.

Mr Williams, a keen member of Oban Lorne rugby club, was supported by his fellow players who gave up their Christmas lunch on Saturday to help with the search.

Mr Williams said: 'It has been a very difficult time. The family thank everyone who has been helping and thinking about Stel-

la. We went out looking on Friday night and then again all day on Saturday.

'People have been so kind by getting out to look. So many people, including colleagues, friends - even the staff in the Regent Hotel who went on a minimum service to get out and join in as well. We've walked all over the place and in some cases we have covered the area twice.

'I've been overwhelmed by the outstanding support from all the community to get out in some terrible weather to find someone who is a stranger to them.

'Thank you to the community and all the people who have been helping us search.

'It is now time for the emergency services to continue to do their work.'

Oban RNLI said it was asked

initially by Stornoway Coastguard to assist in the search for a person reported missing to Oban police late on Friday evening December 16. The lifeboat launched at 11.40pm and conducted a close search of the shoreline from Oban Cathedral, past Dunollie and along to Ganavan and Dunstaffnage.

Oban Coastguard team conducted a shore-based search in the same area along with a Coastguard rescue helicopter.

On its return, the lifeboat searched the north and then east shores of the Isle of Kerrera.

Nothing was found and the lifeboat returned to her berth where she was refuelled and ready for service by 2am.

Police appeal for assistance with continuing search

POLICE Scotland are seeking the assistance of the public in trying to trace a woman missing from Oban since Thursday December 15. Crystalla Dean, 52, was last seen by her daughter at her home in Longsdale Crescent at 8pm last week.

The following day, her daughter returned to the house and, when her mum failed to return home, she contacted police and reported her missing.

Crystalla is described as white, around 5ft 1in tall, with a slim build and curly hair which is dyed blue. It is believed she may have been wearing jeans and boots.

Crystalla has dogs Breaigha and Brodie and she normally



walks them in a wooded area beyond the cathedral, known locally as The Witches. Extensive inquiries have been carried out with officers

and specialist police resources being used in the search to locate Crystalla. However, all attempts to locate her have so far proved unsuccessful.

The search for Crystalla is continuing, with Police Scotland's mountain rescue team and police divers being assisted by partner agencies, such as HM Coastguard and the mountain rescue team.

A police spokesman said: 'Crystalla has recently been dealing with some personal issues and her family just want to know she is safe and well.'

'If anyone has seen Crystalla or has any information or knowledge as to her whereabouts, please contact Oban Police Office on 101.'

TIMESLINE

New towing for Scottish waters

THE Maritime and Coastguard Agency has awarded a five-year contract for a new Scottish emergency towing vessel (ETV) to Ardent Maritime Netherlands BV, to begin on December 31, 2016.

The ship is the levoli Black, a 70m towing vessel of some 2,283 gross tonnes and a bollard pull of 139 tonnes. The vessel is experienced in ETV operations, having served as an ETV for the Netherlands from 2010-13.

The levoli Black is making her way from the Adriatic to relieve the existing emergency tug, the Herakles, by December 31.

Council rapped over exam results

A FREEDOM of Information request about exam results in Argyll and Bute was mishandled by the local authority, the regulator has ruled.

The officer said the local authority should not have withheld exam information from parents when it was requested. An Argyll and Bute Council spokeswoman said that among the 1,200 inquiries the authority received more than 98 per cent of people were happy with the response.

Number of rats is on the increase

EYEWITNESSES are reporting an increased number of rats in Oban. On social media, people are blaming a number of factors, including a fire at the Millpark depot in Oban, and the new three-weekly bin collections. Anyone with concerns can phone Argyll and Bute Council's pest control team on 01546 605514.

Find us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/obantimes

Storm Barbara will disrupt ferry sailings

STORM Barbara is forecast to bring 90mph winds to west and north Scotland before Christmas Day.

Ferry operator CalMac has warned travellers to check regularly for disruption on individual routes online at www.calmac.co.uk or via its smartphone app or on Twitter.

