

The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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Full house for annual Oban carol service

My Village Glencoe



Cigarettes stolen in raid on Oban store

A LARGE quantity of cigarettes has been stolen from Booker Cash and Carry in Oban.

The warehouse security alarm was activated at 7.20pm on Saturday and police attended but found the premises had been broken into. Oban police believe that two men were behind the burglary and that they drove a red Volvo car.

Anyone who has any information relating to this incident or the vehicle involved should contact Detective Constable Gary Brown on 01631 510500.

New doctors for Colonsay

COLONSAY will be served by locum doctors until the newly-appointed husband and wife team of Drs David Binnie and Jan Brooks take over the surgery in April.

The pair will job-share the post, which carries a salary of £100,000 a year, but they are no strangers to the island, as they regularly visit the island to see Dr Binnie's sister and brother-in-law, Elizabeth and Mike McNicholl.

Dr John Currie, who held the island doctor's post for 10 years, left to join the practice in Port Charlotte, Islay, but has since been back to Colonsay as a locum.

Woman hurt in Awe crash

A 20-year-old woman suffered back pain and shock after her car left the road and skidded into a ditch off the A85, near Bridge of Awe Service Station.

The incident happened around 8am last Saturday. No-one else was involved in the incident.



Santa pops up at Soroba party

Little Hannah McIvor was delighted to meet Santa at the Soroba Community Centre Christmas Party last Saturday. Hannah, who enjoyed tucking into the chocolate treats on offer, was one of 30 children at the party who each received a gift from Santa during his flying visit. 07_45150001

Hogmanay party organiser offers options or refunds for revellers

ORGANISERS of the cancelled Oban Hogmanay Street Party have promised that revellers 'will be not be out of pocket', as they announced an indoor line-up for 2010 celebrations - or a refund.

Two shows will replace the planned street party. Donnie Munro and his Band will appear in the town's Corran Halls and Skerryvore will play Skipinnish Ceilidh House - those who decide

not to go to either new venue are promised a full refund.

Organiser Neil Mackay said: 'Having to cancel the event is a major disappointment for many, including myself.'

'We have had a number of conversations with people in Oban and beyond and we have come up with a new plan for Hogmanay.'

'Understandably many people who purchased

tickets are worried about the plans - but we are asking people to hold onto their tickets for a few days. We will then offer them a choice of the Corran Halls, or Skipinnish - or a refund.

Mr Mackay continued: 'The tickets will be redistributed - firstly to people who have bought tickets for the street party and then for any other people who would like to buy a ticket for either

event. No one will be out of pocket.'

'I have nothing but praise for Argyll and Bute Council staff who have cancelled their own plans for Hogmanay and are willing to help out at the Corran Halls. Oban must not be tarnished by the cancelling of this event.'

Mr Mackay said: 'Final details for the events and refunds will appear in next week's Oban Times.'

New Oban dental centre hits cash delay

Increased costs in Campbeltown stall Oban plans

Report by Marian Miller

A NEW NHS dental centre for Oban will be delayed until April 2011 because new services in Campbeltown are costing more than anticipated.

It was announced at the beginning of 2009 that NHS Highland had received capital of £5.64 million for dental services in the area, of which £2.3 million was to be invested in Oban.

But Argyll and Bute Community Health Partnership (CHP) locality manager for Oban, Lorn and the Isles David Whiteoak told the public partnership forum for the area last week that there would be a delay of 'at least three months on the original proposals' because Campbeltown and Oban were being developed at the same time.

'Campbeltown has been selected to be first off the stocks and when it came back from tender was significantly more expensive than originally anticipated,' he said.

This has since been reduced but as a result the projects will have to 'straddle two financial years' with the Oban scheme gaining capital from the two years.

the building,' he said.

'As is the way with things, there have been months if not years of negotiations but agreement to the lease was within the last three months so the situation I don't think will have changed so radically from their point of view that they would wish to withdraw at this stage,' he said.

'The agreement is to take the majority of the ground floor of the building that they have been trying to lease for years,' he added.

Councillor MacIntyre asked: 'Has an agreement been signed?'

'To the best of my knowledge, yes,' said Mr Whiteoak.

Councillor MacIntyre said after the meeting councillors had been approached by an individual regarding planning permission for the old Harbour Bowl building.

'My concern is that it is a long time from now until April 2011,' he added.

Argyll and Bute Council said there had been a number of inquiries but no discussion with any developer and nothing concrete in terms of a planning application.

Sea rescue as cargo ship runs aground again

A LARGE scale sea rescue was launched after a cargo ship ran aground late Tuesday evening in the Gulf of Corryvreckan.

Clyde Coastguard received a call from the skipper of the Fingal and its owner at approximately 9.30pm on Tuesday, stating the vessel had gone aground with six people aboard and was taking in water. Coastguard rescue teams from Jura and Crinan were sent to the area, as were RNLI lifeboats from Oban and Islay and a Royal Navy Rescue helicopter from HMS Gannet.

The Fingal was stabilised and escorted into Oban.

The Fingal was also involved in another incident when she ran aground on rocks off Kintyre in September, when it was feared that 1,400 tonnes of timber, fuel and oil would end up in the sea.

A Marine Coastguard Agency spokesman said there has been no threat of pollution to the area and all six crew aboard are safe and well, following Tuesday's incident.

'Famous' Polish pianist plays St John's Cathedral, Oban



Aleksander Kudajczyk celebrated his 31st birthday after a recital in Oban's St John's Cathedral. 07_45150001

A POLISH pianist, who became famous throughout the world after being discovered playing the piano at Glasgow University, where he worked as a janitor, played a recital in Oban on Sunday.

This marked two celebrations, the forthcoming 200th anniversary of the birth of Fryderyk Chopin and Aleksander Kudajczyk's own birthday.

Virtuoso Aleksander, who became 31 years old on the day of the performance, was presented with a birthday cake immediately after playing a programme of Chopin's music. Next year is the 200th anniversary of the birth of the legendary composer.

In Ruda Slaska, Southern Poland, Aleksander was brought up in a family with strong musical roots and displayed his own musical talent for the first time when he was four by playing a few lines from Mozart's Sonata C Major (No.15 K.545), which he had just heard.

He graduated from the Music Academy in Łódź, Poland, with an Honours Degree and has since given concerts in Poland, Germany, Italy, France, Greece, Netherlands, USA and Great Britain.

In June 2007, while working as a janitor, he was overheard playing concert-standard pieces in the university chapel to the amazement of his colleagues.

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Month	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
January	5	11	18	25	1	8	15
February	1	8	15	22	29	5	12
March	1	8	15	22	29	5	12
April	5	12	19	26	3	10	17
May	3	10	17	24	31	7	14
June	1	8	15	22	29	6	13
July	5	12	19	26	2	9	16
August	3	10	17	24	31	7	14
September	1	8	15	22	29	6	13
October	1	8	15	22	29	6	13
November	1	8	15	22	29	6	13
December	1	8	15	22	29	6	13

Council could stall on nursing home plans

HIGHLAND councillors meet in Inverness today (Thursday) to debate a potentially explosive move to postpone a £21 million plan for five new council-run nursing homes.

If agreed, the tendering process for a new Inverness House at Caol and four other nursing homes at Grantown, Burnside in Inverness, Muir of Ord and Tain would be halted for 'a business case review' - effectively a rethink on the affordability of the proposals.

That would provoke a furious backlash from the SNP opposition, who for the year following the May 2007 elections formed the administration with the Independents and committed Highland Council to building and running the five homes.

Feeling is especially strong in Lochaber that quality local authority-run nursing home provision is essential to underpin local care services for the elderly.

A series of closures in the private care home sector has placed severe pressure on the council-run Inverness House on Belford Road which under the present policy will be replaced with a new 30-bed facility at the former BMX bike track at Caol.

Detailed plans for the new home are due to go before Ross, Skye and Lochaber planning committee on January 19.

Lochaber's four Independent councillors, Bill Clark, Donald Cameron, Allan Henderson and Eddie Hunter, will vehemently oppose the deferral - despite forming part of the administration.

Lochaber councillor Donald Cameron told *The Oban Times* a new, council-run Inverness House was among his election pledges and blasted any policy U-turn by the Independent-LibDem-Labour administration.

The Labour Party's seven councillors are believed to have originally opposed the deferral but are now likely to abstain, according to Lochaber member Brian Murphy, 'for tactical reasons'.

'It's a very difficult one for the group. Our stance is that we are still fully committed to building the five care homes,' he said.

The SNP group is expected to move a vote opposing the deferral and will be backed by Lochaber's four Independents.

SNP Lochaber councillor Bren Gormley said: 'I am absolutely appalled at this and I am sure we will be attempting to put this right at the first opportunity.'

Independent councillor Eddie Hunter said: 'This really is a major issue for the people of Lochaber and there is no way we can support a deferral in the procurement process.'

Asked if he and his Independent colleagues could be kicked out of the administration for voting against, he said: 'We are not concerned about sanctions, we are concerned about the people we represent.'

Independent councillor Bill Clark said: 'It's absolutely appalling. The chairman of housing and social work told me three weeks ago that there was no way the care homes would not go ahead. So what's changed since then? This has come from the Lib Dems. The Independents have given up their role in the administration and are simply following Lib Dem instructions.'

Administration leader and Lochaber Lib Dem councillor Michael Foxley insisted a deferral was not a device to indefinitely delay the project.

Asked by *The Oban Times* to respond to Independent Lochaber councillors' accusations that the care homes project would be mothballed, he said: 'I would say they are wrong. What we have to do with the costs of the care homes is to look at them very carefully. We are under a duty to get value for money for the public pound.'



Lochaber Showstoppers wowed audiences with 'Aladdin'.

Showstoppers' panto brings the house down

LOCHABER Showstoppers brought the house down in three tremendous pantomime performances of 'Aladdin' at the Nevis Centre, Fort William last week.

Around 1,200 paying customers came through the doors on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights to hiss, boo and laugh their way through the shows, performed with panache by the young cast under the direction of director Chris Jones. Mr Jones, who directed Showstoppers' hugely successful 'Dick Whittington' in 2006, praised his team and musical choreographers Clare Brewer and Sheena Coull.

'As director, my greatest pleasure is working a cast of over 40 individuals of

a wide age range and together creating a show from nothing more than the ink written on a page,' he said.

Aladdin was co-written by Lochaber High School graduates Sharon Brown and Kirsty MacDonald, and starred Ryan Laskey as Aladdin, Sian Slezas as Jasmine and John Wilson as Widow Twankey.

Kinlochleven trust members back Post Office move

KINLOCHLEVEN Community Trust members have given overwhelming backing at its AGM to relocating the village Post Office from its present location on Leven Road into the Aluminium Store building, which closed in August 2008.

The proposed move has proved controversial amid claims that rival bids to reopen the Aluminium Store, which had also housed the local library, as a visitor attraction were being ignored in favour of subpostmaster and former KCT chairman Andrew Baxter, who is KCT's preferred bidder to develop the building.

But at last Wednesday night's meeting around 100 members - more than half the total membership - supported Mr Baxter's bid.

In a statement to *The Oban Times*,

KCT chairman Alan Woollacott said: 'Following considerable debate and the taking of a straw poll, members present showed massive support for the proposed relocation of the Post Office to the former library building. There were only four members who showed their opposition in the vote.'

Backing

'It was also apparent from comments made during the meeting that the board of Kinlochleven Community Trust has the backing of nearly all who turned up on a night of poor weather.

'When the vote for directors was made for three vacancies and with seven nominations, it produced landslide victories for the two existing board members who were seeking re-election and for Mr Andrew Baxter who, together with the KCT board, has been

the target of misinformed comment and abuse contained in unsigned circulars and posters.

'Democracy in Kinlochleven has spoken and spoken with a loud voice, and now perhaps the board can get back to what it was elected to do - promoting the village and the welfare of its inhabitants.'

KCT director and local councillor Bren Gormley, Highland Council's representative on the board, has been critical of the board's role in the affair.

His overall role, he said, remained one of scrutiny 'not just on behalf of Kinlochleven, but as a Fort William and Ardnamurchan councillor'.

He said: 'The true concerns that were raised at the meeting about the health of the KCT were not addressed, and those concerns remain.'

Climber killed in rescue attempt

A CLIMBER has been killed after falling into a rocky river moments after stopping to help a fellow walker in Glencoe.

Newcastle teacher Alastair Aitken, aged 37, had stopped to help a walker who had slipped on a narrow, icy path at the Coire Gabhail bridge near the Three Sisters Gully.

Witnesses said that the man was killed while the group he was with surveyed the scene after the walker had fallen onto rocks after leaving the Lost Valley at around 5pm on Saturday December 12.

Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team leader John Grieve said that the climber who was killed was standing looking at the edge of the path when he lost his balance and fell.

Three other climbers were injured in separate incidents on the same mountain in Glencoe as bad weather closed in.

All three men fell between 300 and 800ft down steep slopes at Stob Coire nan Lochan on Sunday at around 3pm. Police said none of the climbers injuries were thought to be life threatening.

Police files

DAMAGE was caused to clear, corrugated sheeting at the Shop Mobility Unit, MacFarlane Way, Fort William, sometime between 3.30pm on Friday December 11 and 1am on Saturday December 12.

A DOUBLE glazed window on the first floor at M & Co, Fort William, had both panes smashed. Staff discovered the damage on the morning of Monday December 7.

Anyone with any information should call Fort William Police Station on 01397 702361.

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'Hands off' phone boxes

BT HAS been told to keep its hands off Oban, Lorn and island phone boxes.

An invitation by the telecommunications company to councillors in the area to 'adopt' red phone boxes it is considering removing phones from has been met with demands to leave them in place. Phone boxes up for 'adoption' include Fasnacloch, near Appin, Achnacloch, near Connel, Cladich and Portsonachan, near Dalmally, Kilmelford, Arduiane and Easdale Island.

Oban, Lorn and the Isles councillors have told BT that it should consider the impact of removing all boxes in remote and rural locations, especially where there is not 100 per cent mobile phone coverage.

At the very least, councillors have called on BT to leave a connection to emergency services.

They have also called on the Scottish government to consider the provision of a network of emergency phones for local communities because of the diminishing number of public pay phones.

Taynuilt whist drive

THE TAYNUILT Christmas whist drive raised £125 for the WRI Taynuilt branch.

Card master Dougie McDougall presided over seven and a half tables on Friday December 11 in the village hall.

Gents winners were 1 Jean Gillies, 2 Jim Groat from Connel, 3 John Ross and 4 Katy Clayton; the consolation prize went to Brenda MacLean and the travelling prize to Stella Huntingford. Ladies winners were 1 Wendy Forbes, 2 Florence Anderson, 3 Ann Sutherland and 4 Marie Keenan; with a consolation prize for Margaret Harris and the travelling prize went to Margaret Forbes of Connel.

The next whist night will be held on Friday January 15 at 7.30pm in Taynuilt village Hall. All proceeds will go to Cancer Research UK.

'Gift' for Connel

A GROUP of Connel singers will be ushering in Christmas week at St Oran's Church in the village this Sunday.

They are performing Graham Kendrick's contemporary musical 'The Gift' at 6.30pm, with donations from the event going to Mary's Meals.

Licensing board reverses its decision on Argyll and Bute's Sunday drink buying laws

ARGYLL and Bute Licensing Board has agreed to lift its previous ban on selling alcohol before 12.30pm on a Sunday.

Now the board is asking any licence holder who wishes to open from 10am on a Sunday to write to the board as soon as possible

applying for a variation of their hours.

The board's chairman, Councillor Daniel Kelly, said various consequences of that policy were brought to the board's attention which persuaded members to review the situation.

'One of these was that off

licence outlets in Argyll and Bute felt they were being unfairly disadvantaged,' Councillor Kelly said.

'Some of our neighbouring authorities allow earlier opening, and local licence holders felt they were losing trade over the borders.

'In addition, people in

Argyll and Bute often have to travel a significant distance to their local shops. Some were setting off early on a Sunday morning, buying their groceries and then discovering that they couldn't get a bottle of wine until 12.30pm.

'We had reports from

shops and off licences that boats were coming in on a Sunday to restock their provisions, only to discover that they couldn't buy alcohol until after 12.30pm. Often, they were having to leave before then to catch the tide,' he added.

'We have always known

that certain decisions we have taken in the past might need to be reviewed at a later date, and this was one such occasion.

'We will of course continue to monitor the impact of all our policies on licence holders, their customers and the wider community.'

Local charitable trust takes over Oban's 'White Building'

A CHARITY that started by using The Oban Times' under-£50 column to sell unwanted items has gone on to donate thousands of pounds to good causes in Argyll and now has a shop in Oban town centre.

MacQueen Bros Charitable Trust sells household items and furniture that are left to the removal company. The larger items are stored and delivered by MacQueen Bros while the small items are advertised free in The Oban Times under-£50 classified adverts.

But last Saturday the charity took the next step forward by opening its Community Benefit Shop at the White Building on Oban's North Pier.

In just over a week, staff from MacQueen Bros and volunteers refurbished the shop with a new carpet, painted inside and out and stocked it with donated items.

Graham MacQueen of MacQueen Bros said: 'Everyone did a great job of redecorating in such a short

time - the White Building is white again!

'I would like to thank The Oban Times for allowing us to advertise items free and to Argyll and Bute Council's area committee for agreeing to let us use the building.

'We have a very powerful partnership for this kind of shop - we have the resources of a removal company and an army of volunteers, organised by the shop manager Grace Scott.'

At the open day, the charity published its full list of donations for 2009, which amounted to nearly £10,000.

Among the beneficiaries this year was Oban and Lorn Youth Pipe Band Association and six of the young pipers played as the shop was officially opened. Graham added: 'We are the only charity shop in Oban that takes large furniture, so I think there is room for us.'

Oban's Christian youth group H2O and Mid Argyll Swimming Pool are also beneficiaries of the Trust, each receiving £1,000.



Community Benefit Shop manager Grace Scott, left, presents a cheque for £1,000 to Oban and Lorn Youth Pipe Band Association secretary Ailsa Leadbetter, as the group's young pipers look on. 07_t51macq01

Children will suffer if pool closes, claims Mid Argyll father

Public demonstration in support of the pool planned

FAMILIES with young children will suffer the most if Mid Argyll Swimming Pool in Lochgilphead does not receive enough money to stay open, according to a father of three.

The pool, which serves a community of 9,000 people could close if it does not receive an initial £10,000 and £30,000 in annual revenue.

But Mid Argyll Community Enterprise Ltd, the pool board, and Argyll and Bute Council remain in deadlock over how the pool will be funded and the future of eight full-time jobs hang in the balance.

Already one Mid Argyll

councillor has resigned from Argyll and Bute Council's ruling group in protest at £10,000 not being committed by the council.

'Pool well used' But a father of three says the pool is well used by families in Mid Argyll and the area's children will also suffer if the pool has to close.

Andy Paton, who lives in Ardrishaig, said: 'I have got three young girls and two of them are using the pool.'

'We only moved here in February but one of the first things we did was to see if our oldest daughter could get swimming lessons - there was a waiting list, which

shows how popular the pool is. I want my children to be active, not stuck in front of a computer because there is nothing else to do.'

Around 4,000 people have signed a petition - www.gopetition.com/petitions/save-mid-argyll-swimming-pool.html - asking Argyll and Bute Council to provide emergency funding.

The community support was demonstrated by a fundraising effort at the beginning of 2009 when £25,000 was raised to pay off debts.

A council spokeswoman said: 'One of the possibilities we raised was that the

council continues the acceleration of its funding to the swimming pool, paying approximately £12,000 of next year's money in the current financial year.'

The pool committee has since confirmed the council has advanced its last contract payment which means it will stay open until February but from then it will be in the red.

A public demonstration in support of the pool will take place on December 19 on Lochgilphead's Front Green and an emergency meeting, originally set for last week, is now to be chaired in January by Argyll and Bute MSP Jim Mather.

Traffic police speed trap 25 at Lochawe

ROAD traffic police speed checks in Lochawe village in Argyll have resulted in 25 drivers being charged with speeding offences within a month.

New speed limit and advisory signs have been installed in the village, however, these appear to be being ignored by some drivers.

Following complaints from village residents, Argyll's new head of road policing Hugh O'Neill set up speed checks on the A85 that runs through the village.

Inspector O'Neill said: 'There are a lot of drivers going through the village at an inappropriate speed, especially taking into account the current weather conditions.'

'I am now in consultation with Transport Scotland and Scotland Transerv with regards to road engineering.'

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Rare Enid Blyton classic first edition gives Oxfam Christmas boost

A RARE 1942 first edition reprint of an Enid Blyton classic has raised £568 on e-bay for Oban's Oxfam shop.

The book, Five on a Treasure Island, was sold with the dust jacket, which is identical to that used on the first edition itself.

Olwen Rowlands, store

manager at the George Street charity shop, said: 'It came in with a bundle of books and we noticed right away it was a valuable book. Our volunteers know their stuff and can always spot a gem.'

