

Strathdearn

February, 2007. Vol.7 Issue 1.

Newsletter

STRATHDEARN COMMUNITY PLAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKER

In the last edition of the Newsletter, we told you what – and who – had so far benefited from the windfarm community benefit administered by the Strathdearn Community Charitable Trust. We had not, however, lost sight of the “big issues” identified in the Strathdearn Community Plan which was drawn up last summer following the Community Participatory Appraisal consultation exercise undertaken last February.

To help put the Community Plan into action, it was decided to appoint a Community Development Worker, and applications are coming in from the advertisements placed in the “Inverness Courier” and “Strathspey & Badenoch Herald”. We will keep you posted.

There follows two articles written by John Hodgson and Alex MacQueen, whom the Trust helped to go to Sri Lanka and Romania, which I am sure you will enjoy as much as I did. John unfortunately had to leave Sri Lanka on 14th January as a bomb had exploded on a bus very near to where he was working and in an area where we used public transport regularly. There had been another bomb the day before and these had been the first time that civilians had been targeted by terrorists in Sri Lanka. The organisation John was working for made the decision to get all their volunteers out as quickly as possible and they will not be sending in any more volunteers until they are convinced that things are safe. John and the other volunteers went to India, and we are very glad they got out safely.

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Hello again,

I am just past the 4 month mark out here in Sri Lanka. The recent Christmas holidays allowed me and the other volunteers some time to travel round Sri Lanka and see some of the sights. We spent a week going round what is known as the Cultural Triangle, which is an area full of sites of historical interest. Polonaruwa and Andradapura are both ancient cities, with ruins and huge statues of Buddha, dating back about 2 thousand years. They are both spectacular. Sigiriya is a huge rock that looms above the flat ground below it. About 1500 years ago, one of the Sri Lankan kings built a palace on top of the rock. It is truly spectacular, and the view from the top is great.

Adams Peak is the holy mountain in Sri Lanka, unique because it is holy to Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Christians, and there are temples to all of these, on top. The mountain is 7000 feet, and the whole way up is stairs carved from the rock. It is a pilgrimage site for many, but we went for the view. We climbed it at night, and at the top it was very cold. We waited with hundreds of others for the sun to rise. Spectacular does not do justice to the view from the top, and I doubt even if pictures can convey the feeling. It is like standing on top of the world. The climb up was hard work, but not overly so. The climb down was much worse, thousands of steps - every one jarring your knees.

LITTLE CHEF SITE

Mr William Frame of Braemore Estates and his agent, Mr Ranald McWilliam of Kerr McWilliam, will attend the next meeting of the Community Council on Tuesday 20th February at 7.30 pm in the Strathdearn Hall, to let the community know about their plans to build an upmarket travel lodge and restaurant, with possibly 5 retail units (in the style of a “mini-Bruar”) on the site of the former Little Chef. Please come along if you can.

School reopens tomorrow (January 2nd) and I have a few weeks there before I travel to India at the end of the month. Teaching has been going very well at the school, and I feel that I have paved the way for other volunteers to do more work there. I have become very close to the family that I am staying with, especially the son Kushan who I love to bits. It will be very sad to leave them, but I think I have been a good ambassador for Scotland and the West, and I am very glad that they have agreed to take on more volunteers after my departure. They have shown me nothing but kindness and understanding, and I could not have hoped to get a better placement.

My return to Scotland is at the end of February. So really my time here is drawing to a close. I think my work at the school has mainly been that of getting the children accustomed to having a white person around them. It was a bit of a deal to them at first, but now it is less so. Because the novelty has worn off, teaching should become easier, and I hope the next volunteers (2 this time, I think) find it this way.

John

Romania 2006

In the summer of 2006, I had the privilege of travelling out to Jimbolia, Romania along with 6 other Millburn pupils my age; Victoria Robertson, Jean Bain, Kirsty Hogg, Heather Mackenzie, Joe Drinkwater and Donald Rae.

Although the trip was organised through the school, we were interviewed and chosen by the charity Blythswood, and lived and worked with their contacts during our time in Eastern Europe. The first trip to Romania by Millburn pupils came about in response to the Blythswood "shoe box appeal" when a group of fifth and sixth years decided they wanted to do something more, and got in touch with the charity. As a result they travelled out to the "Talita Kum" – meaning "child come" centre in Jimbolia. The team helped build a climbing frame and outside play area, and since then every year a group of seven, fifth year volunteers have travelled out to help run a holiday camp for underprivileged children. We were the fourth group to go out, and the camp was held in a new venue, in the mountaintops of Crivia.

The funding of the camp is a big issue, because without the support from Millburn Academy pupils and families it would be unable to run.

To cover the cost of the running of the camp, materials and equipment we took out as well as the cost of our flights we had to fund-raise £4800. We did this in a number of ways;

Holding a curry night, a ceilidh, a cheese and wine night, a jewellery party, dressing up as snow white and the seven dwarves, and lots more! As well as writing to trust funds and receiving private donations from friends and family for things such as our sponsored walk round Farr Windfarm.