CalMac operations director Drew Collier said: 'We will review sailings case by case, but would advise anyone planning to travel by ferry to take this into account when planning journeys.'

The Gourock and Dunoon passenger service, operated by Argyll Ferries, may also be affected - see updates at www.argyllferries.co.uk.

The Met Office issued a 'be prepared' amber warning for severe weather, with gusts of 80-90mph expected on Friday into Saturday until they ease in the morning, and 'the potential for some structural damage, as well as disruption to power supplies and travel, with restrictions on bridges'.



Woodwind and fiddle pupils from Oban High played for the pensioners' treat on Tuesday lunchtime.

ALDI

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- Carrots 1kg

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Mòd 2016 - Children's Mod

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Christmas Eve, 7.30pm

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A look back at the Children's Mod 2016.

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Highlights from the Tìree Music Festival 2016.

Mòd nan Còisirean 2016

Là na Nollaig, 7.30f
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Na còisirean aig Mòd Rìoghail Nàiseanta nan Eilean Siar.
The choir competitions at the Royal National Mod 2016.

Balach nam Bàgh
The Boy from the Bays

Là na Nollaig, 9f
Christmas Eve, 9pm

Iain Urchardan - Neach ealain, ministear, craoladair, sgrìobhaiche - agus reubaltach. Sgeulachd mu shàr Ghàidheal.
The remarkable story of John D Urquhart, broadcaster, Church of Scotland minister and artist.

Anna Latharna: Aitealan

Dimàirt 27 Dùbhlachd, 9f
Tuesday 27 December, 9pm

Cuairt-chiùil shònraichte a' comharrachadh stòiridh agus beatha iongantach Anna Latharna NicGilliosa.
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Firms warned over safety flaws

LOUISE GLEN
lglen@obantimes.co.uk

EMPLOYERS are being reminded to keep staff well trained and safe at work, after a ruling by Oban Sheriff Court saw an established business fined £3,000.

3663 Alba Ltd, who purchased Fortheith's Food Services in 2013, was censured after a worker, Steven John Tonner, who had been given no formal training, was injured driving a forklift truck.

Now the environmental health team at Argyll and Bute Council is warning that many other workers may be in a similar

situation – and it will push for prosecution in every case.

Councillor David Kinniburgh, spokesman for regulatory services, said: 'The council is committed to supporting local businesses, which is why our environmental health team engages proactively with all employers, big and small, to help them work well.

'As a partner with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), we have a role in supporting businesses to manage risk, helping them tackle work-related ill health, as well as avoiding the potentially costly fines which come with breaches of health and safety legislation.

'We can be proud of the record of the overwhelming majority of businesses in Argyll and Bute when it comes to occupational health and safety.

'However, where and when necessary, we do take enforcement action, such as in this recent case.

'An accident investigation by our team identified failings in the company's management of mandatory health and safety training, which led to a prosecution and a fine of £3,000.

'This should serve as a reminder to other businesses of the potentially serious consequences of breaking health and safety at work law. No matter the type of

business, workers have the right to have the appropriate training to ensure they go home safe and well at the end of their working day.

'The council's environmental health team is here to help businesses and is happy to provide advice and support, on a confidential basis, to help them comply with the relevant legislation. Please don't hesitate to call the council on 01546 605519.'

Information on how to ensure workplace transport is safe to use and workers are properly trained to use it can be found on HSE's website at www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/index.htm.



Steven John Tonner had his hand crushed in an accident.

TIMESLINE

Parking rakes in £345,794 in fees

OBAN car parking charges have raised £345,794 for Argyll and Bute Council between July and September this year – £55,000 over its target.

The figure was released to the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee in the Corran Hall on Friday. The report stated: 'The popularity of RET (road equivalent tariff) which has seen the reduction in ferry fares, has increased ferry traffic and vehicles visiting the town.

'This may have had a knock-on effect on car parking income.'