Rather than sell it on the shelves in the shop, staff put the book on

e-bay and listed it for £250 but were amazed when it sold for £568.

'That kind of money will give us a real boost heading for Christmas,' said Olwen. 'The winning bidder probably bought it just for the dust jacket, which they would have put on their

copy of the first edition. The first edition is worth thousands of pounds and a good bit more with a dust jacket.'

'With Christmas just around the corner, we are grateful for every donation we get, whether it's worth a fortune or just a few pounds,' she said.



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Mull Lines



Young Mull musicians take a break from their performance during Torosay Castle's Christmas Fair. 16.150 toro05

YOUNG Musicians of Mull, (YMM), raised £178 with a weekend of music making at Torosay Castle. The group, who have been raising money through donations and grants to provide musical instruments and tuition to pupils on the islands of Mull and Iona, wowed visitors to the castle with renditions of Christmas favourites such as Silent Night. The group, who meet once a week to play as an orchestra, offer tuition to 30 children and have 45 members in the group altogether. All money raised will help subsidise lessons. Many of the pupils sat their Associated Board of the Royal School of Music exams in November which they passed with flying colours.



PUPILS from Tobermory School, from left, William Howard, Rory Reade, Leah Goodwin, Holly MacLean, Hector MacDonald and Amelia Harris, were presented with £200 for school funds by store manager Brian MacLeod to mark the opening of the £400,000 revamp of the town's Co-op supermarket.

To sponsor Mull Lines please contact Isla at 01631-568000

Hope offered that water rescue review will save lives

IF AN independent review of Scotland's water rescue capability can save lives then it will be judged a success. This is the view of Highlands and Islands MSP Jamie McGrigor following the release of the review by Paddy Tomkins, former HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland. Mr McGrigor lives in

Dalmally close to Loch Awe where four anglers from Glasgow drowned earlier this year. The nearest emergency services boat was in Renfrew and conditions at the time hampered any potential helicopter rescue. He said: 'This review was commissioned by the Scottish government in part because of the recent tragedy on Loch Awe where four people lost their lives through drowning and which showed up the difficulties involved for a rescue operation in a freshwater loch in midwinter at night and in thick fog. 'What is vital is that first responders have access to a boat in order to minimise the time it takes to rescue people. 'Any multi-agency approach must be able to trigger a response to a situation at local level as quickly as possible. 'This would be a worthwhile outcome of this review as would the identification of the body responsible for marking submerged reefs and other underwater hazards in freshwater lochs.' He added: 'While I have not yet been able to study the

report in detail, I agree with the recommendations on stronger governance agreements and especially on public education on the dangers of inland water and the wearing and storage of lifejackets for which the Royal National Lifeboat Institution has a specific code which should be followed. 'If this review can save lives it will be judged a success.'

Heroin user to receive treatment

AN OBAN man who admitted being in possession of heroin and cocaine in his home was put on a drug treatment and testing order as a direct alternative to jail. William McConnell, aged 29, of 28 Nelson Road was found with 0.5gms of heroin and 1.2gms of cocaine with a street value of £60 on September 18.

Sheriff Paul Crozier at Oban Sheriff Court told him: 'You have to be 100 per cent committed to this 18-month treatment order. If you co-operate, it can give you the chance to start again.'

Meanwhile, an Oban man has been fined £200 for possessing a small amount of heroin.

Phillip Colewell, aged 23, of Loaming Cottage, Glen Lonan was found with the drug on July 4 at Castle Road in Oban.

Oban Sheriff Court heard that Colewell, a freelance scaffolder, took the opportunity of his brush with law as a wake up call to get his life back on track.

Defence agent Duncan Durbin said: 'He assures me he is now drug free after going cold turkey and hopes to return to full-time work in the new year.'

Sheriff Paul Crozier told Caldwell: 'Being in possession of a class A drug is a serious offence.'

'BT not doing enough to upgrade exchanges'

TELEPHONE exchanges in remote corners of Argyll are among 69 to be upgraded by BT to improve online services – but it is not enough according to one MSP.

Coll, Colonsay, Gigha, Jura, Kilchattan Bay, Bute; Kilfinan, Cowal; Pennyghael, Mull and Whitehouse, Kintyre, exchanges are being improved following talks between BT and the Scottish government and should be complete by March.

The exchanges are already working at or reaching capacity for broadband provision.

But Highland and Islands MSP Jamie McGrigor says there are still far too many

MSP tells of constituents' dismay at broadband services

rural communities in the West Highlands and islands that 'still receive an inferior service and poorer value for money in comparison with their urban equivalents'.

'One constituent in rural Argyll told me that she is paying £40.54 per month for broadband, which she finds does not work half the time.

'When she rings to complain, the company tells her that, because it is raining either in London or in Argyll – which is quite often – the satellite is not working.

'Furthermore, she receives no refund for any lack of service, she is bound into a minimum one-year contract, and even when the system is working it is often so slow that sometimes the service times out before things download.'

He added that another Argyll constituent's broadband provider could only give two megabits per second despite living 100 metres from the BT exchange while another neighbour with a different provider, using a different line in the exchange, could get eight megabits per second.

'Such inconsistency understandably annoys and dismays people; they just feel conned,' said Mr McGrigor. 'I am glad that 69 exchanges are being upgraded, but there are still many more.'

Argyll and Bute MSP and enterprise minister Jim Mather said: 'With broadband an increasingly vital tool for businesses and households, we have acted with BT to identify a way forward.

'Upgrading these telephone exchanges will enable even more people to benefit from a broadband service which

others in most areas of Scotland already enjoy.'

Brendan Dick, director, BT Scotland, said: 'The burgeoning demand for broadband has led to capacity problems at some of our small, rural exchanges and we have been working closely with the Scottish government to find a viable solution to this issue.'

Other exchanges in the West Highlands to be upgraded include Ardgour, Glenborrodale, Staffin, Uig, Killilan, Loch Scavaig, North Erradale and Tarskavaig.

Council explains its planning obligations

ARGYLL and Bute Council has defended its right not to publish all planning applications in pages of The Oban Times.

The council was asked to comment on complaints made by people living in the Ross of Mull. A number of residents only became aware of planning applications for single units wind turbines in various locations on the day of a community council discussion.

A spokeswoman for the council said there are a number of situations when plans would need to be advertised. She said: 'The council must publish a notice in the relevant local newspaper when it is not possible for us to carry out neighbour notification on an application. This is referred to as vacant land and includes open fields, open countryside and forest land where the proposed development is within 20 metres of the neighbouring land boundary.'

Waste materials
The council will also publish information about deviations from the development plan, for planning applications for public convenience, disposal of refuse or waste materials, a scrap or coal yard and a building used for cinema, dancing, fun fair, hot food shop, licensed premises.

The spokeswoman continued: 'Some applications requires to be advertised under separate Environmental Impact Assessment regulations, as do applications that affect the setting of a listed building or when an application is within a conservation area.'

A Mull resident said: 'Contentious applications, such as for wind turbines, should be published through the pages of the local press.'



Oxfam volunteers and Co-op staff celebrated raising £251 for charity with a pantomime cow. 07.150co01

Co-op customers' money will go a long way

STAFF at the The Co-op in Oban were in the mood to celebrate after hearing their customers had raised £251 for Oxfam to buy a cow and other gifts for needy families in the third world.

And as Oxfam Oban manager Olwyn Rowlands explained, £251 goes a long way. 'The money raised from one day of bag packing at the Co-op has bought a cow for a family, paid for essential medicines and supplies to plant an allotment and

provided care for a vulnerable child,' she said.

Oxfam volunteers visited the Co-op last Friday to give the staff the good news and even encouraged them to dress up in a pantomime cow costume to mark the achievement.

The money raised was part of the Oxfam Unwrapped campaign. The scheme is a range of unusual, ethical gifts that people can buy for their friends and family.

The actual goods are then delivered to people in developing countries around the world. Olwyn said: 'A cow is such an incredible gift for a poor family because their milk can help feed them, her manure can help grow crops and any excess milk can be sold at market.

'We'd like to say a big thanks to the Co-op and to everyone who donated at the bag-packing day. Their donations will certainly make a big difference.'

Cafe impresses judges

ATYNDRUM cafe is in line for UK-wide recognition at this year's Fish and Chip Shop of the Year awards.

The Real Food Café has been shortlisted for the Staff Training and Development Award in the competition, organised by Seafish, the authority on seafood.

Owner Sarah Heward and her team will be judged against two other shops, Harbour Lights in Falmouth and Royal Fisheries in Whitby, to decide the winner, which will be announced by celebrity chef, Aldo Zilli, at a London ceremony on January 21.

Competition judges have already been impressed by Sarah's commitment to staff training after the shop successfully negotiated two rounds of judging. Sarah said: 'I am really proud of the team for all their hard work and we are excited to see what the final holds in January.'



The new Oban-based recruits are presented with their certificates from Andy Park, local area co-ordinator.

New recruits for advocacy service

A NUMBER of new volunteer advocates have been recruited and trained in the Oban area by Lomond and Argyll Advocacy Service (LAAS).

Working independently from any other service, the volunteers help to support people over the age of 65, those using mental health services or with a learning difficulty make the right decisions for them and make sure their voice is heard.

Sometimes those who are older, ill or disabled can find it hard to challenge decisions, claim their

rights or get their views listened to. It has been some years since LAAS has run training in the town and the fresh interest has been encouraging for the service.

Local area co-ordinator Andy Park said: 'It will be invaluable to have some volunteers, not only because we have been without them for quite some time in Oban but because we recognise that volunteers giving freely of their time suggest that independent advocacy is valued by the community.'

Teenager urged to 'keep up the good work'

A TEENAGER who admitted a breach of the peace has been ordered by Oban Sheriff Court to be of good behaviour.

Ross MacLellan, aged 19, of 9E Colonsay Terrace, Oban was arrested in the small hours of July 12 in Station Square after police were approached by members of the public regarding his behaviour.

The court heard that MacLellan had a period in his life, described as 'aimless drifting', by his defence agent, after leaving the army.

Reports from social workers confirmed that MacLellan's behaviour was much improved.

Deferring sentence for six months for supplementary reports, Sheriff Paul Crozier said: 'You are getting much better. Keep up the good work.'

Scrap dealer fined £480

A SCRAP dealer has been fined £480 at Oban Sheriff Court for working without a licence.

Lindsay Craft, aged 39, of 56 Lochleven Terrace, Kely, Fife, was also found to be driving a goods vehicle without a tachograph and recording paper on the A82 on June 6 near to the Bridge of Orchy.

Archives plea

THE ROSS of Mull Historical Centre is looking for donations for its archives.

Information is required about all periods, locations and people on the Ross of Mull.

The centre is open from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday or at other times by arrangement phone 01681 700659 for further details.

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Send a card and save a forest

AN ARGYLL community is giving people the chance to send a Christmas card while helping to secure an area of forest for future generations.

Kilfinan Community Forest Company wants to buy 125 hectares behind the village of Tighnabruaich, to provide jobs, training, affordable homes and businesses opportunities for the community.

Michaela Hunter, secretary of the company, said the beautiful card by artist Susan Smith would help raise vital funds, helping them hit their fundraising target of £130,000 by

March. In return for a donation, a copy of the limited edition card will be posted to a loved one.

Michaela said: 'Our charity Christmas card will help everyone to contribute a little or a lot towards this community woodland and therefore a future for our parish. We would urge everyone with a connection with this beautiful place to consider supporting this very worthwhile community initiative.'

The cards are available online from www.kilfinancommunityforest.com or the Tighnabruaich Gallery.

TIMES FORUM
WWW.OBANTIMES.CO.UK



Helen Munro from Contact the Elderly presents Jean Boynton with her award. (51boynt01no)

A VOLUNTEER from Benderloch has proved herself to be the cream of the crop when it comes to befriending the elderly.

Jean Boynton who volunteers for Contact the Elderly as a driver, host and coordinator for the Oban and Benderloch area has been awarded our Marsh Christian Trust Award for going 'above and beyond'.

Jean was awarded the overall Scottish award at the organisation's AGM in London.

Caroline Learmouth, Scottish co-ordinator said: 'For more than 10 years Jean has been our only volunteer in Oban.'

'Most of our groups have at least three drivers, one coordinator and eight or nine hosts. Unfortunately in Oban we have struggled to get more volunteers involved, and as a result Jean has stepped in to each role, year in year out.'

'Jean collects guests in two runs bringing them back to her home where she then provides and afternoon tea and repeats two runs to take everyone home.'

'She is the only reason the group continues to exist. Recently she even sold her newer smaller car for a larger but older car in order to accommodate all her guests in the one run.'

Jean was thrilled to receive the award. She said: 'I was very pleased to receive the award.'

'I have lots of people that help me do this work and it is so much fun.'



STORYTELLER and musician Gordon Patullo was the guest artiste at Oban Accordion and Fiddle Club's December club night.

The concert was well supported by club players for the evening: Robert Robertson from Oban on accordion, Murray Willis, Isle of Lismore, Scott Sinclair, Connel and Willie Buchanan, North Connel.

On melodeon Seamus MacArthur, Oban and on drums were Dave Laverty and Duncan Campbell both Oban.

Comper for the evening Freddy MacKenzie thanked everyone for making the evening such a success. The club would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and look forward to seeing everyone at the club's annual dance on January 8.



Dancers from the Atlantis Lesiure ballet classes had a presentation of certificates and medals on December 5.



A LAST-minute change of venue to the lounge at Lynn Court, Oban did not put off the members and visitors to the Oban and Lom Needlework Group's November meeting who heard an interesting talk from Margaret Gibb, who posed the question: 'Why Sew?'

An insight into her sewing and making things from an early age, inspired by her mother, was illustrated by display of Margaret's work spanning the years.

Thanks were extended to the staff and residents of Lynn Court for their assistance at very short notice.



To sponsor Lorn Lines please contact Isla on 01631-568000

The Oban Times Have you had your say today?

Marine biotechnology company invests in future

AN OBAN marine biotechnology company has made two appointments aimed at taking its business forward.

Based at the European Centre for Marine Biology at Dunstaffnage, Aquapharm Biodiscovery Ltd is at the forefront of pioneering work to use marine micro-organisms in the commercial world including pharmaceutical, industrial biotechnological and food industries.

Development

Jon Williams has been appointed business development director and Dr Lloyd Payne is moving from F2G Ltd where he was chief scientific officer to become research director.

Jon, who was managing director of Summit (Wales), will apply his unique blend of expertise in business development, natural product exploitation and microbial fermentation to seek new commercial

partners to engage in discovery and product development partnerships.

He will also work with Aquapharm's existing partners, including Dr Reddy's Laboratories and Croda International, to build on these alliances and seek further avenues for collaboration.

'I'm excited to be joining the Aquapharm team and am particularly looking forward to applying my commercial expertise to support Aquapharm's efforts to build its pipeline of revenue-generating products,' he said.

Dr Andrew Mearns Spragg, CEO of Aquapharm said: 'Jon's considerable experience in the commercialisation of natural products will be invaluable as we build a portfolio of bioactive ingredients and industrial biotechnology products derived from Aquapharm's unique collection of marine micro-organisms.'

In tandem with Jon's appointment, Lloyd will drive forward the discovery and development of novel bioactives derived from the company's unique collection of marine micro-organisms.

Aquapharm is currently building one of the world's largest marine derived compound libraries and Lloyd's exceptional scientific leadership and vision will be integral to its successful delivery in 2010.

Upon its completion, the compound library will accelerate Aquapharm's discovery efforts, principally in the anti-microbial field, as well as acting as a source of additional revenue for the company through selected screening partnerships.

Dr Mearns Spragg said: 'I feel Lloyd's appointment marks a step change in our discovery efforts and I'm excited to be working with him to drive Aquapharm's candidates forward.'

Little learners find out about life under the waves

Urchins, wriggly rag worms and scallops prove star attractions

MARINE biologists of the future were entertained this week by a visit to the newly opened research aquarium at the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) centre at Dunstaffnage, near Oban.

Pre-school children from Dunstaffnage Little Learners' Nursery were shown sea creatures commonly found in local waters.

Sea urchins from Loch Creran were gingerly handled, alongside wriggly rag worms and locally farmed mussels. The most entertaining organisms were undoubtedly the scallops, part of Dr Kim Last's experimental investigation of the shellfish's tolerance to burial beneath sediment. The children watched as scallops swam around the tanks when shadows passed over them. Some shellfish even squirted out water as they were picked up.

The visit was part of the nursery's ongoing programme of trips out within the local community with the pre-school children.



Gregor Warnock, Dr Vicki Hendrick and Lewis & Summer MacDonald watch scallops flap around the tank at the SAMS aquarium

Assault teenager fined £200

AN OBAN teenager has been warned to 'stay away from the demon booze' and keep out of trouble after admitting assaulting a man.

James MacMillan, aged 17, assaulted the man at Aray Gardens on July 26 by punching him in the face where he fell to the ground. The victim required three stitches for his injuries.

MacMillan, of 5B Dalintart Drive, pled guilty at Oban Sheriff Court where his defence agent Duncan Durbin said: 'This was an isolated injury and he regrets the injury.'

Sheriff Paul Crozier told MacMillan: 'Keep up the good work and stay away from the demon booze.'

He was fined £200.

Bill watches beaks

COMEDIAN Bill Bailey will be joined by two teams of celebrities on a birdwatching tour of Mull as part of a six-part series, Bill Bailey's Birdwatching Bonanza.

The show, to be aired on Sky TV from January 8, is designed to test the observational and practical skills of the two teams while they check out British birds.

The Mull episode is being shown on January 29 and will feature RSPB Mull officer Dave Sexton with celebrities Alex Zane, Donal MacIntyre, Jeff Green and Jayne Middlemiss.

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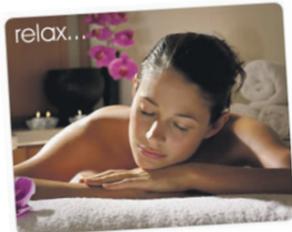


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No more chances for Fort man

A FORT William man was jailed for a total of 255 days after breaching the conditions of a probation order imposed by a sheriff.

Jake Black, aged 20, of 111 Lochaber Road, had earlier admitted offences including assault, breach of the peace and breaching bail conditions and been placed on probation.

However, Black was brought back to court for sentencing on the original offences after breaching the terms of his probation order.

Black assaulted a man in High Street, Fort William, by punching him and struggling with him in August 2008 and was put on probation, Fort William Sheriff Court heard.

Then on September 21 2008, Black committed breach of the peace offences at an address in Kennedy Road, Fort William.

Swearing

He had gone to the house of his former partner and climbed up a drainpipe to get in before shouting and swearing at the woman and brandishing a stick at her. He again breached the peace at the same address on June 11 2009. Black was granted bail on condition he stayed away from the house, but in September he went into the property.

Defence agent Hamish Melrose said: 'He has been given a number of chances. Although still a young man he has serious alcohol issues.'

Jailing Black, Sheriff Douglas Small told him: 'You have had as many chances as you could possibly hope for. The court is now left in the position of having no alternative but to send you to detention.'

New archive centre opens

PEOPLE interested in local and family history related to Skye and Lochalsh can now find out more at a new facility.

The new Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre at Elgin Hostel, Dunvegan Road, Portree, replaces the former Dualchas Heritage Service, which used to be based at Tigh na Sgìre. The archives, which can be made available to the public in the search room, include school records, police archives and estate papers.

The centre, run by opened by Highland Council's archive service, opens on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm.



Pupils from Fort William RC Primary with their eco-friendly Christmas decorations. 10_f51deco01

An eco-friendly Christmas for Fort William pupils

OLD WOODEN hoops and plastic bags are not what immediately spring to mind when thinking of Christmas decorations, but a group of Fort William RC Primary School pupils have used just those things to create their own environmentally friendly Christmas wreaths.

Plastic bags, brought in by the pupils, were cut into strips and tied onto the hoops in most of the school's classes, including the nursery.

The idea was brought to the school by Karen Lees from the nursery and as the

school is aiming for its Green Flag status as an eco-school this year, everyone joined in.

The school has already made many changes including increased recycling in the playground with paper, fruit and plastic bottles all recycled regularly.

The latest venture is for unwanted clothing with a special bin soon to be put in the school grounds.

The children are very proud of their Christmas decorations which will be used to decorate the school in time for the Christmas Concert on December 16.

Artist unveils professor's portrait

SKYE-BASED artist Steven McKenzie unveiled this portrait of Professor Norman Gillies to coincide with the recent visit of Scottish education minister Michael Russell MSP to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

Steven, originally from Burghead and a graduate of Grays School of Art, has exhibited in Europe, Canada, Egypt and Japan.

His work includes drawing, painting and sculpture and this most recent commission will be on permanent display in the Gaelic college.

Professor Gillies spent 20 years as director of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig until his retirement at the end of 2008 when he was succeeded by Professor Boyd Robertson.