Lifeboat races to aid grounded ship

OBAN RNLI lifeboat was called out on Thursday December 15 following a mayday call from a cargo boat aground under Connel bridge.

At 3.10pm the lifeboat was tasked to respond to the call for help from the Havgul. The vessel had been entering Loch Etive during the short period of slack water.

The RNLI said that at peak flow on a spring tide, the falls can run at up to 12 knots with more than 4,600 tons of water passing through the narrow gap every second. Fortunately, the grounding took place at slack water.

The RNLI arrived just in time to see the vessel refloat on the rising tide.

Windfall is cause for celebrations

SEVEN community organisations will receive a share of £20,780 from the Big Lottery Fund.

The groups are Mull and Iona Community Trust, Lismore Community Trust, Isle of Kerrera Development Trust, Isle of Luing Community Trust, Islay and Jura Youth Action, Kilfinan Community Forest company and Tobermory Playpark.

Each organisation has received a grant between £1,000 and £5,000 and have been asked to organise events or activities that would bring people together and celebrate what makes their local communities special.

Argyll and Bute MSP Michael Russell said: 'I congratulate all those who have succeeded in their applications. These projects will provide much-needed activity in a variety of communities where small amounts of money go big distances. Celebration is the theme of these grants and I am sure each area will be celebrating today.'

Playpark fund hits £76,000

FRIENDS of Oban Community Playpark have raised £23,000 towards finishing its final phase, the under-fives play area – leaving only £24,000 to go to reach their £100,000 target.

Friends of Oban Community Playpark is a fundraising group aiming to build 'an outstanding play and recreation area for five to 15-year-olds in the green field next to Atlantis Leisure, created and fundraised for by our community for our community', according to its Facebook page.

Chairwoman Lyndsay Elliott told *The Oban Times*: 'Our recent funding successes are £10,068 from Scottish Sea Farms (SSF) Heart of the Community Fund and £12,942 from Crerar Hotels Trust, which will be used to build a new all-inclusive under-fives playpark at Atlantis Community Leisure. Friends of Oban Community Playpark are aiming to raise a total of £100,000 and with these new donations, have about £76,000 towards the project.

'Both Crerar Hotels Trust and SSF have previously supported our project, with both contributing to the older children's playpark, and we are delighted at their ongoing support.

'We need to continue to close the funding gap and have some grants pending early 2017, so it is a real possibility that we can start building in 2017.'

On top of raising £76,000 for the under-fives playpark, so far the group has 'built an awesome playpark for five to 15-year-olds', which opened in February, and upgraded a memorial garden.



In a galaxy far, far away ... there's a cookie monster

FANS of *Star Wars* flocking to see the latest film *Rogue One* at Oban's Phoenix Cinema on Monday may have been surprised to spot the cookie monster rather than Darth Vader.

The blue, googly-eyed, voracious biscuit-eating puppet from the US children's TV series *Sesame Street*, famous for the phrase 'me want cookie', made a guest appearance in Oban's cinema to watch the eighth instalment in the epic space saga – and *The Oban Times* can exclusively reveal the cookie monster ate a packet of Revels.

However, the cookie monster in question was actually Lee McKillop,

a janitor at Kilniver Primary School, who was dressed in her fuzzy onesie to raise money for the Sophie North Charitable Trust.

'This is a charity that is close to my heart,' writes Lee on her fundraising page 'My Onesie Night Out', on mydonate.bt.com. 'I have a friend who lost his daughter in the Dunblane shootings in 1996. This charity was set up in her memory and I'm aiming to raise £100.'

Lee has already smashed her target, making £326 by Thursday last week.

This year was the 20th anniversary of the Dunblane massacre, when 16 children, including five-year-old Sophie

North, and their teacher were killed by Thomas Hamilton in a mass shooting.

To honour Sophie's memory, her father, Dr Mick North, set up a charity in 2004. It makes three donations each year, on the anniversary of the tragedy in March, on Sophie's birthday in October, and in April, in memory of Sophie's mum, who died of breast cancer in 1993.

By the end of last year, the trust had made 25 donations totalling £6,156 to charities related to children's diseases and hospices, breast cancer, care of the terminally ill, and conflict resolution and anger reduction.

Ms McKillop, a friend of Mick, said:

'The things he has been through – it is just amazing. He was one of the main forces against handguns.'

Earlier this year Dr North said children in Britain are safer as a result of a successful campaign to ban handguns a year after the tragedy.

Lee added: 'I work in a wee primary school myself and it could have been any of us. I tried to think of what I could do. I tried to think of something Sophie would have liked.'

So she picked her cookie monster onesie out of the bedroom drawer and decided to wear it to the cinema, because 'it would be busier, just to add to the embarrassment'.

New homes approved for Glenshellach site

A PLAN to build six more affordable houses in Glenshellach has been approved by councillors, writes Sandy Neil.

The application for six two-storey houses east of Hayfield, submitted by Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA), was recommended for approval by Argyll and Bute Council's planning officers at the meeting of its Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee (PPSL) at Kilmory Castle on Wednesday December 14.

It drew 121 expressions of support, summarised at the meeting, with many echoing the argument that Oban 'desperately' needs new fuel-efficient housing when the population is falling, and it needs to support services such as schools, shops, police stations and hospitals. Another argued: 'Funding has been made available by the Scottish Government and Argyll and Bute Council's SHIP Fund, which should not be lost for a project which will be of benefit to residents.'

On the other side sat 100 objections. One objector cited a 'jarring contrast' between the 'individuality' of Hayfield's existing one-and-a-half-storey houses, with their slate roofs, timber windows and stone or timber cladding, and the proposed two-storey homes with 'steeply pitched roofs and low quality finishing materials'. They asked: 'How can one set of stringent rules apply to one development and be totally disregarded for an adjacent site?'

Another argued the 'traffic

now being funnelled down Glengallan Road has reached saturation point', and that 'additional traffic will have an adverse impact on pedestrian safety particularly with the large number of school children in the area'.

The development 'will exacerbate flooding in the lower glen and Lochavullin area', another objector said, adding: 'Glenshellach is already classified by SEPA as a significant flood hazard area and are continuing to support residential development to the detriment and the hazard of properties lower down the glen. All further development within the Glenshellach area should be stopped pending a full flood survey of the whole catchment area.'

However, planning officers replied: 'SEPA hold no information to suggest that the application site subject of the current application is at risk of flooding.'

Others argued 'this part of the town is already overdeveloped and no encouragement should be given to squeezing in more houses than the local development plan (LDP) defines.'

Council officers responded: 'The LDP states that "the housing provision numbers are indicative and in appropriate circumstances may be varied at the discretion of the planning authority. Should the current proposal for six units be approved, this would represent an overall increase in units within the allocation from 11 to 18 units, which is considered to be acceptable and would relate well to the higher density development directly to the east of the site".'

Earlier, at a hearing on November 14, councillors voted unanimously to approve ACHA's plan to build 12 houses by Hayfield, which had received no letters of support and 43 objections. The original application for 18 houses had been reduced to 12, but Steven Fair, who represented objectors to the 'tightly crammed' development of 'excessive number and density', argued six of the houses had simply been relocated to an adjacent site and a second planning application, and they 'jointly propose 18 houses on an 11-house allocation'.

The council stated this application now brings the number of affordable units on that site to 18, significantly more than the 25 per cent required in the LDP.

Councillor David Kinniburgh, chairman of the PPSL, said: 'We were happy to approve this application. This planning approval, in keeping with the council's local development plan and national planning policy, is great news for people in and around Oban who are looking for good-quality, affordable housing.

'It's also good news for people who work in construction – new developments support local joiners, plumbers, builders, electricians and so on.'