Steven McKenzie unveils his portrait of Professor Norman Gillies at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

Glendale votes in favour of school transformation

MORE than 70 residents on an Isle of Skye crofting estate have voted in favour of proposals to transform a mothballed school into a permanent heritage and cultural centre.

A packed public meeting in Borrodale School, Glendale, last week backed a business plan by The Glendale Trust for the new centre at the school, which organisers believe can become a major hub for local social and economic activity.

At the end of proceedings, the audience voted unanimously to lend

their support for the £250,000 project. Glendale Trust chairman Ian Blackford told *The Oban Times*: 'We are delighted that those at the public meeting have given their backing to our plan.'

Funding

'We will now continue with our process of consultation with the community and begin the effort to raise the funding necessary to establish the heritage and cultural centre.'

'This is an important development for Glendale and we are most excited about the potential of building a heritage and

cultural centre we can all be proud of and, of course, one that will tell the story of Glendale and its people.'

'This initiative will encourage tourism to the north west of Skye and will create much-needed jobs in a fragile community.'

Benefit

'We believe we have a strong case to put to Highland Council to allow us to use the mothballed Borrodale School for the benefit of the community and sustaining the use of the building for an educational and social use.'

Cannabis grown in home for six years

SENTENCE has been deferred on a Kinlochleven man who grew cannabis plants in his home over a period of six years.

Mordaunt Allan Lane, aged 41, of 48 Foyers Road, admitted growing the plants between January 2002 and February 2008, claiming the class 'B' drug alleviated his chronic back pain.

Fort William Sheriff Court heard Lane suffered sciatica and related problems arising from a leg injury sustained 12 years ago. Lane had been prescribed various types of

drugs including valium but found the side effects were severe and had stopped taking them. A further spinal problem meant, he claimed, that the medication he had been given was not effective.

Procurator Fiscal Alison Wylie said police found 38 cannabis plants at Lane's home.

'I hesitate to use the term 'professional operation' but he had all the technical equipment required to produce cannabis at his home,' she said.

Defending, Stephen Kennedy said that Lane

had stopped using cannabis and was now looking at alternative, and legal, pain management systems.

Sheriff Douglas Small said: 'The medical report confirms the fact that you do suffer from sciatica, however, you knew it was illegal to grow cannabis and you knew that it was wrong to use cannabis to alleviate pain.'

'I have decided that the best way of dealing with you is to defer sentence for nine months, and it depends on the way you behave as to what the ultimate sentence might be.'

Man jailed for assault on boy

A KINLOCHLEVEN man has been locked up for eight months after assaulting a 10-year-old boy in the boy's own home in the village.

Archibald Alexander Cattanach, aged 48, of 12 Foyers Road, admitted assaulting the boy and breaching the peace on August 28.

He also admitted failing to appear for trial at Fort William Sheriff Court on October 28.

The court heard Cattanach had been drinking heavily and had gone into the boy's home because he used to live there and thought he was in his own house.

Procurator Fiscal Alison Wylie said: 'He walked forward and seized the boy by his throat trying to choke him, then

started kissing him on the face saying, 'oh baby, oh darling'.

'I don't think there is any suggestion that there was a sexual connotation, just someone with a drink in them. When he released his grip the boy was so scared he ran out of the house.'

Alcohol problem

Defence agent Stephen Kennedy said that Cattanach had a long-standing and chronic alcohol problem.

'He was intoxicated and has very little recollection of events,' said Mr Kennedy.

'He was met by the child at the front door.'

'He didn't know the child by name but recognised him. It was perhaps some misguided attempt to show affection to

the child. He failed to appear in court as he was worried that in coming to court that may meet up with the father of the child who he was under the impression would be annoyed by what happened, and rightly so.'

Sheriff Douglas Small said: 'The incident involving the 10-year-old boy is extremely serious. You went into the boy's house, you were drunk and took hold of his neck. The boy was not surprisingly alarmed by what happened.'

'There is only one sentence I can impose and that is custody.'

Cattanach was jailed for eight months and ordered to continue on a probation order and to perform 75 hours of community service.

Work on damaged Raasay House underway

WORK is about to begin on the first stage of rebuilding the fire damaged Raasay House.

The Grade A Listed mansion house on the Isle of Raasay, Skye, was left a smoking ruin following a major fire which gutted the building in January of this year.

Now contractors are poised to begin stabilising the historic house in preparation for rebuilding it next year.

Raasay House, which was taken over by the local community in 2007, had been in the final stages of a

£4.5m upgrade at the time of the blaze.

It was due to re-open in the spring of 2009 providing upgraded facilities for its tenant Raasay Outdoor Centre and as a key community asset.

The project's funders Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), The Big Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland have been working intensively with Raasay House Community Company (RHCC) since the fire to get the building back on track.

The cost of the work will be recouped from insurance

policies held by both HIE and the contractor Rok which was finalising restoration works at the time of the fire.

David Westgarth, chairman of RHCC, said: 'To see the house literally go up in flames in January was devastating for the whole of the Raasay community. To get the house so nearly fully restored in January was an enormous achievement for a small community and to see all that work destroyed overnight was a terrible setback.'

'However there was no question of us being deterred

from our original intention and with the help of HIE, we are now in a position to see work beginning on site again.'

Robert Muir, HIE's area manager for the Skye, Wester Ross and Lochaber, said: 'Because of its historic status the ruin required a very detailed investigation into its condition and what options are feasible for its future.'

'It is the community's wish to see it restored and because its outside façade remains largely intact, this will be possible.'

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My Village Glencoe

What makes Glencoe special for you?

It's probably special because it's the place I grew up in. I travelled to school, firstly in Kinlochleven, then to Oban, then left home for further education in Edinburgh and thereafter lived/worked in Glasgow, so having lived elsewhere for various periods of my life I can appreciate the place more now I have returned home.

Additionally, even though the place becomes very busy in peak seasons, the fact that you have more control over your pace of life here than in any city helps to make it a special place to live.

Does it have an interesting history?

Absolutely – no Scottish history lesson or book would be complete without including a chapter about the Massacre of

Iain Brown has lived and worked in Glencoe since he was a young boy and now runs

Invercoe Caravan Park, a business started up by his parents. He has seen a lot of changes in the village since then but has helped to shape its future, becoming involved in the community council over a number of years.



Iain Brown.

Glencoe in 1692 when the Clan MacDonald were brutally murdered in their own homes by their guests, a 120-strong troop of soldiers under the leadership of Campbell of Glenlyon. This deed was seen to be more heinous because the soldiers had accepted the MacDonal's hospitality for several days before the massacre actually took place. The history afterwards involved nearby slate

quarries, which started the year after the massacre, the church and burial islands of Eilean Munda, and the crofting in the glen can fill many chapters in Scottish history – far too much to attempt to capture in one or two paragraphs.

How important is it to the Highlands? What does it offer that other villages can't?

Apart from its obvious importance in Highland history, Glencoe is a village where genealogical links can be readily traced and revisited through museum visits and annual commemoration services. Additionally, Glencoe can often be the first stop on any Highland tour and offers a wide variety of accommodation for holidaying and a wide variety of activities, from water to mountain sports both in summer and winter. Glencoe can undoubtedly be classed as a 'glen for all seasons'.

How would you describe the village to someone who has never been there?

It is a fairly typical west

Highland village, but obviously with scenery second to none.

Were you born in the village?

No, I was born Oban, and lived in Appin until I was five years old and my family moved to Glencoe.

My parents operated their milk deliveries from our home in Appin and moved the business to Invercoe in 1965. After a few years they sold the milk business and started the caravan park in 1969. The rest, as they say, is history, but many good memories.

How much has Glencoe changed since you were a child?

It has changed considerably. As a child growing up here I knew everyone, partly through delivering milk to their doors and partly as it was such a close-knit community.

The British Alcan factory in nearby Kinlochleven was, by far, the biggest employer in those days, but now that's closed other opportunities have



An isolated cottage in the glen enjoys a dramatic backdrop.

had to be found.

Accordingly now, people travel further to work, holiday further away as well and generally spend less time in the community than before, probably resulting in less community spirit than there has been historically.

Do you have a favourite place or building in Glencoe?

I think the Glencoe Lochan is a stunning location, but being honest my favourite place has to be the front of the caravan park here at Invercoe – there is no view better. I am constantly reminded of the fact by the innumerable visitors to Invercoe who tell me the same.

When it comes to buildings, I have to say that the closed down, boarded-up Glencoe Hospital is a sad sight for what was once a very

impressive building. Now the health service has deemed it too expensive to run a new owner and use has to be found and in current financial climates that may be difficult to achieve.

Do you have a favourite time of the year in Glencoe?

Spring is probably my favourite time of the year, but every season has its own appeal for different reasons.

What do visitors to the village like about the place?

Obviously the outstanding scenery firstly, but people who come back to Glencoe time after time enjoy the feel of the place and the relaxed attitude of the locals.

Indeed many visitors to the caravan park here know as many people in the village as I do through



The river Etive flows through Glen Etive, by Glencoe.

their regular visits.

Is there anybody famous from or who now lives in the village?

Internationally renowned climber and photographer Hamish MacInnes is probably

our best known resident.

Jimmy Saville also has a cottage in the glen and visits often.

What are the challenges facing the village or how could it be improved? I would imagine

that Glencoe is like every other Highland community, in that we need affordable housing for the upcoming generations and we need reasons for them to want to stay in the village.



The entrance to Glencoe Visitor Centre. (51glen01)

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REACHING retirement can be both a joy and a worrying depending on the circumstances of one's retirement.

Different people see retirement through different eyes and while one person embraces the chance to have time to pursue hobbies, interests or see more of family, others face the prospect with dread.

Sometimes that dread can be fear over finances with pensions perhaps not matching up to expectations or not having the back up of a pension at all but there are professionals who can help with arranging finances to ensure a regular income.

They can also help with managing income or giving advice on taxes if you decide to take on part-time employment.

Sometimes it can be daunting facing each day without a regular routine, but this is something that with the right attitude can be revelled in.

Many retired people decided to become politically active, either in their community council or local authority because they feel they have a wealth of experience to give.

Or if not a political animal, charities are always looking for volunteers, either to help on the 'front-line' or behind the scenes and it can be a great way to meet like-minded people and make new friends.

For those with a more adventurous mindset, many charities encourage people to take part in activities to raise funds and retirement – especially if you are still reasonably fit – is a fantastic opportunity to take part in these.

For instance, Marie Curie Cancer Care has a variety of events, from trekking up Mount Kilimanjaro to cycling across the Canadian Rockies or the Blue Mountains of Jamaica, for people of all ages to take part in.

'Taking on one of these challenges will be an unforgettable experience that will leave you with vivid memories on a real sense of achievement,' said Vonnie Carson, community fundraiser for Marie Curie Highland.

For the less adventurous, clubs like the University of the Third Age (U3A) offer stimulation, interesting activities and again a chance to meet others.

Health and well-being are often a focus for those reaching retirement and a visit to a local leisure centre is worthwhile as often they have classes or discounts specifically tailored to those who are retired.

Learning a new skill is another option; many colleges do distance learning and having the time to learn a new skill could lead to new doors opening.

Wednesdays see the over 50s take over Atlantis Leisure for the morning, providing a fun way to keep fit and an opportunity for friends to meet. Classes start at 10.15, with a fitness class for an hour involving stretching and all round body exercises to improve movement and muscle tone. After this, participants have the option of doing a body balance or Tai Chi class, playing badminton, going swimming, having a sauna or using the gym. People can also come in earlier and use the gym before the class starts if they wish. All this is for £3 and includes a discount at the café in Atlantis.

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Dylan's disco dancing gold

ISLAY youngster Dylan Cummings has won gold in a wheelchair disco dancing competition.

The 11 year old from Bridgend did his island proud in the Scottish Wheelchair Dancing Association's homecoming festival when he performed Tina Charles' 'I Love to Love You'.

Hopes brew for Easdale play park

AN ISLAND community is hoping to beef up its play park with help from a competition by the makers of Bovril.

A sub-committee of Eilean Eisdeal Trust on Easdale Island, trying to improve the island's aging play park, has been nominated on Bovril's Great Outdoors Revival for a share of £100,000.

The idea is that outdoor areas in need of a make-over are nominated and then voted on by members of the public and the more votes a scheme gets the more likely it is to get a share of the pot.

In consultation with the island's 12 children, a plan has been drawn up to replace the present equipment, which is also well-used by visiting children to Easdale, with a pirate-theme play scheme.

Visit www.bovril.co.uk/revival and enter SLOT000128 to vote and find out if Easdale is still in the running.

The first phase of voting finishes on December 28 with a final second phase of voting until February 28.

Seaplane tour for Susan

LOCH Lomond Seaplanes, which flies from Oban Bay to Glasgow, flew overnight singing sensation Susan Boyle around Loch Lomond and the Trossachs as part of a documentary.

The documentary, *I Dreamed a Dream*, was shown on ITV on Saturday after the X-Factor final and was shown in many countries around the world.

In North America, it was expected to realise one of the biggest TV audiences in 20 years.

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Man jailed for six months for stealing £1,400 from pub

A DUTCH man with a gambling addiction has been sent to prison for six months for embezzling more than £1,400 from a Mull pub.

Oban Sheriff Court heard that Roland Verrijt, aged 30, whose address was given in court as Raniven Guest House, Oban stole the money

while working as a trusted member of staff at the Keel Row pub in Fionnphort.

Procurator fiscal Craig Harris said: '£839.55 went missing from the lockfast safe in the pub between August 18 and 23 and the owners were not able to account for it. But it was

not until a second theft of £641.20 on September 16 that the owners raised the matter with the police.'

The police spoke to Verrijt at Craignure pier and arrested him.

Verrijt admitted the crimes stating that he had a gambling addiction.

Defence agent Duncan Durbin said that Verrijt had already been convicted of similar offences and had spent time in prison for crimes of deception occurring in Glasgow and Dingwall.

'He steals to feed his gambling habit. He

recognises the errors of his ways and has already started out on an addiction programme to get help.'

Sentencing Verrijt, Sheriff Paul Crozier said: 'I have to say I have little option but to imprison you. You betrayed a position of trust. I have great displeasure in your actions.'



Craft workers from Croig, Calgary and Fionnphort show off some of their wares. 16_15010902

Mulled wine and Mull delights

TOROSAY Castle held its annual Christmas Fair to the sound of the Young Musicians of Mull and the smell of mulled wine.

The event held over two days saw hundreds of people come through the doors of the castle and shop from local crafts people.

And for children there was the ever popular play park and free rides on the miniature railway.

Sarah James of Torosay said: 'I am thrilled that the day has been such a great success. It is wonderful to welcome people into castle and to show off all the marvellous cottages industries that exist on Mull.'

PO closures have negative affect

THE CLOSURE of eight post offices in rural Argyll over the past year has resulted in members of the public being unwilling and unable to use the service, writes reporter Euan Paterson.

Research conducted in Argyll by Consumer Focus Scotland also found that customers often avoided objecting to the closure of one post office in fear of another closure elsewhere.

Inaccessible
The closures took place last year as part of the Post Office Ltd's Network Change Programme (NCP). Argyll and Bute was one of

the first areas of Scotland to be affected by the programme, which ran from 2007 to 2009.

The research included interviews with consumer groups and sub-postmasters at post offices expecting greater foot-fall as a result of the closures.

However, the survey discovered that while in some cases customers experienced longer queues at their post office, many reported that they no longer travelled to any post offices because the nearest branch was inaccessible.

It was also claimed by some that the time frame of

the public consultation into the closures was too short to submit a detailed response or for communities to fully understand what the details of the proposals meant for them.

No surprise
Argyll and Bute MP Alan Reid said: 'It doesn't surprise me that a lot of Post Offices are losing business. Rather than travel for miles to get to their nearest post office, people are finding other ways of getting the same service, for example older people having their pensions paid straight into a bank account.'

'What worries me now

is that the formal closure programme is finished but post offices like St Catherine's and Bridge of Orchy are still closing.

'I think there could be a gradual loss of Post Offices as postmasters and postmistresses retire and are not replaced.'

The report makes a series of recommendations to Post Office Ltd on the action that should be undertaken to improve the service.

Trisha McAuley Consumer Focus Scotland interim director said: 'Local post offices are lifelines for thousands of people in communities across

Scotland. 'The negative impact of the Network Change Programme on service users in Argyll and Bute revealed by this report is of great concern, particularly if it reflects the experience of consumers in other parts of Scotland. We want the Post Office Ltd to act on our recommendations in order to ensure that the concerns of post office users are addressed, but also to help inform future changes in the post office network.'

Up to September 2009 there were 269 post office closures across Scotland, as part of the NCP.

South Uist youth group celebrates 10th anniversary

IT WAS party time in Iochdair, South Uist as the local junior youth group celebrated its 10th anniversary.

Around 60 youngsters, including past members of the group, gathered at Iochdair school to enjoy a range of activities and a celebration tuck-in. The children enjoyed hair and beauty treatments, face-painting, air hockey, pool, Nintendo Wiis, plus a bouncy castle and sumo suits hired for the occasion.

The group was started by local father Ronnie MacPhee after he saw a lack of out of school activities for P1 to P7s. The group currently sees around 30 children attending every Wednesday night in term

time in Iochdair school.

Aided by parents, Mr MacPhee also organises outings to various activity centres locally and in Stornoway. Every fourth year, the group embarks on a weekend away at Fairburn activity centre in Rosshire.

Parent-helper Mairi Ann Macdonald said three of her four children have so far attended the club. She said: 'They love it, and would have to be seriously sick to miss it. Ronnie is so hard-working, he does a fantastic job. He's great with the kids and has lots of patience.'

Mr MacPhee said he was indebted to the parents who help on a rota basis, and to the headteacher and janitor of Iochdair school for giving the group a home.



Leader Ronnie MacPhee surrounded by some of the members of the Iochdair Junior Youth club



Beachd Ailein

Mar phàirt de dh'iomairt ùr gus daoine a bhacadh bho bhith a' dràibheadh fo bhuaidh na dìbhe tha a-nise Riaghaltas na h-Alba am beachd na càraichean aig feadhainn a thèid a ghlacadh barrachd air aon uair, a thoirt bhuapa. Mar a shùilicheadh sibh tha cuid air argamaidean ciallach gu leòr a thogail an aghaidh seo, ach tha am peanas seo ga chleachdadh ann an dùthchannan eile agus far nach eil a chaochladh ag obrachadh feumar feuchainn air rud sam bith a chuidicheadh.

Gu ruige seo cha b' aithne dhan mhòr-chuid againn cron sam bith a bheireadh bhuaidh do char ach poiseadh, agus na mo bheachdcha cha gabh coimeas deanamh air an dà "chron"! Ged a chanas uachdaran aibhne an àiteigin gur ann leis a tha an t-iag a th'air cuan mòr a shiubhal mun d' thàinig e chun na h-aibhne, agus gum bheil am poiseadh a' goid, chan eil a bhith a' glacadh iasg neo dha air allt a' cur beatha duine ann an cunnart. Ach tha an neach a thèid air an rathad fo bhuaidh deoch neo droga sam bith a' bagairt a' mhòr-shluaigh, agus tha còir stad a chur air ann an dòigh sam bith san gabh sin deanamh!

Aig an aon àm dh' àirrainn fhìn gum bithe a' cur an cuimhne dhràibhearann uile gur e innealan cumhachdach, agus cunnartach, a th' anns na carbadan aca agus gum bheil e deatamach gun cum iad an aire air na tha iad a' deanamh leotha. A-rèir rannsachaidh ùir ann an Lunmainn tha an àireamh de dhràibhearann a tha a' cleachdadh fòn-làimhe fhad 's a tha iad a' dràibheadh air a dhol suas as an dà bhliadhna a chaidh a dh' àirdeoin peanas nas motha. A bharrachd air gum bheil seo a' nochdadh dìth cèille nan daoine a tha ris an obair sin, tha e cuideachd a' dearbhadh an dùbhlain a th'aig an lagh a' feuchainn ri rathaidean a dhèanamh nas sàbhailte.

Na mo bheachd fhìn chan eil dad dol a dh' obrachadh ach eisimpleir peanas chruaidh, agus cha bhiodh dragh sam bith ormsa a' cur 6 comharra air a' chead-dràibhidh aig an tè a chunna mi a' glanadh a fiaclan san sgàthan fhad 's a bha i a' dràibheadh!

Vehicle confiscation by a court was associated with cases of poaching, but now it is being planned for repeat drink driving offenders.

Setting aside the arguments about "theft" of fish, poaching does not endanger lives, but the driver who takes a vehicle out when he or she is under the influence of drink or drugs is a danger to everyone and should be prevented by whatever means work!

New research shows that instances of drivers using mobile phones, while driving, is increasing, and I am convinced that only tougher penalties will address this. I would certainly have no difficulty in imposing 6 penalty points on the license of the lady I saw brushing her teeth in the mirror as she drove!

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

Tiree man honoured with new literary award

A NEW Gaelic literary award has been launched in honour of a Tiree man.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) have launched the Donald Meek Literary Award to mark the contribution of Professor Donald Meek as a champion and scholar of the Gaelic language.

Earlier this year he was named as a sàr-Ghàidheal - Gaelic champion - following his retirement after a distinguished academic career.

Promoted

The new award will be managed and promoted by Comhairle nan Leabhraichean, the Gaelic Books Council and funded by the bòrd and SAC.

The first award will be made early in 2010, marking work which has been completed in 2009.

Arthur Cormack, cathraiche (chair) of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, said: 'I expect that it will encourage new writers in all sectors of Gaelic publishing.'

'Donald Meek's contribution to Gaelic has been widely recognised and we are delighted that he has agreed to be associated with this initiative by identifying the importance of creative Gaelic writing.'

Final details of the award and how to make nominations are still to be announced.

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Cutting budgets, cutting care

NEWS this week that at least one Scottish health board is planning to control rapidly escalating financial burdens by reducing the numbers of qualified nurses which operate on its hospital wards will be a frightening prospect for patients.

NHS Greater Glasgow claims that all other cost cutting avenues have been explored and exhausted and it proposes to introduce a scheme which will alter the 'skills mix' as part of its modernisation of hospital services. In plain language this means that unqualified staff will operate alongside qualified nurses, with the number of trained and/or experienced staff being reduced to fit the wage bill, not the standard of care.

Nurses working within today's health service are already expected to operate far in excess of their 'duty' and the majority go that extra mile willingly and weekly because they are caring and compassionate people in a profession that sets high self-standards. But there are limits.

Health board fund managers, under pressure from politicians may succeed in cauterizing leaking budgets but not without opening a seeping wound in frontline services that may prove costly for us all.

Glasgow Letter

Clydebank ceilidh

DESPITE fog and extremely cold temperatures, the faithful supporters of the Clydebank ceilidh turned out in good numbers for the December ceilidh in Lesser Town Hall.

George Paul, a member of the association, chaired the proceedings introducing the singers Sheena MacKenzie, Mary C MacLean, Norman MacKinnon and Alasdair MacDougall and interspersing each item with humorous stories.

Young Andrew Caulfield was the piper for the evening and Susan MacFadyen, from West Kilbride, displayed her expertise on the accordion.

On occasion I highlight the absence of accompanists at ceilidhs but not so on this occasion as there were two! Norma MacDougall played for husband Alasdair while Kirsteen Grant assisted the other singers.

The next monthly ceilidh will be on Friday January 8 2010 and the dinner dance, which will feature the Monach Isles Band from Inverness, will take place on Saturday February 20.

Stirling ceilidh

ATTENDANCE at the recent ceilidh of the Stirling branch of An Comunn was slightly down, but the quality of entertainment was up to its usual standard.

With Paul MacColl in the chair, the singers were Deirdrie Graham, Gordon McKeeve and Mary MacLean and it was pleasing for the branch to welcome back Dr Innes Smith as piper for the evening. Innes also played for the Cluaran Dancers while Lex Keith on accordion and Jean-Ann Calendar on fiddle added to the evening.

The next ceilidh is on Saturday January 16 2010.

Highland Ball

THE EVER popular Highland Ball run by Comunn Taobh-an-Iar in Milngavie Town Hall on Friday January 8 2010 will feature John Carmichael and his band with songs from Janet Campbell.

Tickets must be bought

Excellent Ballachulish panto

Sir, I recently attended the Ballachulish amateur pantomime with my grandchildren.

What a magnificent show. It would be impossible to single out any artist as they were all excellent. I can imagine the work that must have been put into the production to produce such a wonderful show. My sincere thanks to everyone involved. Everyone I met was full of praise, and I think it should be recognised how much everyone enjoyed the evening.

I hope there is another production next year as they are as good as the professionals in city productions.
Tom Kirsop, Brudair, North Ballachulish.

PRESS POLICY

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

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

The Oban Times adheres to the Press Complaints' Commission's Code of Conduct.

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



Reading The Oban Times in Egypt

Lochaber couple David and Ellen Duncan from Corpach unexpectedly met Argyll couple John and Alison Hay during a Nile cruise. They are pictured reading *The Oban Times* on a visit to the ancient Abu Simbal Temple in Egypt. We would like readers to send in flashback photographs and photographs of *The Oban Times* being read in far flung places. Please send prints to *The Oban Times*, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4HB, or email editor@obantimes.co.uk. Prints or emails must be accompanied by a caption, name, address and telephone number. Anyone wishing their prints returned must supply a stamped addressed envelope.

Letters to the editor

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Disgust at withdrawal of pool cash

Sir, I was disgusted to read in the local press articles regarding the NHS Highland decision to withdraw funding from the Dolphin Hydrotherapy Pool.

My son Neil has been attending the pool twice a week for the past nine months. Neil is 44 years old and was involved in an accident leaving him with brain and other severe physical injuries, meaning he has very little communication skill and needs round the clock care.

The only constant in Neil's care since we got him home to Banavie has been hydrotherapy pool volunteer Maurin MacDonald and lately her volunteer assistant Kate O'Rourke. The difference in Neil because of their work with him has been amazing.

The compassionate care and attention Maurin and Kate show to Neil is exceptional. We know if these ladies cannot attend Neil's sessions it is because they have an engagement they cannot possibly cancel. I would add this very rarely happens.

Seeing the difference in Neil and speaking to other pool users and hearing of their experiences, NHS Highland should be looking at ways to support the Dolphin Hydrotherapy Pool and its volunteers even more instead of making cuts. It would cost the NHS a lot more if they were to supply paid professionals to carry out this work. £8,000 is a pittance compared to the money NHS Highland wastes in any one financial year.

Betty Nicolson, Corpach, Fort William.

Well done Oban Saints

Sir, I cannot describe how proud I was to hear on STV on Sunday December 6 that Oban Saints were the winners of the Local Team of the Year award. The award brought back memories of the early 1960s when Bobby McLuckie and myself, along with John Ledwidge 'Pluto', decided that Miller Road was ready and able to enter a team in the Oban and Amateur District Football League.

Up to that point I had won a championship league medal, aged 14, with the invincible Oban Athletic whose manager was Alistair Boyd and had such wonderful players such as Peter 'Biorach' Turnbull, Matt McLeod and Dante Lopez.

Oban Athletic folded at the height of its success and I moved on to Oban United, who played in claret and amber, and sported household names like Jock Hart, John 'Killer' Cameron and Dougie MacIntyre.

The decision to form the Saints overcame all these affections and I remember well that we based the new club on the Real Madrid of Di Stefano, Puskhas and Ghento and their all white strip which only became known to us in the early 1960s with the advent of TV.

The current Saints are far removed from these early days with all the teams they run and last week's award is an enormous tribute to David Buchanan who has been involved with the club without interruption for more than 40 years.

An elegant footballer, and indeed shinty player in his youth, I just wonder where Oban Saints would be today if he had opted to support this sport rather than football!

Well done David and everyone connected with Oban Saints Football Club.
Iain MacIntyre, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian.

Change needed

Sir, When politicians talk about Scottish culture and heritage on TV, they might mention our built heritage, natural resources and beauty spots, folk music maybe even Gaelic and multi-cultural diversity.

But shinty? When did you last hear a major politician discuss that? Shinty may be strongest in the Highlands now but it was once played throughout Scotland. Amongst other things, we know this from kirk records from Glasgow, North Berwick and elsewhere complaining about games on the Sabbath or in churchyards.

Other Scottish sports - golf, curling and rugby sevens - are international and have Olympic status. Unlike shinty which despite giving birth to ice hockey has faced a catastrophic decline on its home turf and doesn't get the support it deserves. Coverage in the national media is pitiful and no political party has a specific shinty policy. This needs to change.
Raymond Bell, Edinburgh.

Democracy has spoken in Kinlochleven

Sir, Following weeks of negative comment and correspondence in your columns from a handful of disaffected people, it is

pleasing to advise that at the Kinlochleven Community Trust (KCT) annual general meeting on December 9 there was an extra large turnout of members - 99 - half of the total membership and representing a very large section of the local population.

Following considerable debate and the taking of a straw poll, members present showed massive support for the proposed relocation of the Post Office to the former library building. Only four members showed their opposition in the vote.

It was also apparent from comments made during the meeting that the board of Kinlochleven Community Trust has the backing of nearly everyone who turned up on a night of poor weather and when the vote for directors was made for three vacancies with seven nominations it produced landslide victories for the two existing board members who were seeking re-election and for Andrew Baxter who, together with the KCT board, has been the target of misinformed comment and abuse contained in unsigned circulars and posters.

Democracy in Kinlochleven has spoken and spoken with a loud voice and now perhaps the board can get back to what it was elected to do - promoting the village and the welfare of its residents.
A Woollacott, chairman, Kinlochleven Community Trust.

Reduce discards

Sir, I write with reference to your article 'Prawn vessel takes part in vital monitoring scheme' in your edition of December 3.

The skipper of the prawn trawler involved is quoted as saying: 'We do not have any discards because we use smaller gear and just target prawns.'

Assuming that the word 'discards' means all the fish and other species which are unintentionally caught and normally die, it seems inconceivable that a prawn trawler that is using small mesh nets is not killing large numbers of unintentionally caught fish.

The Clyde Fisheries Development Project sampled the catches on prawn trawlers and estimates that between July 5 2006 and May 15 2007 the fishery discarded 11 million whiting; 5.8million haddock; 1.25 million plaice; 640,000 cod; 292,000 hake; 12.3million other fish species and 603 tonnes of crustaceans.

This study does not include the peak season for small fish, mid May to end June,

so the annual discards would be expected to be higher than these figures.

I welcome the participation by trawlers in monitoring schemes and hope this will lead to changes in gear type to minimise wastage of a very limited resource.

Sadly it appears some in the Scottish Government continue to oppose technical measures to reduce the level of these discards.

Name and address supplied.

Vigil invite

Sir, Thank you for your coverage of my forthcoming visit to the West Bank with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine (EAPPI) and Israel.

I am glad that the news story appeared on the same page as an item about Oban Concern for Palestine, for which I am co-convenor with Graeme Pagan. Whether we stay here in the West of Scotland, learning about that painful situation and raising awareness, or travel out to see with our own eyes and play a small part in the work that is being done to bring peace with justice, we all have a part to play.

Readers would be welcome to join us briefly at the clock tower in Station Square, Oban, between 12 noon and 2pm on Tuesday December 29 for a vigil to remember the ongoing plight of the people of Gaza.

Jan Sutch Pickard, Bunsan, Isle of Mull.

Grit concern

Sir, Three weeks ago I received a call from my work colleague at 6am to warn me how dangerous the roads were as they were not gritted and I was leaving two hours later.

She called the emergency number to tell them the roads needed gritted. I drove with caution on the road to Craignure but still spun at Aros bridge and Fishnish.

A week later, within the space of an hour, there was a series of accidents on the Glen Road from Dervaig. People who stopped at the scene were unable to walk on the roads as they were so slippery and even had to dive out of the way as more cars were losing control.

Early in the morning of Saturday December 12 my husband was travelling through Lochawe, again on icy ungritted roads, to find a car upside down

I wonder if Argyll and Bute Council would like to state what action is going to be taken to prevent any of this happening in the future as it is lives it is failing to protect.

Wendy Tobermory, Brown.

A VIEW FROM THE TOWER

By McCAIG



Is 18 the educational totem?

OF COURSE, that latter day Oliver Cromwell - Alex Salmond - Scotland's First Minister, who grows more messianic with each day's passing, declared that 18 pupils is the totem figure for classes in primaries one, two and three.

Who declared it to be, I'm not sure. Eminent academics deny it was them, the teaching unions deny it was them and there doesn't seem to be a government minister who will own up.

Fiona Hyslop, the erstwhile Education Minister, has never said it was imperative that schools throughout Scotland should only have a maximum number of pupils as low as 18.

Probably Mr Salmond, who wrote the manifesto, thought it was a number that would impress parents who actually want one-to-one tuition for their offspring who, of course, are all terribly bright.

I'm sure that the current Education and Lifelong Learning Minister Mike Russell was in an infant class of at least twice that number and he could still master the 3Rs, go on to university and both write books and plays and produce the latter for television as well.

I seem to remember that the infant class in which I was had somewhere in the region of 40 pupils and all of us could read and write as well as add and subtract by the time we moved up to primary one.

How many schools could say that today?

Anyone who has ever sat on an interview panel will agree that even those with degrees can't spell or construct a sentence. Indeed, ask them to define a sentence and we will be told that their primary teachers stressed the importance of 'creative writing'.

So that's the cause of all the semi-literate people who appear on the jobs market!

Mike Russell to the rescue

AT LEAST Mike Russell, married to a primary school head teacher - must be politically correct and non-sexist - will get expert advice on how to achieve the impossible if the manifesto pledge is to be honoured.

Quite simply, even with the number of recently trained but unemployed primary teachers who can't get a full-time job with a contract, there aren't enough to meet the manifesto pledge, nor the classrooms nor the money.

Fortunately Mr Russell has admitted that the pledge is impossible to fulfill by the time of the next Scottish Parliamentary election in 2011.

And I hope we can convert him and the rest of the Scottish Cabinet to the fact that there are many more important things to do in education than having classes of under 20

throughout primaries one to three and right up to primary seven. And the money? Cut out the frills, make sure every normal child can read, write and master the basics of mathematics and computing.

If they cannot do these, then all the fancy stuff will not mean too much to them and no employer will give them a job - not even the Scottish Parliament!

No Oban Hogmanay street party

WHEN Councillor Neil MacKay told me a few days ago that there had to be a major three-day drive to sell 2,000 tickets for Oban's Hogmanay Street Party or it couldn't go ahead I was shocked but not surprised.

Those who live in Oban have an unfortunate reputation of never buying tickets in advance. Generations have believed this and don't see why it 'will not be all right on the night'.

Sometimes that does work. It's all right for a ceilidh where you can pack them in if they turn up provided health and safety inspectors don't do a surprise visit. Indeed, there is even a better atmosphere if the audience has difficulty in finding room to raise their glasses.

But the expenditure in booking even a top-quality set of artistes pales into insignificance when it comes to booking those who are top names in entertainment and can command fees of thousands of pounds even just for one night.

Promoters have to be guaranteed they can get their money back and therefore must ask those who are going to be the audience to commit themselves months in advance.

Tickets for next year's 'T in the Park' sold out months ago; if I want to go to a Royal Scottish National Orchestra concert in either Glasgow or Edinburgh with a famous soloist or conductor I have to buy a ticket up to six months in advance.

But not in Oban. That's why so many potential concerts in the Corran Halls are cancelled at short notice.

The city promoters ring to check their artists are going to get a good audience about 10 days before it is due.

They are told by an embarrassed box-office staff that somewhere between 16 to 30 have booked. Result: immediate cancellation of the gig.

Are we dominated by lethargic moaners who want entertainment but aren't prepared to pay for it except on the night of the extravaganza if they can be bothered to make the effort?

I'm ashamed my hometown can't support those who work very hard to give them first class entertainment.

McCaig

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.

Islay

Your correspondent is Susan Campbell: 01496 850215

Port Ellen to be a Tall Ships guest harbour

PORT Ellen Harbour Association has been successful in its bid to have the village included as Guest Harbour Two on the Cruise in Company leg of the famous Tall Ships Race.

In the 2011 race, the Tall Ships will sail into Port Ellen on the first leg of their voyage from Greenock to Lerwick.

The Tall Ships will set sail from Greenock on July 12 2011, and the first port of call for these glorious vessels is likely to be Port Ellen.

The ships' other ports en-route to the Shetlands will be Campbeltown, Oban, Stornoway and Stromness.

Spirit of Islay Pipe Band

IT HAS been quite a year for the Islay Pipe Band.

From a funding crisis at the beginning of 2009 to gaining a new sponsor in Bruichladdich distillery, the band had a very successful first season competing in Grade 3B.

As well as preparing for the coming year's competitions, the band has also been nurturing up and coming pipers and drummers, giving tuition to beginners every Thursday evening before band practices. The progress made by the keen new students has been outstanding and what may have seemed just Pipe Major Nigel Morris' 'pipe dream' is coming true.

And from these new students Nigel has formed the new 'Spirit of Islay' Pipe Band.

After gaining vital performance experience playing on Islay alongside the main band, it is hoped that the new band will eventually begin competing in Grade 4B.



Easdale Primary School celebrated St Andrews Day with the P1-P7 pupils all dressing in kilts and taking part in a ceilidh with set and social dances and the singing of Scottish songs.

St Patrick's Day gig in Ireland

ISLAY Pipe Band has accepted an invitation to play in Moville in Ireland in the town's St Patrick's Day parade next year on March 17.

Anyone who would like to travel with the band, please contact secretary James McEachern on 01496 850392.

The next pipe band gig will be at the Port Charlotte Hotel at Hogmanay.

Pipe Band 100 Club Draw October - £100 Bette Bell, £25 John Douglas, November - £100 Andrew McEachern, £25 Fraser Aitken.

Islay Energy Trust AGM

MORE than 35 people attended the Islay Energy Trust (IET) AGM on November 18.

Andy Macdonald provided a summary of the Sound of Islay tidal project. Recent activity includes the deployment of a two-tonne frame for measuring sea turbulence and the installation of a tidal gauge at Port Askaig which will provide long term forecasting of tides in the Sound.

On the carbon savings

project, project officer Lindy MacLellan outlined her plans for a renewable energy roadshow to be held on January 30.

She also talked about the excellent uptake of the OWL energy monitors and home energy checks.

IET chairman Philip Maxwell provided an update on the Argyll Renewables Consortium (ARC) project, and how it is planning to maximise the community benefits of the proposed offshore wind projects for Tirez, Islay and Kintyre.

Leisure centre re-opens

AFTER closure from December 14 to 18 for repairs and maintenance work the MacTaggart centre will re-open this Saturday from 10am to 6pm.

Kilchrenan

Your correspondent is Marilyn Henderson: 01866 833201

MSP visits Dalavich

AS PART of the National Conversation, Jim Mather MSP visited Dalavich recently where he met with residents to discuss the way forward for Dalavich.

Chris Bruce, chairman of the Dalavich Improvement Group (DIG), welcomed Mr Mather and thanked him for accepting his invitation to meet with the residents of Dalavich.

The informative evening was spent discussing problems and the ways and means of tackling them.

Mr Mather asked the question: 'As a community, who benefits?' Answers included tourism; the environment and potential investors if it benefits the community.

Firstly, it was agreed that the community met most of the residents' personal needs. The most important service Dalavich provides is tourism, with a plethora of flora and fauna.

The worrying aspect in Dalavich is the infrastructure, with the water and sewage system in need of upgrading. It was agreed that other improvements necessary were rejuvenation of the area, public transport, opportunity for employment and protection of ownership.

Mike MacKenzie, Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Argyll and Bute, gave an enlightening presentation on the rejuvenation of Easdale Island where, in 1997, they formed a community development company, which gained various grants enabling them to build a new community hall, upgrade the harbour, buy the museum, which now employed two people, and they had recently received funding from Scottish Gas for a renewable energy project.

Mr MacKenzie advised DIG that its first priority was to speak to Highland and Islands Enterprise.

As some of the land is privately owned, it was suggested DIG should increase communication with the owner, try to gain community ownership, register an interest with the Forestry Commission, start renewable energy projects and, most importantly, call everyone to come and help. Mr Mather concluded the evening by informing the residents that the evening's

conversation would be delivered to the Scottish Parliament.

Charity auction

AN AUCTION will be held on Sunday in Dalavich Community Centre in aid of the charity Children 1st.

The auction will be followed



Santa visits SWRI party

Santa paid a visit to the Kilchrenan SWRI children's Christmas party and made sure every child left with a gift.



The cast from this year's Dalmally and Lochawe Christmas pantomime.

Dalmally Village Hall hosts its last panto

DALMALLY and Lochawe Drama Society performed what could be the last Christmas pantomime in the current Dalmally Village Hall.

The *Monster of Loch Awe* was written by group member Sal Nicholson and

entertained locals on Thursday, Friday and Saturday last week.

Drama society member Ian Craig said: 'This year the panto had a local theme.'

'It was all about the monster which

Scalpay

Your correspondent is D Morrison: 01859 540217

The Tolosa

IN 1935 a cargo vessel called *Tolosa* ran aground at the entrance to the bay at the south end of the island.

The vessel had a large cargo of coal on board on a trip to Sweden but ran off course.

A subsequent inspection from the salvage team revealed no serious damage but some of the coal had to be winched from the hold to get the vessel refloated.

Thank you

THROUGH a delivery van from Tarbert, Harris, residents have the convenience of a supply of groceries ordered from Munro's shop at Tarbert.

Let's hope it is kept going, as it has been particularly welcome since the fish van discontinued.

Fishing

THE MUCH mentioned shoals of herring have not yet been spotted by home shores.

Signs

A SIMPLE, traditional weather forecast before radios or barometers came into existence was to watch

the sheep on the hills. If they were grazing on the top of the hills this denoted good weather, whereas grazing on the low ground was a sign of stormy days.