Councillor Robin Currie, policy lead for housing, said: 'This is a very exciting time for housing in Argyll and Bute. With 554 new affordable homes having already been created, and plans for up to another 650, this will go a long way to addressing the housing shortage.'

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Well deserved point for the Fort against Formartine

A BRILLIANT effort from Fort William at the weekend saw them earn a very well-deserved point against fourth top and big spending Formartine United.

The Fort took the game to the visitors straight from the start at Saturday's home game, and came close to opening the scoring in only the ninth minute, Scottie Davidson's excellent effort being turned onto the bar by Ewen Macdonald in the Formartine goal.

Sean Ellis was next up to try his luck, but his effort from the edge of the box just drifted

Football

past the post. Then, just before half-time, Fort skipper Iain Foggo was denied by a brilliant pointblank save by Macdonald.

Foggo again went close just 20 seconds into the second half, this time from 25 yards.

Stone Wall

The Fort had what appeared to be two certain penalties turned down.

On both occasions, Fort top scorer Davidson was taken down by the United keeper, both, if given, would have resulted in a



Fort's Sean Ellis bears down on Stuart Smith.



Fort captain Iain Foggo chases the ball as Formartine's Stuart Smith closes in. Photos: Iain Ferguson, The Write Image

red card for Macdonald. Craig Mainland then hit the united bar from distance.

On the hour mark, Claggan Park erupted as Fort took the lead.

Sean Ellis was brilliantly played in by Scottie Davidson and his excellent left-foot finish gave Macdonald no chance. But

within 10 minutes, Scott Barbour fired home an equaliser after Dougie MacLennan had saved Jamie Masson's initial effort.

Chances continued to flow at both ends, but there was to be no more scoring and it finished Fort William 1, Formartine United 1.

Fort manager Ally Ewen said: 'I was pleased with the result. Where we are in the league, every point is crucial to us.'

Outstanding

'Today was a tough test for our credibility and we set out to make life difficult for them, and I felt we did that. Dougie MacLennan was outstanding for us,

as was the team as a whole. I felt that if a couple of refereeing decisions had gone our way then it would have been three points instead of one.'

Next up is Clachnacuddin tomorrow night (December 23) followed by Strathspey Thistle at home on Friday December 30 with an 8pm kick-off.

Santa 'n' Elves hold fun run

Fun run

LOCHABER Santa 'n' Elves fun run will take place tonight (December 22).

Senior Santas will do a 5k run, with a shorter loop available for junior elves.

The route will start and finish at the Parade, with runners going through Fort William.

Organisers took to Facebook to encourage people to get involved: 'Get those Santa hats, jingle bells or elves ears out and dusted down in preparation for the festive fun.'

Taking part will cost £5 per adult, which includes a hot drink and mince pie and, on the night, organisers will be raising money for Lochaber Mountain Rescue.

Juniors can run for free, with gifts and a medal presented by Santa.

Head torches will be essential for adults.

Registration for the run will be tonight at 5pm in the parade and if you're not joining in for the run helpers are always very much appreciated.

Club lottery numbers

Lottery

THE WINNING numbers for the Caol Regeneration Lotto draw on December 15 were 1, 7 and 8.

There were no winners so the jackpot is up to £200 for the draw on today (December 22).

FORT William Golf Club's lotto numbers for last Thursday's draw were 10, 13 and 19.

With no winners last week, today's jackpot is up to £400.

THE Ballachulish Shinty lottery winning numbers for the draw on December 18 were 13, 16 and 19.

There were no winners this week so the draw goes to £400 for the next lotto which will take place on Boxing Day, a day later with Christmas being Sunday.

THE numbers for the Caol Community Centre bingo lotto on the December 19 draw were, 2, 4 and 10.

One winner scooped the £800 up for grabs, M Mathers, so back to £100 for the next draw.