Fish factory

THE FISH factory on Scalpay, according to local rumours, had been viewed by net menders.

Whatever is correct, any client would be better than the building remaining empty.

Artefacts

ARTEFACTS of old broken drifters, an engine boiler in one example, can be seen on beaches rusting into oblivion and on seeing these one can reflect on past fishery aspirations.

Sea travellers

IT SEEMS that fewer people are opting to travel across the Minch by ferry at this time of year because of the rough seas.

Strong to gale force winds cause sea sickness in some but we do not want to discourage people from using the ferries.

Although there aren't so many travelling on the Harris ferry at this time of year it still runs back and fore with necessities for the island.

Only in extreme gales will there be a period of delay. This is natural.

Killin SWRI

THERE was an excellent turnout of members and friends at the December meeting when the demonstrator was Carlotta Fraser.

She made several dishes using unusual vegetables, all of which were tasted by the audience at the end of the meeting.

Competition winners: Three Mince Pies: 1 Cathie Reid; 2 Margaret Ogilvie; 3 Margaret Galloway. Folded Napkin: 1 Margaret Galloway; 2 Jenny Huntley.

The branch was due to hold its children's Christmas party on December 16.

On Thursday January 7 it is the turn of the grown-ups to enjoy a birthday party in the Bridge of Lochay Hotel.



Christmas fair boosts school funds

Children at Strath of Appin Primary School display the items they made for sale at their school Christmas Fair. Third in a series of fund-raising events for extra facilities at the school, more than £500 was raised on Saturday at the event in Appin Village Hall.

15 Years Ago Those Were The Days The Oban Times Thursday December 15 1994

Mallaig lands multi-million pound catch
THE WEST coast fishing port of Mallaig landed its biggest catch ever this week, a £4.1 million Scottish Office grant.

Scottish Fisheries Minister Sir Hector Monro MP announced on Monday that the cash injection had been awarded towards the cost of creating a breakwater and associated land reclamation.

Now it is hoped that the £6.8 million venture will pave the way for future developments such as a new ice factory, fish market, improved berthing and the possible relocation of the boatyard.

Mallaig Harbour Authority has been at the forefront of a long-running campaign to upgrade port facilities.

'We are absolutely delighted,' said harbour authority chairman Michael Currie, on hearing the news.

'It has been a long haul and has involved a lot of time and effort by so many people.'

He added: 'This is a great boost for Mallaig and the surrounding area, not only in the short term when jobs will be created locally but in the much more important longer term, as the development will enable Mallaig to cater for larger fishing craft and provide proper fish landing facilities via a new fish market built to EC regulations.'

Triple budget blow for Highlands
THE HIGHLANDS were this week reeling from a triple budget whammy as Chancellor Kenneth Clarke slapped extra taxes on fuel and spirits while savagely cutting council funding and investments in rail services.

Critics say it will lead to a big hike in the cost of living in the Highlands, already one of the highest in the country. They also fear the measures will threaten services and put jobs at risk.

Another penny-a-litre was added to petrol and diesel. The chancellor, having earlier indicated that he would protect the whisky industry, slapped 26p on the cost of a bottle of spirits.

The budget adds at least another 14 pence-a-gallon to the cost of four-star petrol and a minimum of 18 pence-a-gallon to the price of diesel.

Women priests ordained
THE FIRST women priests are to be welcomed into the Argyll diocese of the Scottish Episcopal church next month following the historic decision by the General Synod in June to ordain women.

Two women who already work within two different Cathedrals in Argyll will be ordained by the Right Rev Douglas Cameron, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, at St John's Cathedral, Oban, on January 26.

Gillian Orpin is honorary chaplain at St John's Cathedral and will serve as a diocesan chaplain with an attachment to the cathedral after her ordination.

She was on a mission to Thailand for 15 years. After a brief period of teaching, she returned to work full-time in a parish church in Peterborough for 13 years before coming to Taynuilt to look after her mother when she was invited onto the cathedral staff.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

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Across

- The ones to ask, not the monkeys! (5-8)
- Lens (8)
- Farm call (4)
- Moving (7)
- Corpulent (5)
- Religious belief through reason (5)
- Flag (7)
- Way off (4)
- Didn't look for it! (8)
- Where we went, when passing the 11 plus (7,6)

Down

- Rowdy party (4)
- Wrist bone (6)
- Fieri (7)
- Era (5)
- Gather on the surface, chemically (6)
- Third male in line (8)
- Endure (7)
- Small crustacean (6)
- Before one (6)
- Not divine (5)
- Scoring basket (4)

Last Week's Solution

S	P	A	T	B	A	C	K	S	P	I	N
T	B	F	N	U	R	O					
I	N	A	N	E	L	Y	D	R	O	I	D
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www.thehighlandtheatre.co.uk for full listings and future presentations

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IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE	Cert U 129min FRI 8.00 SAT/SUN 3.30, 8.00 TUE & WED 9.15
ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 2	Cert U 88 min MON 21st 4.00, 6.00 TUE/WED 3.30, 5.30, 7.30 THURS 3.30 ONLY
LARS & THE REAL GIRL	Cert 12A MON 21st 8.30

From Sunday 27th December - SHERLOCK HOLMES '12A'

YOUR STARS WITH PATRICK ARUNDEL

ARIES Mar 21st - Apr 20th 090 6612 4520
Several planets are forging super helpful links this week, but...and it is a big but, your ruling planet Mars, starts a backward journey and you may have to watch your frustration levels. Plans inevitably go astray at moments at this stage of the year, and you need to prepare yourself. Worldly demands can also step up and a clash of personalities can occur. Call me now for more news and advice...

TAURUS Apr 21st - May 21st 090 6612 4521
If there are last minute changes of schedule in the run up to Christmas, you could find yourself reacting in one of two ways. You can find it very irksome, or you can think on your feet, and realise that this fluidness can actually create possibilities. However, you will probably need to let a family member have a good old grumble. Grit your teeth if needed. Call now for your in-depth forecast...

GEMINI May 22nd - Jun 21st 090 6612 4522
You have put your point of view across and have been asked to listen in return. If you have been able to do this in an open and balanced way, the chances are a relationship can now deepen. However, if you are still circulating a sense of injustice around your mind, this may instead become more rooted. If so, try to accept that no-one is always a winner Gemini. Call for your love scope...

CANCER Jun 22nd - Jul 23rd 090 6612 4523
Co-operation and a clear understanding that seeking perfection is futile can start to smooth any rough edges. And yet there may be one person, who you feel, will only respond to common sense and if you tell it how it is. Yet as much as the Sun may push you towards a confrontation, with Saturn squaring it and Pluto, the fallout can last for a very long time. Call now for more advice...

LEO Jul 24th - Aug 23rd 090 6612 4524
You can be both kindly and generous, and will be keen, as is often the case at this point of the calendar, to ensure that everyone is catered for in your thoughts and in deed. But someone may turn out to be in a cantankerous mood and whatever you do to placate them, can come to naught. Remind yourself that thousands more will be in the same boat! Call your prediction line for more advice...

VIRGO Aug 24th - Sep 23rd 090 6612 4525
The Sun moves into the most outgoing sector, joining zippy Mercury. This combination can help to put a smile on your face, and with Uranus active, can also trigger a fleeting attraction which cheers you further more. However, with Mars rewinding, a person from your past may cast a shadow over your week, or perhaps you'll welcome their involvement. Call now for your love scope in full...

LIBRA Sep 24th - Oct 23rd 090 6612 4526
Despite a sparkling array of bubbly planetary angles, however much you join in the pre-Christmas mirth and merriment, something deeper, more meaningful and sentimental can start to tug at your heartstrings. If you are estranged from anyone, the situation can take an added piquancy. Yet it may be difficult to take the first step to make contact Libra. Call me now for your love scope in full...

SCORPIO Oct 24th - Nov 22nd 090 6612 4527
Clashes of opinion can spill into the seasonal celebrations, so be sure of just which issues you go into battle over, because very deep psychological stuff is being stirred which may see you take offence too easily or be too defensive. A sibling can be a person you find yourself at odds with, but equally it can be someone you constantly spend time with. Call now for your in-depth forecast...

SAGITTARIUS Nov 23rd - Dec 21st 090 6612 4528
With Mars starting a rewind, any plans to travel - whether to see friends or family over the winter break, or further afield, may need some revision. Industrial disputes could also cause some glitches, so it may be best to develop a Plan B - just in case. Your financial situation can also focus your thinking. Too much extravagance may not be such a good thing. Call for your financial scope...

CAPRICORN Dec 22nd - Jan 20th 090 6612 4529
The planets power you up, and give you added pizzazz. But at what is a give and take time of year, if you decide to dig your heels in about an issue that's important to you, it can create a lot of stress. People don't HAVE to have the same ideas as you, and you should not expect them to. Use your leadership skills with a deft touch and events will turn out fine. Call me for your in-depth forecast...

AQUARIUS Jan 21st - Feb 19th 090 6612 4530
Amongst all the hubbub, you may find yourself people watching. You've been at the heart of things, but if others take more responsibility, it can be a relief. Yet this can be a week of magic moments romantically. A discreet introduction, or eyes meeting across a bar or dance floor may seem improbable, but someone could absolutely captivate you. Call now for your love scope in full...

PISCES Feb 20th - Mar 20th 090 6612 4531
Friendships and group activities are a tale of two extremes. Things can either go swimmingly well for you Fish, or you can find yourself drowning in a sea of seething jealousy and possessiveness. This may not come from you, as much as be directed towards you, but it can be a factor. This can be sparked by you or a pal, showing a more independent streak. Call now for more news and advice...

SP: Pronto Ltd, PO Box 52785 EC1P 1TY
Calls cost 60p per minute from standard landline
For entertainment purposes only

Barcaldine go Polish for Christmas

CHILDREN at Barcaldine Primary School embraced Polish culture during the Christmas concert by singing a Christmas carol in the language, while wearing traditional Polish dress.

Two Polish children attend the small North Lorn school and the teachers worked with their parents to learn more about the country's culture ahead of the performance. But the pupils further demonstrated their linguistic skills, singing in Gaelic, as well as English, during the evening's performances.

Head teacher Jeanette Morrison said: "The purpose of the evening was to entertain our local community and the children planned and ran the evening."

"The children also made sweets and Christmas trappings for a sale as part of their enterprise."

"We have two Polish children in school and to learn and share more about their culture we worked with their parents to learn a Polish Christmas carol and we sang the song to our community on the night."

Every child who wanted to present a piece was able to do so on the night.

Carols in traditional Polish dress during festive concert



Barcaldine Primary School children perform a Christmas carol in Polish, with the children in the front row in traditional Polish dress.

gig argyll your essential guide to live music in argyll

Thursday 17 December > Markie Dams	Acoustic Session (come along for a song)
Friday 18 December > The Woody	Brass Monkeys
18 & 19 December > Skipinnish 10PM - £8	Christmas Party Ceilidh Discos
Saturday 19 December > The Woody	Ballochmyle
Saturday 19 December > Markie Dams	Sandra Macbeth Open til 2am
Thursday 24 December > The Woody	Ballochmyle
Friday 25 December > Markie Dams	Sandra Macbeth Open til 2am
Saturday 26 December > Markie Dams	Chunks Open til 2am
Saturday 26 December > The Woody	Danny Carroll
Saturday 26 December > Skipinnish 10PM - £5	Boxing Day Party with house DJs
Hogmanay - 31 December > Markie Dams	Crooked Reel Open til 2am
1st January 2010 > Skipinnish 9PM - £10	New Years Day Extravaganza!

what's on

Various > Ballet West Classes	Ballet, Jazz Body conditioning
Various > Energie Fitness	Kundalini Yoga
Mondays > Rockfield Primary Campus 6.30pm	Pilates
Mondays & Wednesdays > Energie Health & Fitness Club Monday 11am / Wednesday 7pm	Pilates
Thursdays > Church of Scotland Centre 7.45pm	Beginners Tai Chi
Saturdays > Oban Primary Campus - Suitable for all ages 12-4pm	Gymnastics with Nikki Magic Show
December > Various venues - www.thevatersayboys.com	The Vatersay Boys
Thursday 17 December > Victory Hall, Benderloch	Local Producers Christmas Fayre
Monday 21 December > Corran Ferry Hotel	Carols, Music, Mince pies Mulled wine, Lantern launch

Searching for the paranormal in Inveraray

A REAL-LIFE ghost hunt took place at Argyll's 19th century prison at Inveraray Jail.

The 16 ghost hunters were greeted at the eerie jail by Ghost Events Scotland, Scotland's leading paranormal events company, at 10pm and the paranormal investigation lasted until 4am in the morning.

Presences
The night started with a walk around the location with one physic and medium in search for spiritual presences.

Mark Turner, paranormal investigator at Ghost Events Scotland

said: "We picked up the presence of a woman in the prison block. It was thought she was a nasty character who disliked children."

Interactive
The event continued in the dark with interactive experiments which included filmed vigils, trigger object experiments, Electronic Voice Phenomenon (EVP) experiments and a variety of other ghost hunting gadgets. Ending at 4am, participants looked back at the recordings to see the results.

Mr Turner said: "One

of our participants felt a sensation in his ribs as if he had been punched and claimed to have seen green light moving through the air. A woman on the tour also felt that someone was touching her head.

"Our EVP recordings, which are recorded below the human hearing frequency, picked up voices in response to questions asked by our participants. It is not clear what is exactly said but there are sounds of loud shouting."

The next paranormal investigations take place in February.

Author speaks out to Argyll Tories

OBAN Tories were taken back to the 1980s when author and journalist David TorrancespokeaboutFive Myths of Mrs Thatcher and Scotland to the monthly Conservative Party lunch held recently in the Regent Hotel.

Thatcher myths
Speaking more than 30 years after Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, Mr Torrance commented on the mythology that has built up about her view of Scotland and the record of

her governments on Scottish affairs, largely that Mrs Thatcher hated Scotland, sought to destroy Scottish industry, tested the Poll Tax, insulted the Church of Scotland and destroyed the Scottish Conservative Party. Mr Torrance busted each myth and revealed that Mrs Thatcher's first summer holiday as prime minister had actually been spent on Islay as a guest of Lord Margadale, whose two sons, Charles and Peter Morrison, were Tory MPs.

Notes and quotes



Bruce Guthro, new album of love and loss

Guthro; singular

Bruce Guthro the lead singer with Runrig has just launched his latest project, the new CD 'No Final destination.' A solid album it is too!

'Rockin' Tonight' and 'Flew MacCarthy Home' are standout tracks while some great driving songs include 'Drive' - no surprise that, and 'Going Home'.

Strong vocals are a Guthro trademark whether on his solo albums or with Runrig - this is no shrinking violet. This is more about people than place - about love and loss. As he says himself it is about 'moments of chaos and calmness, brilliance and disappointment'. Life in fact!

Hands up for Trad - The winners!

Enthusiasts for traditional music do not come any more fanatical than Simon Thomuire the man behind the annual recognition of Scottish traditional musical talent.

Simon has been described as a Concertina virtuoso and has played with some of the finest musicians north and south of the border. His baby The MG Alba Trad awards, now in their 7th year, go from strength to strength and tickets for the event are generally gone like snow of a dyke on a warm January day.

This year they were away to the borders and the DG1 centre in Dumfries.

Nominees always read like a list of Folk music's great and good and this year included Gaelic songbird Julie Fowlis for 'Dual' and Shetlanders Fiddlers Bids' entry 'All dressed in yellow' in the album of the year category. Fiddlers bid pulled it off!

The best live act was a truly Highland affair with youngsters 'Face the West' from Stormway tilting at the established Session A9 and Oban's own Aiden O'Rourke's band, Lau. Aye, I know he's from Seil but we can claim him too! Especially so when they win as they did last!

What would you do when faced with the challenge of Bodega in the same 'Folk band of the year' grouping with Mary Ann Kennedy and Na Seoid. What you did was vote for the youngsters Bodega!

Not surprisingly the Gaelic singer of the year was an all-Highland event with Norrie McIver, Christine Primrose, James Graham and Sineag Macintyre locking horns. The honours went to Ms Primrose.

Another great night in the Borders. The full list was:
Album of the Year: "All Dressed in Yellow" by Fiddlers' Bid
Club of the Year: Stonehaven Folk Club
Composer of the Year: Mairead Green
Community Project of the Year: Caledonian Canal Ceilidh Trail
Event of the Year: Hebridean Celtic Festival
Gaelic Singer of the Year: Christine Primrose
Instrumentalist of the Year: Lauren MacColl
Live Act of the Year: Lau
City Finlayson Scots Singer of the Year: Shona Donaldson
Scottish Dance Band of the Year: Tom Orr Scottish Dance Band
Scottish Folk Band of the Year: Bodega

Red Shoes

Dave Pegg of Fairport Convention is due our gratitude along with a young lady called Megan who built a MySpace page for her Mum and Dad.

Had it not been for their intervention we may never have heard of Red Shoes or the beautiful voice of Carolyn Cook.

The MySpace site gained popularity with hits coming from all round the world for the duos clever songs. You might have imagined this way of getting the known in the music world is the reserve of the teenager. Not exclusively!

Carolyn has been singing with the guitarist Mark Evans for 25 years since she auditioned him for her band and later thought the audition so successful, she married him.

Pegg spotted the website, made the phone call and the result as a fantastic new album which will 'Ring around the land.' The title track is touted to become an English folk anthem - but don't let that put you off, check it out at www.myspace.com/redshoes1

Cairngorm

Strange things were afoot at the top of the mountain recently as Mhairi Hall and her Trio manhandled a piano up the hill to launch her album named - yes, you've guessed - Cairngorm!

Now thought to be the highest album launch in history it also attracted an audience of 150.

Mhairi was delighted, naturally she got a real high from the event, and told us that she could not believe the number of folk in attendance.

"They travelled from as far as Glasgow and Plockton. Not many people get the chance to play in such beautiful surroundings and the weather was fantastic with the sun flooding through as we took to the stage."

Check the height and sounds at www.myspace.com/mhairihall

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Oban Strings perform Frosty the Snowman at the Rotary Club of Oban's Christmas Carol Service. 07_151car001

Full house for annual Oban carol service

EXTRA seats had to be brought out at the Corran Halls as the public turned out in force on Sunday to the Rotary Club of Oban's Christmas Carol Service. As is traditional, the service began with

the Muckairn Handbell Ringers, followed by a welcome from Rotary club president Dave Finlayson. Oban Bach Orchestra, conducted by Norman Nicholson provided music for

the carols and there were performances from the Lorn area's schoolchildren and Spotlight Theatre Group. Oban High School captains Angus Scott and Lisa MacKenzie also gave readings.

Seil group listen about lichens

ATALK on lichens in Atlantic Woodlands gave members of Seil Natural History Group the opportunity to learn more about the algae and fungi life forms.

Speakers Anna Griffith and Andy Acton demonstrated that by walking almost anywhere in Argyll people would be able to view one or more of the species.

The lichen, of which there are more than 500 examples in Atlantic woodlands alone can be found on the sea shore, graveyards, walls, trees and surfaces underwater. They will even grow on rubber, glass, road signs, mining spoil heaps and bones.

The next talk is entitled Fully Protected Marine Reserves by David Ainsley at 7.30pm on Tuesday January 12 at the Seil Island Village Hall, Ellenabeich.

Art exhibition at Plockton

A LARGE watercolour of Lioness from Lake Nakaru, Kenya and a delicate moss dress from Fanks, Portree were two examples of the varied artwork on show at Plockton as part of an exhibition which took place in The Manse last weekend.

Organised by 4+, and usually held in Edinburgh, the exhibition raised funds for CLIC-Sargent, cancer care for children.

On show, and for sale, were sculptures, paintings, prints, jewellery and ceramics created by 15 internationally renowned Scottish artists including locals Caroline Dear, Miriam Drysdale, Gilly Langton and Vera Naessens.



Friends of Oban Hospice secretary Anne May and chairwoman Margaret MacLean accept the cheque from Raymond and Susan Hyams. 07_151cheq01

Friends of Oban Hospice surprised during Christmas lunch

THE OWNERS of Oban's Queen's Hotel surprised Friends of Oban Hospice during their Christmas lunch on Sunday by presenting them with a cheque for £400.

The sum has been donated jointly by the Queen's Hotel and JM Boyd plumbers, who are working on the hotel's refurbishment.

Hotel proprietors Raymond and Susan Hyams experienced the work of a hospice in Preston first hand recently, following the

death of Susan's mother. Raymond said: 'For the last two weeks of her life in the hospice, Susan's mother got the most dedicated care and the staff were lovely to all the family.'

'Susan has always said she wouldn't have been able to cope without the support of the hospice staff.'

'Every community needs a hospice desperately; it is really important.'

Friends of Oban Hospice chairwoman Margaret MacLean

said: 'We are very grateful and very surprised by this donation.'

'It is very encouraging to get support from local businesses.'