Indoor football results

Indoor football

RESULTS from week eight of the indoor league: Ballatasaray 0, Nevis Range 4; Fiorentina Turner 3, Inverloch 0; HW Energy 1, Doghouse Thistle 12; Portoway 5, The Stoaters 2; The Young Team 3, The Goon Squad 2.

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Local gillie catches monster salmon on the River Spean

THE 2016 winner of the FishPal Malloch Trophy, for one of the largest salmon caught by an angler on a fly and safely returned during the year in Scottish waters, has been announced.

The successful angler is John MacIsaac, a gillie from the River Lochy in Lochaber, who caught the fish of a lifetime in the River Spean (the Lochy tributary) on September 29. The salmon was estimated as weighing between 38lb and 41lb, and was just under 47 inches long.

The River Lochy, known as the Queen of Scottish salmon rivers, has a long-standing reputation for big fish. John hooked and lost a similar sized fish several years ago in the main river.

John said: 'I was on the point of going home at the end of the day when I decided to try a cast on the Spean as I had not fished there this year.'

'My first cast splashed into the tail of

the long pool. The heavy fly I was using brought the fish to the surface where he hit the fly, turned and rolled.

'Now attached, the fish took a couple of runs during which I had the chance to see its belly - I then knew at once that it was very big fish. However, it was only when it came closer to me that I realised I was going to need some help. Fortunately, the fish then dived and stayed deep, hardly moving, until assistance came.'

Mr MacIsaac continued: 'When Joe, my fellow gillie, arrived 25 minutes later with his net, I told him immediately, "We going to need a bigger net"! The salmon's length and depth dwarfed the net. It was a very deep fish, with an adipose fin the size of an apple. I was not even able to get my hand around the tail.'

The fish was returned quickly and safely back into the River Spean. To be

Angling

eligible for the trophy, a salmon must be caught on a fly in a sportsmanlike manner and be released back into the water.

At the FishPal Malloch Trophy committee meeting on December 14, several contenders were considered from a shortlist of five.

Mr MacIsaac's entry, which fulfilled the relevant criteria including best evidence, was endorsed as the winner for 2016.

His name will be engraved on the Tay Foundation's trophy, joining an illustrious list of previous winners which stretches back four decades.

He will also receive a replica Malloch Trophy, a Mackenzie DTX rod, a £250 FishPal voucher and a box of salmon flies from Caledonia Fly Company.



John MacIsaac pictured with the monster salmon caught on the River Spean.

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WEATHER

Thursday	Light rain Winds moderate westerly Temperatures 4°C to 5°C.
Friday	Heavy rain Winds strong south south easterly Temperatures 5°C to 9°C.
Weekend Outlook	Cloudy on Saturday Heavy rain on Sunday Winds strong westerly Temperatures 5°C to 9°C.

Stop Press: New pontoons at Ulva and visitor moorings installed at Lochaline by North West Marine Ltd

TIDAL INFORMATION
Tide tables for Oban during the week from Thursday December 22, 2016 are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour) BST)

Date	am				pm							
Thur	05.49	1.6	12.06	3.1	19.12	1.9	**	**	Ardrihaig	-5.35	Mallaig	+0.25
Fri	01.21	3.0	06.52	1.7	13.40	3.1	20.26	1.9	Campbeltown	-5.30	Portree	+0.55
Sat	02.21	3.1	08.01	1.8	14.39	3.2	21.21	1.8	Crinan	-0.47	Tobermory	+0.16
Sun	03.08	3.2	09.06	3.2	15.22	3.4	22.02	1.6	Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Dover	+5.30
Mon	03.49	3.4	09.57	1.6	16.01	3.5	22.37	1.5	Lochboisdale	+0.30		
Tues	04.28	3.6	10.39	1.5	16.40	3.7	23.10	1.3	Ferry Crossings/Sea States			
Wed	05.06	3.8	11.18	1.4	17.19	3.8	23.44	1.2	Oban to Barra/South Uist		Moderate	
									Oban to Coll/Tiree		Moderate	
									Kennacraig to Islay		Moderate	

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)