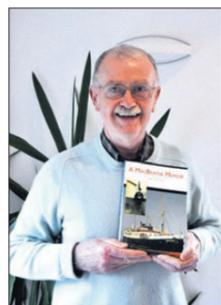
Raymond and Susan took over the running of the hotel two years ago with the intention of giving back to the community but any spare funds have been put into the refurbishment of the property.

'When we have finished the work on the hotel, we plan to make regular donations to local causes,' said Raymond.

Author launches new book of MacBrayne memories

Personal, individual and unique account of the ferry, bus and haulage

WIN a copy of this book



Brian Patton with his new book which outlines memories of the MacBrayne company. 16_151macb01

A NEW BOOK dealing with personal accounts and archive information of the MacBraynes company has been published in time for Christmas.

Author Brian Patton wrote the book about the west coast company in order to set a record of the agents and its influence on the Highlands and Islands.

Mr Patton said: 'I spent many of my childhood holidays on the west coast - and as you can see from the book, even my parents enjoyed many holidays aboard a MacBraynes' boat.'

'But what people don't realise is that there are many personal, individual and unique accounts of the ferry, bus and haulage company - and my book, published by myself, tries to explore the social and economic history of the company.'

'My favourite boat was the Lordly Ship, the King George V, that sailed around the island of

Mull to Iona. It was a majestic sailing.'

Mr Patton was encouraged in his endeavours to find archive information in The Oban Times offices and in the island museums - particularly the Mull Museum in Tobermory.

Mr Patton continued: 'It has been a real adventure to write the book - from getting stuck in Harris due to the bad weather to unearthing stories and memories of the boat and the life of the islands has been an absolute joy.'

The book, A MacBrayne Memoir can be purchased direct from the author by telephoning 01289 386363.

To win a copy of the book, send your name, address and phone number to MacBrayne Memoir Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, PA34 4HB answering the question: What boat named after a king sailed to Mull and Iona?

Christmas Greetings

From our readers

Mrs Agnes MacKay

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all neighbours, friends and carers.
6 Quarrie Road, Oban.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Sheena Allan, Craignure, Mull, would like to wish all relatives, friends and neighbours a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. A donation in lieu will be given to charity.

Donald Archy MacDonald

Dunmar Court, Oban, would like to wish everyone a Peaceful Christmas and a Good New Year.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Ada Kirkpatrick wishes her friends and neighbours a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Danny Kennedy, Inveraray

Would like to wish his family, friends and neighbours a Merry Christmas and a Good New Year.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Seasons Greetings to all friends and family from John Bell, 2 Sinclair Drive, Oban

Norma Burnett

Would like to wish everyone a Peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Happy Christmas to all my friends and family from Jean Whyte, Benderloch

Nessie Boyd

would like to wish everyone a Peaceful Christmas and a Good New Year.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Seasons Greetings to all friends and family from Anne Marie and Raymond (McKelvie Heights)

Geordie Smith, Glenview, Dalmally

Would like to wish all his neighbours and friends a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Colin and Lorna Campbell, Feorlin are not sending local cards this year. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all their friends.

Joey and William Simpson

Would like to wish all our relatives and friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Margaret and Willie Melville, Treshnish, are not sending local cards this year. They wish friends everywhere a happy, peaceful and joyful Christmas.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Seasons Greetings to all family and friends. Best Wishes, James, Rona, Rachael, Kelly, Sarah.

Chrissie and Hamish Yeoman

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year for 2010 to all friends and family.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Christine, Margaret, Doreen, Eilidh and Stewart wish all relatives and friends a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful and Prosperous New Year. Glenstockdale.

Campbell and Margaret MacLeod

wish all our friends and neighbours a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mary Sweeney

sends good wishes for Christmas and New Year to all friends and relations.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Christmas and Hogmanay Greetings to all my friends on Mull. (Charity donation in lieu of cards this year). Jock Hill previously of Beadoun, Tobermory.

Seasons Greetings

to all my friends and family from Rena McLennan, Dunbeg.

Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all friends and relatives from Audrey, Alison, Daniel and Betty.

Ewen and Carrie MacPherson

would like to thank all their family and friends for their kind thoughts and good wishes during Carrie's recent stay in hospital and would also like to wish everybody a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and prosperous 2010.

SEASONS GREETINGS

To all friends and family from Mima and John McNab, Lochaline.

Ann MacKenzie

wishes family and friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Ian MacKechnie wishes all relatives, friends and neighbours a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Selma, Tobermory.

Merry Christmas

To Ellie Didcock Merry Christmas From Daddy, Granny, Grampa

Trixie McIntyre

wishes all relatives and friends Merry Christmas and a Happy, Peaceful 2010. Orchy Gardens, Oban.

Merry Christmas

To all friends and relations in Lismore, Lochawe, Dalmally and Oban, have a good Christmas and Happy New Year all. - James MacArthur

Betty McIver

Christmas Greetings and a Good New Year to all my friends and neighbours in Dunbeg, Connel and Oban. 19 Dunmar Court Oban

Morag MacFaden

(Oban) would like to wish all her friends and neighbours a Merry Christmas and a Very Good New Year. I'm not sending cards

SEASONS GREETINGS

Everyone, Everywhere, a joyful Christmas and a prosperous and peaceful New Year. From Alistair Scoular, Lochaline.

Iain, Elena and Masha Clark

wish all their relations and friends a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2010. Glenshellach Farm, Oban

SEASONS GREETINGS

Angus and Kathleen MacKinnon, regret they will not be sending Christmas cards this year, but to all our friends, relatives and neighbours we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. 11 Laggan Road, Dunollie.

Merry Christmas

Gilbert and Jean MacKechnie would like to wish all family and friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Glen and Jessie MacKellar wish all their customers and friends a Peaceful Christmas and a Healthy, Happy New Year. The Flat, Post Office Stores, Bunessan.

Jean Buchanan

Would like to wish her family and friends Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas from Lord MacLean of Bentalla.

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ALIenergy is looking for an experienced individual to help promote and co-ordinate the development of biomass markets in Argyll; involving: provision of information, advice and support to biomass projects; promotion, awareness raising and training on biomass issues; development of biomass networks and assistance to projects on grant applications.

Criteria: degree or similar in a relevant subject; excellent communication and networking skills; knowledge and understanding of biomass issues, the wood fuel economy and current funding opportunities for wood fuel projects; experience of project development and project advice/support.

35 hours per week; job share considered; location: flexible within Argyll

Salary: £22,209; contract until March 2012

Closing date: 5pm on Wednesday 6th January Interview date: 18th January

Job packs available from: Jane Menzies (jane@alienenergy.org.uk; 01631 565183) or by downloading from www.alienenergy.org.uk

For further information, contact Dr Mandie Currie on 01631 569195 / 0791 937 3097 or mandie@alienenergy.org.uk



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United Auction held their Annual Christmas Sale at Dalmally when a new centre record for store cattle was achieved 07-1514001

Barra bullocks sets new record of £1,135 at Dalmally sale

UNITED Auctions held their Annual Christmas Sale of 423 cattle and 1,134 sheep of all classes at Dalmally Auction Mart last Saturday.

A large attendance of buyers ensured all classes were cleared at satisfactory rates. Stock went forward from west coast islands as well as all the usual mainland areas.

Mr Morrison, 10 Eoligarry, Isle of Barra enjoyed spirited bidding for his annual consignment when Simmental

cross bullocks sold to £1,135 per head, a new record per head for store cattle at this centre. Charolais bullock calves from Tullochmore sold to 281 pence per kilo whilst Charolais heifer calves from Ballygown sold to 267 pence per kilo. Heifers sold to £670 for Limousin crosses from Clachan, Isle of Tiree. Cross Texel lambs from the same home sold to £73 per head and Blackface from M/s Jackson, Pole sold to 174 pence per kilo.

DALMALLY United Auctions

Aberdeen AngusX: £910	10 Eoligarry, Barra £635,	£580(3), £535(2) and	£510(4) Machrins Farm, Colonsay.
Blonde d'AquataineX: £650,	£620 and £550 High Carse.	CharolaisX: £650(2) and	£595 Balliemanoach £550 Tullochmhor.
LimousinX: £1005, £940,	£935, £920 and £915 10	Eoligarry, Barra £905(2)	Moleigh Grazings £900
10 Eoligarry £895 and	£815 Moleigh Grazings	£815(2) Moleigh Grazings	£895 and £890 Moleigh Grazings
£855(3) Clachan, Tiree	£815(2) Moleigh Grazings	£805 12 Ardveanish, Barra	£800(2) Moleigh Grazings
£775 Stronacroibh, Lismore	£755(3) Clachan, Tiree	£725 Stronacroibh, Lismore	£720(2) Clachan, Tiree
£718 2 Keil Crofts and	Garraron and Melfort Farms	£710 10 Eoligarry £705 and	£700
12 Ardveanish, Barra	£700 Morenish £680	Moleigh Grazings £670	Stronacroibh £655 10
Eoligarry £650 Moleigh	Grazings £650(2) and	£630(4) 10 Eoligarry	£625(2) Tullochcan £620
Sonachan and Moleigh	Grazings £618 Iochdar,	Mull £605 10 Eoligarry	£598 Moleigh Grazings
£590(6) Garraron and	Melfort Farms £570 2	Keil Crofts.	Luing: £785(3) and
£660(7) Moleigh Grazings	£655 (5) Stronacroibh,	Lismore.	SalerX: £890, £600(2) and
£595 Moleigh Grazings			

SimmentalX: £1135,	201p - 10 Eoligarry
£980, £975 and £940 10	Eoligarry.
Eoligarry £895, £890(5)	and £815 Moleigh
Grazings £815 12	Ardveanish, Barra £715(2)
and £665 Stronacroibh,	Lismore.
WBX: £760(4) and	£655(7) Kinnell Estate,
Killin.	Heifers
British ShorthornX: 200p	Kiloran Farmers
Blonde d'AquataineX:	199p High Carse
CharolaisX: 267p(2)	Ballygown 264p
Tullochmhor	LimousinX: 227p 111
Borve, Barra 225p(2)	Tullochcan Farm 221p and
213p 10 Eoligarry 213p	111 Borve, Barra 210p(2)
2 Keil Crofts 204p(2) and	203p 10 Eoligarry 203p(2)
Ardchonnell Farms 201p	Moleigh Grazings 200p(2)
Morenish.	SimmentalX: 221p
Keilor.	Lambs
SuffokX: £60 Achanelid	Farming Co
TexelX: £73 and £71	Clachan, Tiree
Cross: £66 and £57 Ederline	Estate
Blackface: £70, £68 and	£61 Cladich £59 Kilchoan
£54 Cladich and Kilchoan	£53 Cladich £52
Glenshellach £50.50 Pole	£50 Ederline Estate.
Ewes	£51 Auchencorvie £50
Kirkton	Prices per kilo
Lambs	SuffolkX: 148p Achanelid
Farming Co	TexelX: 167p Keppochan
154p and 143p Clachan,	Tiree 143p Barbreck
Farm Partnership	Blackface: 174p Pole
173p Glenshellach 164p	and 154p Kilchoan 154p
Auchindaul 152p Ederline	Estate 151p Cladich.

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Scottish Winter Fair commercial champion, Eorna, a home-bred Charolais cross heifer from the RSPB's Aoradh Farm on Islay

Quality Argyll cattle heralded as among the best in Scotland after Isle of Islay's Winter Fair success

A FARM manager has hailed Argyll cattle as some of the best in Scotland after a good showing at the Scottish Winter Fair.

Commercial winner

Eion Brown, who runs RSPB Aoradh, Gruinart, Islay, won the commercial calves section at the fair on November 25 with a home-bred heifer, Eorna – only the third time he has entered the show and sale.

The heifer, which won the heavy heifer class, is by Allanfauld Amazon and out of a Limousin-cross Angus cow and is the half sister of Eion's champion calf at this year's Islay Show.

Champion in the light heifer class was Argyll links too. E. MacPherson and Sons, Benderloch and Berwick-upon-Tweed won

the class with the cross Limousin Miss Fancypanes.

Eion's uncle Bob Cunninghame, Neriby, was second in the light steer category and another Islay man, John MacKellar from Auchnaclach was third.

The judge was Orcadian Terry Coghill.

Eion, who sold Eorna for 1,450g said: 'I am absolutely delighted to have won the commercial calves section in what is the premier winter show in Scotland, especially with a home-bred entry.'

'There were a few of us over from Islay and it was a good advert for all of us.'

'Because we are on an island, we have to take to the mainland before anyone sees them and we are keen to attract new buyers

to Islay stock.

'Argyll, on the whole, produces good cattle, which are as good as any in Scotland.'

Mrs J Bowser and Mrs E Paterson, Barncroft, Killin, produced the pure-bred Highland champion, following up first-place and second-place tickets in the steer by Highland class.

Supreme champion in the show went to Hugh and Lynn Dunlop, Holehouse, Ochiltree with a three-quarter Limousin steer, Soutar Johnnie.

Reserve overall was Just Dance, a Limousin heifer shown by Mike and Melanie Alford, Foxhill, Cullompton, Devon.

Texel ewes sell to £100 at Dingwall

DINGWALL and Highland Marts Ltd sold 2,218 sheep of all classes at Dingwall last Wednesday when a mixed show on offer met an exceptional demand.

Ewes proved dearer on the last sale.

Lambs averaged £47.64 and sold to £80 three times for Suffolk crosses from Easter Sheep Park, Balblair, Cheviots from Inchbae Farm, Garve, and Charollais crosses from Folly, Thurso.

Correct ewes averaged £51.03 and sold to £100 twice for Texels from Easter Urray, Muir of Ord, and Bogallan, North Kessock.

Broken mouth ewes sold to £41 for Blackfaces from Mid Feam, Ardgay.

Feeding ewes averaged £45.82 and sold to £82 for Cheviot Mules from Lochdhu, Nairn.

Feeding (sheep) averaged £52.77 and sold to £103 for a Cross wedder from Tullochgribban Mains, Dulnain Bridge.

Back Charolais take champion and reserve at Stornoway

Steinish Cheviots are prime sheep leaders

DINGWALL and Highland Marts sold 34 cattle and 435 sheep of all classes at its Christmas show and sale at Stornoway last Thursday when all stock on offer met a strong enquiry with quality sorts selling at premium rates.

The prime cattle champion judged by Mr R Smith, Francis Street, was a 565kg Charolais cross heifer from No. 1 Gress, Back, Stornoway, realising 300p per kg and £1,695 to W. J. Macdonald, Butchers, Francis Street, Stornoway.

The reserve went to a 600kg Charolais cross bullock also from No. 1 Gress, which realised 250p per kg and £1500, also to W. J. Macdonald.

The prime sheep champion, judged by Mr D. Macdonald, Corriehennin Farm, Portree, was 45.5kg Cheviots from C. Macleod, Crobeag, Steinish, which realised 219.8p per kg and £100 - with reserve going to 44kg Beltex crosses from 9 Eordale, Ness, realising 181.8p per kg and £80.

Prime bullocks averaged 202.6p and sold to 250p per kg and £1500 for the reserve champion. Prime heifers averaged 234.7p and sold to 300p per kg and £1,695 for the champion.

Prime lambs averaged 149p and sold to 219.8p per kg and £100 for the champions from Crobeag.

Breeding cattle sold to £700 for an in calf Hereford from 2 Arivruach, Balallan.

Store bullocks averaged 189.1p and sold to 248.3p per kg and £710 for a 286kg Charolais cross from 12 Lionel, Port of Ness, while store heifers averaged 179.2p and sold to 265.2p per kg for an Aberdeen Angus cross from 5 Mangersta, Uig, and £90 for a Limousin cross from 6 Haclete, Bernera.

Store lambs sold to £72 for Cheviots from Crobeag and feeding sheep sold to £47 for Cheviot ewes from 13 Cross Skigersta Road, Ness.

Barcaldine's Oban Christmas Show champion sells to 400p per kilo

Dippen takes reserve champion and leading pen awards

CALEDONIAN Marts (Stirling) Ltd sold 1,207 suckled calves, store, breeding and Over 30 Month cattle at their Christmas Show and Sale at Oban last Tuesday when there was record number of calves forward from the Kintyre and Knapdale area.

Show judge was Graeme Stirling, Burnbank, Throsk and he selected as his champion, and winner of Caledonian Marts Perpetual Challenge Trophy a 300kg black Limousin bullock exhibited by E McGillyvary, Barcaldine Home Farm, Barcaldine.

The bullock later realised £1,200 to the judge.

Reserve champion was a 365kg Limousin heifer from D W Semple, Dippen, Carradale which made £1,020 to R Wotherspoon, Holybush, Slamannan.

The champion pen of cattle, and winner of the Millhall Perpetual Challenge Trophy, was also D W Semple, Dippen, Carradale with a pen of four Charolais bullocks scaling 350kgs and which realised £840 to J A M Leggat, Little Innernorth, Fraserburgh.

Show results

Bullock calf - Mainland Bred: 1 Champion E McGillyvary; 2 D W Semple, 360kgs, £980 to J McKay, Wester Auchendennan, Arden; 3 B Campbell, Achnacreebeag, North Connel, 215kg, £550 to Ross Farms, Wester Middleton, Gorebridge.

Heifer calf - Mainland Bred: 1 Reserve Champion, D W Semple; 2 D McDonald, Tyree, Benderloch, 345kgs, £730 to Ross Farms; 3 D McDonald, 305kgs, £900 to C Malone, Corbieewood, Bannockburn.

Bullock calf - Island Bred: 1 and 2 J MacCormick, Balnagowan, Lismore, 250kgs, £650 and 270kgs, £620 to R S Kinloch, Wester Coltrain, Kinross; 3 D McCormick, Baligarve, Lismore, 300kgs, £660 to D A Cuthbertson, Jedderfield, Peebles.

Heifer calf - Island Bred: 1 A McGillyvary, Achuran, Lismore, 315kgs, £710 to A Dunn, Redhall, Gargunnoch; 2 D MacCormick, Baligarve, 300kgs, £1100 to J McDougall, High Milndovan, Cardross; 3 A McGillyvary, Achuran, 315kgs, £760 to Ross Farms.

Native Bred bullock: 1 and 2 J & M Turner, Kildalloig, Campbeltown, 370kgs, £750 to J A M Leggat; 375kgs, £670 to A Dunlop, South Bar, Inchinnan; 3 B Walker Carloonan, Inverary, 340kgs, £635 to A Reid, Lagg, Ayr.

Native Bred heifer: 1 D MacCormick, Baligarve, 290kgs, £600 to W Colquhoun, Bankhead, Kinross; 2 and 3 J & M Turner, Kildalloig, 250kgs, £470 and 235kgs, £450 to J Watson, Mains of Druidland, Banff.

Sale report

Bullocks averaged 191p and sold to 400p per kg and £1,200 for the champion 300kg Limousin from Barcaldine Home Farm.

Heifers averaged 188p and sold to 367p per kg and £1,100 for a 300kg Limousin from D MacCormick, Baligarve.

Breeding cattle sold to £960 for a Shorthorn cow with calf at foot from High Ballantyre, Inverary, with in-calf heifers selling to £900 Kintail and in-calf cows to £780 Dalrannoch and £640 Ballygrundle, Lismore.

Bulling heifers sold to £880, Fuinery, Oban, and to £800 Ballindore, Taynuilt.



The pedigree Texel gimmer from KA & R Campbell of Lochgoilhead which was sold for 13,000gns at Carlisle

Carlisle Christmas Star Sale success for Cowal Texels

CHRISTMAS came early for K A & R Campbell of Lochgoilhead this year when one of their pedigree Texel gimmers was sold for 13,000gns at Carlisle.

The gimmer, from the Cowal Texel flock, is in-lamb to Kelso Pavarotti, who was purchased jointly for 40,000gns at Lanark earlier this year. The Cowal gimmer, sired by Muireisk Northern Dancer, was the only sheep in-lamb to Kelso Pavarotti being sold

on the day. She was in the Cowal show team of 2009 and her ET sisters are being retained.

The annual Christmas Stars Sale is now in its sixth year and featured 127 in-lamb females from a total of eight consignors. The previous highest price at this in-lamb sale was 8,500gns for a Milnbank gimmer in 2004. The Cowal flock have attained the highest price twice before – 8,000gns in 2006 and jointly at 7,000gns in 2007.

Sandy's tales of shepherding are published

A 92-YEAR-old former hill shepherd who tended sheep throughout the west has written a small but highly entertaining book.

Sandy Paterson originally wrote the book for his family and close friends but it proved so popular that he has already sold several dozen copies with more ordered.

Memories of a Hill Shepherd gives an amusing and interesting insight into the life of the hill shepherd from his boyhood near Airdrie, through shepherding all over Scotland to his eventual retirement from the Great

Glen Ranch in Lochaber. In the days when shepherd and his dogs walked the hills and shearing was done by hand, Sandy also worked in Kintyre, and the island of Luing, where the cattle were often herded on horseback.

Tales of high jinks that Sandy and his pals were prone to, and his shrewd observations of people that he met, his views on training dogs and advice on making shepherds crooks, make this brief account of one man's life on Scottish hills a genuinely worthwhile read. Further details are available from Michael Taylor on 01586 830111

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Market reports

STORNOWAY
Dingwall and Highland Marts
Prime heifers: 1 Gress, (CharX), £1,500, 250p; 1 Gress, (CharX), £1,158.75, 225p; 41 South Bragar, (AA), £1,126.60, 172p.
Prime lambs: BeltexX 1 Eordale, £80, 181.8p; Cheviot Crobeag, £75, 182.9p; SuffolkX 17 Habost, Ness, £70, 25 Lower Shader, Barvas, 154.8p; Blackface 1 Eordale, £66, 17 Habost, 156.1p.
Store bullocks: 201-250kg 12 Laxdale, £340, 162.7p; 301-350kg 41 Lower Barvas, £680, 209.9.
Heifers up to 200kg 5 Mangersta, £480; 201-250kg 5 Mangersta, £540, 246.6p; 251-300kg 2 Arivruach, £460, 170.4p; 301-350kg 2 Arivruach, £540, 178.8p; 351-400kg 3 Upper Carloway, £580, 151.4p; 501-550kg 41 Lower Barvas, £730, 6 Haclete, 170.2p.
Store lambs: SuffolkX 28 Lower Shader, £64.50; Cross 41 Lower Barvas, £63.50; Blackface 28 Lower Shader, £56
Cheviot Carloway House, £54

OBAN Caledonian Marts
Bullocks: 0-250kgs - £740, 296p Barcaldine Home Farm; 251-300kgs - £1200, 400p Barcaldine Home Farm;

301-350kgs - £840, 242p Dippen; 351-400kgs - £980, 242p Dippen; 401-450kgs - £880 Killoch, 202p Achuran; 451-500kgs - £930, 188p Barbreck Estates; 501-550kgs - £1000, 185p Mill Farm; 551-600kgs - £1040 Barbreck Estates, 184p Balliemore.
Heifers: 0-250kgs £660 Achnacreebeag, 320p Ardfenaig; 251-300kgs £1100, 367p Baligarve; 301-350kgs £900, 295p Tyree; 351-400kgs £1020, 279p Dippen; 401-450kgs £870, 205p Achnaba; 451-500kgs £900, 191p Achuran; 501-550kgs £700, 123p Achnacreebeag.
Breeding cattle: In-calf heifers: £900 Kintail. In-calf cows: £780 Dalrannoch, £640 Ballygrundle. Bulling heifers: £880, Fuinery, Oban, £800 Ballindore.
Kintyre/ Knapdale area
Bullocks: £930 & £900 No 5 Tomaig; £880 Killoch; £850 No 8 Killeonan; £845 Kildalloig; £800 Rhoim.
Heifers: £890 No 8 Killeonan; £740 Rhoim; £720 Killoch; £700 Dippen; £600 Kildalloig.
Prices per kg
Bullocks: 237p, 232p High Tirfergus; 222p Ellary Estates; 216p Ardnacross.
Heifers: 228p Ardnacross; 217p Dippen; 215p Low Tirfergus; 190p Ellary Estates.

DINGWALL
Dingwall and Highland Marts
Lambs: Cheviot Folly, £78; SuffolkX: Loanreach, Ardross, £77; Cross: 2 Broynach, £76; TexelX: 1 Camusluinie, Kyle of Lochalsh, £75; Mule: Silverwells, Edderton, £74; Zwarble: Aldourie Home Farm, Inverness, £69; Blackface: Gorthleck Mains, Inverness, £68; Charmois: Lower Gaich, Dulnain Bridge, £55.
Correct ewes: Texel: Easter Urray, £90; Cheviot: Ashley, North Kessock, £88; Suffolk: Bogallan, £88; Cross: Whitebog, Rosemarkie, £84
SuffolkX: Glastullich Farm, Nigg Station, £82
TexelX: Wester Moy, Urray, £75
Mule: Rhevackin Farm, Kiltarity, £70
Blackface: Rhevackin Farm, £58.
Feeding ewes: Cheviot: 4 Culnaha Cottages, Nigg, £81; Charollais: Lochdhu, £71.
Feeding sheep: Suffolk ram: Redhill, Allanfean, £100
Cheviot ram: Rurach Croft, Inverinate, £90
Texel ram: Glastullich Farm, £85
Blackface ram: Bogallan, £70
Suffolk gimmer: Bogallan, £80
Cheviot wedder: 4 Culnaha Cottages, £79
SuffolkX wedder: Rhevackin Farm, £76

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PUBLIC NOTICES
Notice of Application for a Premises Licence under the Gambling Act 2005
 Notice is hereby given that CalMac Ferries Ltd of The Ferry Terminal, Gourack, PA19 1QP are applying for a Variation to the Adult Gaming Centre premises licence under section 159 of the Gambling Act 2005. The application relates to the following premises M.V. Clansman, The Ferry Terminal, Oban, PA34 4DB The application has been made to: The Licensing Office, Inverclyde Council. Information about the applications is available from the licensing authority, including the arrangements for viewing the details of the application. Any of the following persons may make representations in writing to the licensing authority about the applications.
 A person who lives sufficiently close to the premises to be likely to be affected by the authorised activities.
 A person who has business interests that might be affected by the authorised activities.
 A person who represents someone in any of the above two categories.
 Any representations must be made by the following date 18th January 2010.
 It is an offence under Section 342 of the Gambling Act 2005 if a person, without reasonable excuse, gives to a licensing authority for a purpose connected with that Act information which is false or misleading.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997
PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997
 The applications listed below, along with plans and other documents submitted with them, may be examined between the hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) at the AREA PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS OFFICE, FULTON HOUSE, GORDON SQUARE, FORT WILLIAM, PH33 6XY and, where given, the alternative location(s).
 Written comments should be made to the Area Planning and Building Standards Manager at this office 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	Alternative locations where application may be inspected and time period for comments
09/00443/FULL0	Unit 1 North Road Fort William	Change of use from offices to hairdressers	Lochaber Area Planning & Building Standards Office (14 days)
09/00446/FULL0	Land 50m South West of Drumlochry Letterfinlay Spean Bridge	Erection of boat house	Spean Bridge Post Office (14 days)
09/00451/FULL0	Land 500 Metres West of Inshlaggan House Invergary	Formation of forestry access	Invergary Post Office (14 days)
09/00456/FULL0	Loch Lochy Fish Farm Gairloch Spean Bridge	Alteration and extension to building	Spean Bridge Post Office (14 days)
09/00457/FULL0	13-15 Lovat Road Kinlochmore Kinlochleven	Convert single house back to original 2 houses	Kinlochleven Post Office (14 days)
09/00458/LBCL0	Grahams Manse Arisaig PH39 4NU	Installation of two solar panels to roof on South elevation + oil storage tank	Arisaig Post Office Regulation 5 - affecting the character of a listed building (21 days)

Area Planning and Building Standards Manager, Ross, Skye & Lochaber:
 Dafydd Jones, Highland Council, Fulton House, Gordon Square, Fort William, PH33 6XY
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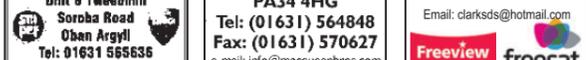
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Interment thereafter in Forfar Cemetery arriving approx 1.30pm.

EASTON - Dr H Gordon (formerly of Glasgow and Connel) In his 94th year, in Stirling on December 13, 2009, Gordon. Loving husband of Isobel, dear father of Catriona, Margaret, John, Peter and Seanag. Funeral at St Oran's Church, Connel on Thursday, December 17, 2009, at 1pm, thereafter to Oban cemetery. Family flowers only please. Donation if desired to Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture.

MACGILLIVRAY - Tragically at Condorrat, North Lanarkshire, on December 5, 2009, aged 51 years, Duncan, beloved son of Mary and the late Dougie MacGillivray, Kilchoan. Special brother of John and Teen, loving father of Kayleigh and Michael. A treasured nephew, brother-in-law, uncle, grandfather and friend. Interred at Kilchoan on December 16, 2009. Will be very sadly missed by all who knew him.

MACKAY - Suddenly but peacefully at Belford Hospital on Saturday, December 5, 2009, Alasdair, aged 73 years. Dearly beloved husband of Janet and stepfather of Cameron and Margaret.

TANKARD - Peacefully at home on December 15, 2009, aged 87, Mary Christina nee Gillies, beloved wife of the late Charlie, a much loved mum, gran, great-gran, sister and auntie. RIP.

husband, father, father-in-law and grandpa, who passed away on December 23, 1993. Always in our thoughts.

- Mary and family.

MACDONALD - In loving memory of Peggy, a dear wife, mum, granny and great-granny who died December 21, 2007.

Gad Ionndrain
 - Donald Archy and Family, 4 Dunmar Court, Oban.

MACINTYRE - Precious memories of our devoted parents, Duncan, who died December 19, 1981 and Betsy, April 16, 1988, also our dear sister, Margaret and nephew Diarmid. Partings come and hearts are broken. Loved ones go with words unspoken. Flowers will wither and suns will set. But hearts that loved you will never forget.

- Inserted by the family late of Kiltvree Farm, Connel and latterly Cruachan, Strathyre, Perthshire.

MACLACHLAN - Treasured memories of my dear husband, Allan, who died December 22, 1998. Will always be remembered.

- Inserted by wife, Ann, Ben Hiant, Kilchoan.

MACLACHLAN - Special memories of a much loved dad, who died December 22, 1998.

Your presence we miss
 Your memory we treasure
 Loving you always
 Forgetting you never

- Love Hugh, Rosemary, Nan, Alisdair and families, Kilchoan.

MACLEOD - Mary Lawrie. In loving memory of a dear mother and gran, passed away December 7, 2007.

Dearly loved
 Sadly missed.

- Donald, Ian, Linda, Rachel, Jenny, Pamela and Donna.

MACPHAIL - Cherished and ever loving memories of my beloved mother Morag MacDonald, who died December 17, 1987, my dear sister Margaret Christie, who died suddenly on January 10, 1988.

Memories are precious things
 They last from day to day
 They don't get lost
 They don't grow old
 And never fade away
 Remembering also loved family members gone before and since.

Loved and remembered always.
 - Chris.

McKIERNAN - In loving memory of a special dad Jim, who passed away on December 21, 2007. Always in our hearts.

- With love from Catherine, Diane and Alan.

McKINNEY - In loving memory of a dear sister, Marjory, who died December 15, 2003.

Sweet are our memories
 Silently kept.

- Pat and Malcolm.

McKINNEY - In loving memory of a special aunt Marjorie, died December 15, 2003.

Forever in our thoughts.
 - James, Sandra and family.

McKINNEY - Marjorie. In loving memory of a dear mum and granny, who passed away December 15, 2003.

As time goes by and life goes on
 You're in our hearts
 you're never gone.

- Love Drew, Anne and Liam.

McKINNEY - In loving memory of my dear sister Marjorie, who died December 15, 2003.

Always in my thoughts.
 - Jessie.

MUNRO - In loving memory of our beloved daughter, Violet, who died on December 22, 2006.

Silent thoughts
 Memories dear
 As time unfolds
 Another year
 Too dearly loved
 To be forgotten.

- Isabella and Douglas, Loanhead.

NICOLSON - Treasured memories of our dear mother and grandmother Christina Stewart who died December 19, 1985, also Mima McAulay our dear sister and auntie and precious mother of Donald Angus and Shirley Ann who died December 30, 1989.

Time passes memories stay
 Quietly remembered every day.

- sadly missed by all the family.

YOUNG - Cherished memories of Iain James, our beloved son who died on December 27, 1997.

Loved and remembered every day.
 - Mum and Dad.



Members of the Friends of Oban Hospice committee at the Light Up a Life book. 16_511gh01

A candle and a prayer to remember loved ones lost

THE LIGHT Up A Life book of dedication has proved, yet again, to be a popular way of remembering someone special at Christmas time.

At the Light Up A Life ceremony Margaret MacLean chairwoman of Friends of Oban Hospice

announced that more than £10,000 had been raised from this year's fundraising campaign.

The well attended service heard that the friends and trustees of Oban Hospice were fully committed to the hospice movement and would continue to provide the

care and support that they could for palliative care in Oban, and deliver services through the day hospice.

Ceremony
 The Switch On Ceremony heard singer Mary Catherine MacNeil sing Child in a Manger in Gaelic and English

and Ewan Dewar play The Dark Island on the pipes. A prayer was offered by Donald MacKinnon and Dr Mac Armstrong, Margaret McGregor and Margaret MacLean helped to lead the service.

The book of dedication was on show on the

evening before it was moved to the public library on Albany Street. Anyone who would like to make a donation to the Friends of Oban Hospice can contact the group at Friends of Oban Hospice c/o ABCR, 120 George Street, Oban, PA34 5NT.

BIRTHS

COTTIER - Liz and Finlo are delighted to announce the arrival of Finlay William, in Oban, on Wednesday, December 9, 2009. A brother for Ruari and grandson for Ros, Rodger, Linda and Ian. A huge thanks to the superb team at Oban Maternity Unit.

MACDONALD - Helen and Colin are delighted to announce the safe arrival of Eilidh Isobel on November 28, 2009 in Glasgow. A granddaughter for Archie and Janet MacDonald, Cnoc na Sgillinn, Tobermory, and for Olive Brown, Stronsaule, Tobermory.

ENGAGEMENTS

MILNE - RAE - Both families are delighted to announce the engagement on Saturday December 12, 2009, of Madeline, daughter of the late Bill and Sheila Milne, Oban to Gordon, son of Jean and the late Gordon Rae, Dundee.

MARRIAGES

CLARK - HONEYMAN - At Las Vegas on November 30, 2009, Ewan, son of Duncan and Jean Clark, Culluaine, Connel to Jennifer, daughter of Stewart and Aileen Honeyman, Vancouver B.C.

RUBY WEDDING

GRAHAM - TEASDALE - On December 20, 1969 at the Baptist Church, Lochgilphead by Rev Greg, Duncan to Isabel, Eilean Mor, Ardrishaig.

GOLDEN WEDDING

ANDREW
 Sam and Fay on December 22, 1959 in St. Columba Church Glasgow by the late Rev AF MacKinnon. Congratulations and best wishes from Fiona, Sandy, Louise and Ashleigh.

DEATHS

BAIN - Peacefully at Dumaros Hospital on Sunday, December 13, 2009, aged 82 years, Jessie Bain, of Tobermory, Isle of Mull. Much loved by all her family and friends, sadly missed. Funeral Service was held at Tobermory Parish Church on Wednesday, December 16, 2009, thereafter to Tobermory Beadoun Cemetery.

CAMERON - WHITE
 Suddenly at home on Friday, December 11, 2009, Irene Maxwell Cameron-White (nee Dickinson), beloved wife of Hugh and dear mother of Ruairidh and Calum. A service will take place on Tuesday, December 22, 2009, in Greenock Crematorium at 3.00pm to which all are respectfully invited. Family flowers only please but donations in lieu if desired to the North Ayrshire Hospice.

COPLAND - On December 12, 2009, in his 100th year Canon Charles McAlester Copland, Kirriemuir beloved husband of the late Wendy, dearly loved father of Frances Packman and Jane Lendrum and much loved by all his family. Funeral service in St Mary's Episcopal Church, Kirriemuir on Friday, December 18 at 12.15pm.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ELLIS - The Ellis family would like to thank everyone at home and abroad for their cards, considerations and very kind thoughts on the sad passing of Isla, a dear mummy to Alex, beloved daughter and sister.

Isla is at peace in Glenshira.

MACKAY - Janet and the family of the late Alasdair MacKay would like to thank all family and friends for cards, flowers and all who paid their last respects at church and graveside. Thanks to Rev Douglas MacKeddie and Mike McFall for funeral arrangements.

IN MEMORIAM

CAMERON - In loving memory of my dear husband, father and grandpa, Alastair, who died on December 18, 1990.

Loved and remembered always.

- Helen and family, Strontian and Morvern.

CAMERON - In memory of my beloved husband and dear father Lachlan Cameron, who died December 14, 1994, also remembering loved ones departed before and since.

Deep are the memories
 Precious they stay
 No passing of time
 Will take them away.

- Inserted by Mary and Margaret.

CAMPBELL - In loving memory of, Iain, our precious son, brother and uncle, who died on December 16, 2007, aged 29 years also our much loved husband, dad and Gen, Iain, who died on December 27, 1994, aged 49 years.

Always in our thoughts
 Forever in our hearts

- Seonaid, Annmarie, Marion, and families.

CAMPBELL - Iain. Always on my mind
 Forever in my heart
 Although its not forever
 That we will be apart
 I cant wait until I see you again

My extra special best friend
 When I see a shining star
 I know you're happy wherever you are.

All my love
 - Jenna xxx.

DUFF - Remembering Stuart our son who died aged 26 on December 18, 2000.

- Mum and Dad x.

FRASER - In loving memory of our devoted wife and mum Sharon, who died on December 19, 2008.

Always loved and forever in our hearts and thoughts.

- Alasdair, Callum, Fergus, Finlay and Cameron. Innishail, South Logan.

FRASER - In loving memory of my darling daughter Sharon, who died on December 19, 2008.

Gone from my life, I miss you so

The grief and heartache you'll never know
 How I miss your smiling face
 You made the world a better place.

- Mum, 17 Glenview, Dalmally.

FRASER - Precious memories of my dear twin sister Sharon. One year since you were taken from us

You were everything and we were proud to call you sister, sister-in-law and auntie Sharon. A one off.

- Loved always Keith, Nicola, Morven and Leanne, Lochawe.

MACALLISTER - In loving memory of David (Tobermory, Symington and Zambia) who died December 21, 1994.

Fondly remembered.

- Rosemary, Fiona Alex and David and Grandchildren.

MACDONALD - In loving memory of Duncan, a dear

CHARITY DONATIONS

Oban Hospice
 CARING FOR THE FUTURE
 Donations always gratefully accepted
 Please contact
David Mudie (Treasurer)
 Oban Hospice Ltd
 The Croft
 Kilmore

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 North Avenue, Clydebank
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 Tel 0808 100 6000
 In memory of Dawn Joyce

ASSOCIATED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, OBAN

Campbell Street Church
 Sunday 20th December 2009
 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.
 Phone-In 'Worship Link' available

Rev. Archie McPhail
 MA, MTh
 (01631) 567076
 All welcome

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Sunday 20 December 2009
 Advent 4
 St John's Cathedral, Oban
 Holy Communion.....08:00
 Sung Eucharist.....10:15
 The children will perform the Christmas Tableau
 Service of Lessons and Carols.....18:30

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 Norman MacCallum,
 Provost
 (01631) 562323

St Columba, Gruline, Mull
 Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols.....11.00

St Columba, Bishop's House, Iona
 Holy Eucharist.....10.00

Advance Notice
Thursday 24 Dec 2009
 Christmas Eve
 St John's Cathedral, Oban

Crib Service "Let's go to Bethlehem".....15:30
 Midnight Eucharist.....23:15

The Provost

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Thought for the week

'An upside down world'

John 12 v 47 'For I did not come to judge the world but to save it'

THE WORLD we live in seems to be turning upside down, Christian values we once held on to and that were the norm have disappeared and it is often hard to find a reference point within the communities that we are part of.

However, as we read the Christmas story again we can see that the message Jesus brought is completely 'upside down' God came to be among us in humility not in power, so that what we are going through is not

new, Jesus has been there before.

Jesus tells us that 'to serve' is what we should strive for even in a society where serving is perhaps seen as a sign of weakness, not strength.

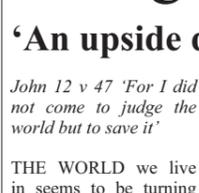
As stated by Tear Fund, one of the larger development organisations, 'It's an upside down world. The poor grow poorer and the rich grow fat. Poverty is shame and wealth is power'.

In this build up to Christmas let's try and live our Christian upside down values, to serve, to love, to give, to make our values

something we do rather than think about.

Let's live out our faith every day in a world which is changing so quickly that it's hard to keep up. Make a resolution before Christmas, rather than at New Year, to do something that is 'upside down' in terms of the world's values of wealth and power, to use what you have to make a difference even if it seems quite small... just do it. A simple upside down act can change someone's world, just as God did when he sent Jesus into this world to save us, not as a king but as a servant to us all.

Climate change activists turned out on a cold night to call for real change at the Copenhagen climate change conference.



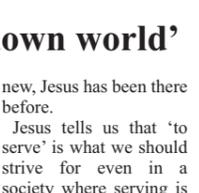
Climate change activists gathered on a freezing cold and starlit night in Oban Bay to join a world-wide call for a real climate deal in Copenhagen.

Activists brave the chill for climate change campaign

CLIMATE activists gathered on a freezing cold and starlit night in Oban Bay to join a world-wide call for a real climate deal in Copenhagen.

Hardy
 Protesting for serious decisions to be made at the conference, the 12 hardy protesters were joining thousands of like-minded groups and individuals all over the world.

Holy Land protest in Oban

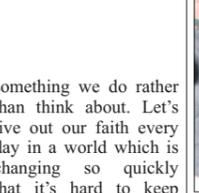


Children at Happy House Christian Pre-School enjoyed a walk in Dunollie Woods as part of their topic learning about The Forest. The children took part in different activities including taking their own photos, matching leaves and making bark rubbings. This huge branch was big enough for them all to sit on.

If you go down to the woods today...

Children at Happy House Christian Pre-School enjoyed a walk in Dunollie Woods as part of their topic learning about The Forest. The children took part in different activities including taking their own photos, matching leaves and making bark rubbings. This huge branch was big enough for them all to sit on.

Golf cheque for hospice



LADIES of Dalmally Golf Club have handed over a cheque for £215 to Friends of Oban Hospice chairwoman Margaret MacLean.

Clarification

Last week, a story about Mull lay preacher Jan Sutch Pickard's trip to the Holy Land referred to her as a Mull minister.

Ms Pickard has asked The Oban Times to clarify that she is a lay preacher in the Methodist Church and not in fact an ordained minister.

Barcaldine pupils put others first



Barcaldine Primary School pupils have chosen this year to support a local charity for Christmas. They collected gifts for the Salvation Army Christmas Present Appeal - Give a gift, light up a life. Craig McKinstry of the Salvation Army in Oban visited the school and spoke to the children about the work they do in the area to support those who are less fortunate.

Cup of tea appeal

ON HOMELESS Sunday, January 31, congregations across Argyll are invited to join in with a Cup of Tea Day and raise money for Scottish Churches Housing Action.

Congregations can give a minimum donation of £1 each to the work of Scottish Churches Housing Action.

In Argyll, New Start Oban is one of a number of groups who benefit from funding and training from the charity.

TIMES FORUM
 Have your say on the forum at
 WWW.OBANTIMES.CO.UK

Lochaber go down as Bute gain away win at Oban

Bute net two points required for Premier survival

BUTE maintained their place in shinty's Premier elite with a 3-1 away win in Oban on Saturday that clearly demonstrated the depth of resolve at the island-based club to stay in the top flight.

The victory also meant relegation for Lochaber Camanachd, who now join Glenorchy as the two clubs to drop from national to area leagues.

Bute manager Barry Martin made a point of seeking out and shaking hands with Lochaber manager Ally Ferguson following the final whistle of Saturday's match at Mossfield - clearly aware of the mixture of emotions on the day.

'For Bute to drop into South Division One was unthinkable,' said manager Martin. 'That was a big motivation for today's performance.'

'North Division One is a highly competitive league and Lochaber will come back and be all the stronger for being part of it.'

'I'm sure, they will bounce back quickly and Bute Shinty Club wish them all the very best.'

Oban Camanachd made it clear in the opening minutes of Saturday's tie that if Bute wished to retain their league place they were going to have to earn it.

Within the first minute, shots from Scott MacMillan and David Devine had tested

Shinty Scottish Hydro Premier Division Oban Camanachd 1 Bute 3

Bute keeper 'Paddy' Queen Bute forced their way forward and took a surprise fourth-minute lead when



Oban Camanachd's David Devine thought he had scored in the first minute until Bute keeper 'Paddy' Queen saved his shot 17_15shin01

Stuart Strathie gathered the ball 15 yards out on the right and fired a low shot which skidded under keeper Gavin Stobbert to nestle in the net.

Although Oban saw much of the ball in midfield, the more threatening attacks came at the other end as Stobbert did well to turn a low Robert Walker shot around his left-hand post and then deny a Strathie goal-bound effort from the right.

Camanachd were forced to replace wing-back David MacInnes after 22 minutes and then faced a further blow when defender David MacMillan received a serious hand injury in an accidental clash with Bute's Hector Whitelaw. MacMillan immediately went to hospital in Oban before being transferred to Paisley.

Oban drafted young substitutes Ewan McCorquodale and James MacMillan into the defence and while the home team's forwardline were often over-elaborate in their passing style of approach play, Bute chose route one with Whitelaw and Walker forcing good saves from Stobbert.

With three minutes of the start of the second-half Whitelaw tested Stobbert again and, from the resultant corner, Bute scored a hotly disputed goal. The corner was whipped in from the left and was caught in the air

by Robert Walker who then juggled it in the box and clipped it passed Stobbert. Camanachd claimed Walker met the ball in the air from an offside position - a hard one to call - and referee Mitchell, who seldom looked in total control, opted to award the goal in Bute's favour.

Oban immediately drew a goal back when Scott MacMillan found the top corner of Queen's net from 20 yards out on the right.

The following 20 minutes proved a dour and scrappy affair with Bute determined to hold onto their slender lead and Oban struggling to hold onto the ball long enough to be creative.

Bute drew Hector Whitelaw into defence with 20 minutes remaining but they then crafted a two-goal cushion when Walker raced goalward from midfield and his final ball to the edge of the box was met by substitute Ali Carmichael who stroked it home.

After 90 minutes, the curtain finally came down on another long, long, shinty season - the Premier title had been decided on goal difference - the Premier relegation battle had been decided on goal difference - but the eager excitement and anticipation of August and September had been somewhat lost in the gathering gloom of mid-December.

17_15shin02

Bute defender Iain MacDonald aims to clear the bouncing ball as Oban Camanachd's Daniel MacIntyre tries to shut him down at Mossfield on Saturday 17_15shin02

St Columba's lead A league

Shinty

ROCKFIELD Rovers currently lead the First Shinty C League by seven points after the latest round of matches.

Unfortunately the Salen teams were unable to make this month's competition but will be back in January.

Lochnell lead the B league at the moment with the chasing pack not far behind while in the A league St Columba's lead by 10 points. The next round of games will take place on January 10, 2010.

Results: C League: Ben Lora 1 Park Sparkies 0; Rockfield Rovers 3 St Columba 0; Rockfield Rockets 0 Ben Lora 3; Park Sparkies 0 St Columba 1; Rockfield Rovers 5 Rockfield Rockets 0; St Columba 1 Ben Lora 2; Rockfield Rovers 2 Park Sparkies 0; Rockfield Rockets 0 St Columba 1; Ben Lora 1 Rockfield Rovers 2; Park Sparkies 1 Rockfield Rockets 1; **B League:** Lochnell 5 St Columba B 1; Dunollie 1 Taynuilt 0; Lochnell 5 Crauchanside 2; St Columba B 0 Dunollie 3; Taynuilt 3 Crauchanside 0; Lochnell 3 Dunollie 1; St Columba B 3 Taynuilt 0; Crauchanside 0 Dunollie 2; Taynuilt 4 Lochnell 3; St Columba B 4 Crauchan 0; **A League:** St Columba 2 Park 0; Rockfield 0 St Columba 3; Rockfield 2 Park 2; Park 0 St Columba 6; St Columba 6 Rockfield 1; Rockfield 3 Park 2

A League	P	W	D	L	F-A	Pts
St Columba	8	7	1	0	29-3	23
Rockfield	8	2	3	3	10-20	13
Park	8	0	2	6	5-21	12
B League	P	W	D	L	F-A	Pts
Lochnell	8	6	0	2	33-14	20
Taynuilt	8	5	0	3	16-10	18
Dunollie	8	5	0	3	12-12	18
St Columba	8	4	0	4	18-19	16
Crauchanside	8	0	0	8	4-28	8
C League	P	W	D	L	F-A	Pts
Rockfield Rovers	12	12	0	0	37-1	36
Ben Lora	12	8	1	3	16-10	29
Park Sparkies	12	6	2	4	10-13	26
St Columba C	12	5	2	5	8-14	24
Rockfield Rockets	12	5	2	5	6-14	24
Salen Grasshop	12	1	2	9	2-17	16
Salen Sharks	12	0	1	11	0-11	13

Results

Shinty

Scottish Hydro Premier Division Oban Camanachd 1 Bute 3

Shinty leagues

Premier Division

Kingussie	18	13	4	1	82	28	30
Newtonmore	18	13	4	1	68	20	30
Fort William	18	9	2	7	39	31	20
Glenurquhart	18	8	3	7	35	38	19
Kyles Athletic	18	8	4	6	49	43	18
Oban Camanachd	18	8	2	8	31	38	18
Bute	18	5	3	10	28	41	13
Inveraray	18	6	1	11	40	55	13
Lochaber	18	5	3	10	25	47	13
Glenorchy	18	1	2	15	13	71	4

1,000 goals Ross wins Spirit of Scotland Award

Shinty



Ronald Ross with his award.

SHINTY star Ronald Ross has won the Spirit of Scotland Sport Award for the second time, in recognition of achieving 1,000 career goals this season.

Ronald won the award - which he also won in 2003 - in the same week he scored four of his side's five goals against Kyles to secure another Premier League championship.

The awards ceremony was hosted by Kirsty Wark at Prestonfield House Hotel, Edinburgh, last Wednesday and Ronald received his award from STV presenter Stephen Jardine.

Speaking after the ceremony, Ronald said: 'I won this in 2003, the season I scored 94 goals. I never ever thought I'd get back again.'

'It just shows that, if you work hard and train hard, there's always things down the corridor for you.'

'Tonight is just amazing. When I won in 2003, I was hyper for months. Kirsty Wark must be lucky for me, because I never thought for one minute I would get it back.'

Argyll cup clash

Shinty

THE FIRST round of the Argyll and Bute Challenge Trophy for first and second year pupils took place in Oban last Wednesday, between Oban High and Dunoon Grammar.

In the end Dunoon Grammar School just managed to out-muscle their slightly younger and smaller but very skilful opponents 4-2.

The trophy is played for to bridge the gap between primary and secondary shinty.

Week 1 of 2

Spot the SHINTY BALL Competition

To allow for the Christmas Holidays, Spot the Ball will run for 2 weeks - entries must be in by 12noon on Monday 28th December

WIN £700

All you have to do

We have removed the shinty ball from the photograph opposite. Now look carefully at the position of the players and use your skill and judgement to place a cross at the exact point where you think the centre of the ball was. You may have a maximum of 20 attempts on this coupon at a cost of £1.

If you wish to have more attempts, you must enter on separate coupons.

The game starts with a jackpot of £500 and will increase by £50 per week until it is won outright. To win the jackpot, the centre of your cross must be in the exact centre of the ball. If the crosses overlap the entry will be void. Prizes will be shared between those submitting correct entries.

If no correct entry is received, two 'near miss' prizes of £25 will be awarded. When the jackpot is won, no other prizes will be awarded that week.

Easy to enter

Cut out your completed coupon and put your entry plus £1 per 20 attempts into a sealed envelope and post it to reach "Spot the Shinty Ball" Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB by 12noon on Monday 28 December.

You may hand it into The Oban Times Head Office, Lochavullin, Oban by the same time. Otherwise all entries must be posted.

Competition Rules

No responsibility will be accepted for entries which are delayed, mislaid or lost, and proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. The Company's decision is final on all matters relating to the competition and no correspondence will be entered into. The final decision rests with the Company.

In the event of more than one correct entry, the jackpot will be shared equally between all winning entries. Any decision regarding the awarding of a prize is entirely at the discretion of the Company.

The Company reserves the right to declare the competition null and void at any time, subject to its discretion and to make full refund of the price of the coupon to any person who has entered the competition at that time.

Employees of The Oban Times Limited, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

I enclose £1 (note) for 20 crosses (tick box) The maximum number of attempts on this coupon is 20, but you may enter on separate coupons as many times as you wish. No photocopies allowed. You agree to abide by the rules.

How to enter: Mark your crosses using a ballpoint pen. Twenty crosses may be put on this coupon for £1.

Name _____

Address _____

Tel No. _____

Send to 'Spot the Shinty Ball' Competition, The Oban Times, P.O. Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB

This week's nearest the ball winners, who each receive £25 are: A Livingstone, Port Ellen, Islay and C MacDonald, Mary-burgh Court, Fort William

Shinty's American dream

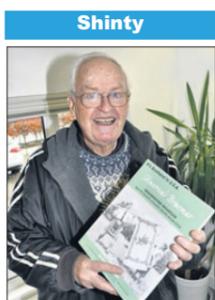
Argyll links to inspire revival of sport in USA

By EUAN PATERSON

A RETIRED journalist who moved from Oban's twin town of Laurinburg to Scotland is on a mission to revive shinty in the American city.

Donald MacDonald is using the strong historical shinty connections between Argyll and North Carolina to reignite interest in the sport across the pond.

Donald, who married his late wife Marietta MacLeod, from Lewis after meeting her during a holiday to Scotland, says that shinty was first played in Laurinburg by Scottish settlers in 1790.



Donald MacDonald.

More than 200 years on, Donald is keen to give the sport more recognition in Laurinburg and is looking

to Oban High School's exchange with Scotland High School in Laurinburg for help. Donald, who now lives in Edinburgh, said: 'I left Laurinburg in 1961 but I still have quite a few contacts there and I'm trying to get them to organise a shinty team.'

'It would be great if one of the youngsters on the Laurinburg exchange trip was a shinty player and could demonstrate the sport to the American pupils.'

'The first settlers in Laurinburg played shinty. Some of the first recorded settlers in Laurinburg left North Lorn on board the Jupiter of Lorne, which sailed from Dunstaffnage.'

Clearances

They were mainly from the Appin area and are believed to be early victims of the Highland clearances.'

And it seems the traditional North Lorn surnames have survived the test of time.

Donald said: 'Laurinburg has a lot of MacIntyres, Carmichaels, Livingstones, McColls, Blacks and MacCormicks,' said Donald. 'The Appin link is also evident through Stewartville Cemetery. A lot of the first immigrants from Appin are buried there.'

'Indeed, there were also a lot of MacLaurins at the time at that is how Laurinburg got its name - MacLaurin's Bourough.'

Donald worked at The Scotsman newspaper for 13 years and eventually became a journalism tutor at Napier University, before retiring in 1990.

He has written a book, America's Braemar, about the links between Scotland and North Carolina.

Football girls looking the part



The Girls football squad at Oban High School took delivery of their new strips this week courtesy of local business Oban Wetsuits. The girls play alongside the boys in the school's junior team and will make their debut in the new strips on January 11 next year when they take on Musselburgh Academy in Oban in the Scottish Schools' Cup. The girls are pictured with the school's head teacher Peter Bain. 07_051girl03

Saints cup tie rescheduled for Saturday

Football

LAST Saturday's Scottish Amateur Cup fourth round replay between Broomhill and Oban Saints was called off on the Saturday morning after a pitch inspection found Parklea Playing Fields, Port Glasgow, to be unplayable.

The match has been rescheduled for this Saturday at the same venue with a 1pm kick-off.

Extra time and penalties, if required, will decide who goes through to the fifth round of the national competition. Saints manager Iain Jackson should have a full squad to choose from.

Over 35s league

Football

THERE will be no more games in the over 35s league until after New Year.

Last week Owen Sails were beaten 7-0 by Taynuilt, Trialists beat Hydro 5-3 and Emergency beat Clan Trees.

Over 35s 6-a-side league

	P	Pts
Emergency	2	6
Spartak	2	6
Trialists	2	6
Taynuilt	3	6
Seil	3	6
Clan Trees	2	3
Teachers	2	0
Hydro	3	0
Owen Sails	3	0

Last league games

Pool

TONIGHT sees the last games in the league until January 7.

Oban Pool League

	P	Pts
Loch B	7	12
Lochnell	7	12
Claredon	7	10
Markie Dans	7	10
Loch	7	8
Lancaster	7	8
Kelvindale	7	6
Cellar Bar	7	6
Markie Dans B	7	6
Gluepot	7	4
Claredon B	7	0

Islay Golf Club

Golf

Winter League Week 5

1 Robert Shaw	39pts
2 Alan McGhee	38pts
3 Alistair Livingstone	36pts

Tides

Tide tables for Oban during the week from Thursday, December 17, 2009 are listed below with differences for major ports listed beneath.

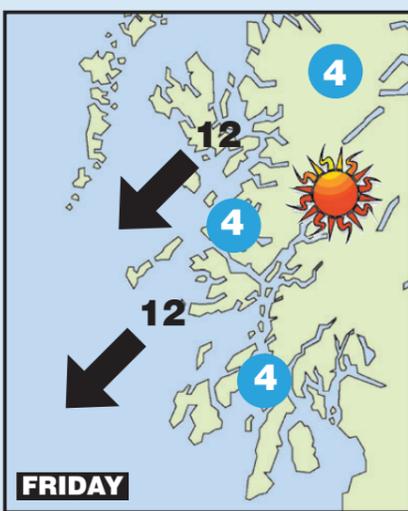
All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Date	am	pm
Thur	05.54 4.0 12.21 1.3 18.06 3.7 *** **	18.41 3.7
Fri	00.34 1.2 06.31 4.0 13.00 1.4 18.41 3.7	
Sat	01.12 1.2 07.07 4.0 13.37 1.5 19.16 3.7	
Sun	01.49 1.3 07.44 3.9 14.15 1.6 19.51 3.6	
Mon	02.26 1.4 08.21 3.8 14.52 1.7 20.26 3.5	
Tues	03.01 1.5 08.58 3.6 15.31 1.8 21.00 3.4	
Wed	03.36 1.7 09.37 3.5 16.14 1.9 21.38 3.2	

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ardrihaig	-5.35	Lochboisdale	+0.30
Campbeltown	-5.30	Mallaig	+0.25
Crinan	-0.47	Portree	+0.55
Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Tobermory	+0.16
		Dover	+5.30

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the weather

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Thursday
Will be sunny with clear skies throughout the day leading to frost at night. Winds light to moderate west to south-westerly. Temperatures 0°C to 3°C

Friday
Again sunny throughout the day leading to frost at night. Temperatures -2°C to 4°C.

Weekend Outlook
Saturday will see light rain and showers with a strong westerly wind continuing into Sunday. Temperatures 1°C to 8°C.

Ferry Crossings/Sea States
Oban to Barra/South Uist - Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree - As above
Kennacraig to Islay - As above

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Oban draw blank in 'worst performance of season'

Rugby

West Division One

Oban Lorne 0 Strathendrick 27

OBAN had several players returning to the squad for the home match at Glencruitten including Bert Wright at stand off and Chris MacDonald and Craig McGowan at centre although both David Hunter and Mark McTighe were unavailable from last week's team which lost narrowly at Cumnock.

The weather was crisp and bright although the pitch had only just been defrosted by the time kick off came, really a great day for running rugby.

Oban were slow to start and seemed unable to break out of their own half as Endrick had the upper hand in terms of possession and territory.

What scraps Oban did manage to pick up were generally aimlessly kicked back to the visitors who used their pacy back three players to run back at Oban.

The visitors were 3-0 up after ten minutes before scoring two further first half tries for a 15-0 score line.

Pressure

Too often Oban put themselves under pressure by not clearing their lines and played to the visitors strengths by gifting them possession.

Although Oban raised their game at times in the second



Gary MacEwan.

period they were not able to turn around their fortunes and the match followed a

similar pattern. There were some good breakthroughs when the Smith twins combined to good effect but none were finished off leaving the home scoreline blank. Strathendrick scored a further two tries for a final score of 27-0.

Overall this was one of Oban's worst performances of the season which was a bit of a mystery with a strengthened playing squad to choose from.

If it had not been for some last ditch tackles by captain Gary MacEwan then the try count would have been higher.

Oban now have a four-week break from league rugby before first-footing Paisley on January 9, 2010.



Eddie O'Donnell junior and senior in the Escort mark II.

O'Donnell duo's 'unlucky' season splutters to an end

EDDIE O'Donnell junior and senior have had some promising results this season, despite not having lady luck on their side.

All season, the Mull crew has been dogged by engine problems and breakdowns when in promising positions and the season-ending Grizdale and Galloway Hills rallies were no exception.

The narrow, twisty roads in the Grizdale stages suited the O'Donnells and they drove to sixth

Rally

place overall, going into the final stage.

However, on the next run they got a puncture and spun off, wrecking any chances of an assault on the top of the leaderboard.

Misfortune

At the Galloway Hills, their misfortune was to continue.

Again, after a promising first two stages, the crew sat in sixth place

overall but on stage three, a rear wheel was sheared and any hopes of a strong finish ended.

They also had poor luck at their home event, the Isle of Mull Rally, when their gearbox and a rock conspired to ruin their weekend.

The father and son duo thanked their hard-working service crew: Gerry Kilmurray, Simon Proud, Hamish MacAlpin and Steven and Amanda O'Donnell and their sponsors.

Saints under 19s beat Dunoon side

Football

ON SATURDAY the Oban Saints Under 13s match against Barcalomond was postponed after several Barcalomond players went down with the flu.

Drumchapel United drew 2-2 with Saints under 15s with Cammy MacLean and Martin MacPherson scoring for Saints.

The Under 19s won 3-2 against Dunoon with Marc Beaton, Kevin Keene and Michael McGhee scoring. This Saturday the under 15s are away to Kilpatrick while the under 19s are away to Gleniffer Thistle.

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