It was a lot of hard work, and although at first the money trickled in slowly in the end we raised over £9000! (The extra money will stay with the project in Romania)

I would also like to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to the Strathdearn Charitable Trust who funded the costs of my flights.(£251.30)

When we arrived in Hungary one summer evening (26th June) the heat hit us. We were met by Adi Popa who runs the "Talita Kum"

project, and although we had to drive through to Romania along the highway, apart from the nerves about crossing over the border we enjoyed a pleasant journey. (If only the rest of the driving we experienced in Romania had been of such quality!) Our first few days in Romania were spent at the project centre where Adi and his family live and work, they were very welcoming and showed us around the sights and sounds of Jimbolia.

When we reached the mountaintops of Crivia and met the children for the first time it was definitely one of the high points of our trip. We loved to see their faces just light up each day when we brought out the crafts and toys. We had expected the language barrier to be a bit of a problem, and although we had excellent translators we soon discovered there are other levels of communication. By the end of the trip had really come to understand and build up good friendships with the children, picking up a bit of Romanian along the way!

We were supervising the kids for around 16 hours a day: We had to get up and get the kids up in time for breakfast at 8am. Then after that we had what became known as "Quiet Time" which was when we split into small groups, and told the children about Scotland and life at home, and they too shared their own stories- we were very thankful for our translators at these times! Then we had supervised play (usually outdoor) for a couple of hours, then back into groups for our craft for that day, which ranged from paper plate masks to sock puppets to t-shirt making.

Then a break for lunch, usually followed by a trip to the lake swimming or a walk up the mountains. Back to base for our evening meal, more supervised play, a disco, bonfire, or puppet show to round off the evening and then showers and bed. Which sounds simpler than it was, as we had to shower the kids ourselves as most had never used one before.

At first they hated it, but by the end of the week we couldn't get them out, and despite our efforts the small bathroom flooded every time!

Really for us the whole trip was more or less a high point, and being given such a privileged opportunity to play a small part in the lives of the Romanian children we met.

Of course due to the nature of the trip there were low points. We felt embarrassed and ashamed when we saw the children only had a carrier bag of clothes with them compared to our big cases. Especially as these had only been lent to them by Blythswood. (The children had to return these things at the end of the trip as in previous years the parents had sold them for alcohol money.)

Also taking the children home after camp to the "gypsy villages" and seeing where they lived was a real eye opener. The villages consisted of courtyards with long low houses, with no glass in the windows, and empty door-frames. There was no electricity or running water and all the rubbish and sewage was dumped in the centre of the courtyard.

The Popa family explained to us that a few years ago Blythswood had gone into the villages and built proper fire places in every house, to give the families a source of warmth in the cold Romanian winters. However, when they returned to see how the families were getting on 2 weeks later, everything had already been ripped out and sold.

It was then we realised how hard it is to reach out and help these people, and why the children's camp and after school club is so important, as by means of a better education, these children may lead a better life.

The Gypsy villages were something that we couldn't have prepared ourselves for and even photos wouldn't portray the extent of the dirt and smell and hundreds of flies that covered our arms and legs as we walked around. However the thing that hit us

most was how little these children had and yet how happy they were. At the camp it was so easy to forget their hard backgrounds and homes, as the children were so full of life, well behaved and enthusiastic. And they really were an example to us all.

What we've learned from the experience:

We discovered a new culture as previously we did not realise that "Gypsies" are a race in Romania, and quite different from our term of the word which usually suggests travelling folk. In fact they have their own villages and own language (separate from Romanian, although they do speak it as well).

We were also saddened to learn there is a lot of unrest between the Gypsies and Romanian citizens.

However, we felt a great sense of achievement that the camp had been a success, and we'd made a difference even if it had been very small. We will never forget our time in Romania, and the Gypsy children of Jimbolia, but this trip has also brought to the fore

the realisation of just how fortunate we really are!

Alex MacQueen.

50th BIRTHDAY SURPRISE

Sandy had just given up his job in web design in Orange County to move up to Idyllwild, a little town in the Californian mountains, to fulfil his lifelong ambition of making guitars, so his 50th birthday was a landmark but he was too busy to think about celebrating it.

His friends and family had thought otherwise and planned a big surprise party! So when he walked in to the Rainbow Inn, thinking he was going to play at a "gig", he couldn't believe his eyes. Surrounded by a roomful of friends shouting, "Surprise! Happy Birthday", he was just recovering when Alan, Gill and I, and cousins Anne and Sandra, walked in. It was an amazing and emotional moment and worth all the planning and subterfuge.

Everything was beautifully set up with a band, buffet and lots of presents, and three birthday cakes (Teri couldn't decide on his favourite). The entertainment was provided by his musician friends and Sandy was able to try out one of his new guitars.

The rest of the week was fun. Lovely walks around Idyllwild, cosy restaurants, trips to the desert and a wonderful evening at Laguna Beach, watching the sun set over the Pacific Ocean.

Thanks to Alan, Gill, Anne and Sandra for sharing it with me and helping to make it so special.

Betty Watson

Distance no object for Highlands befriending project

Living in the Highlands of Scotland can feel isolating, particularly for people with a mental health problem, but one charity has come up with a unique way of dealing with that loneliness.

The Distance Befriending service from Befrienders Highland provides people living in isolated areas someone to talk to, even if they live hundreds of miles away. Volunteers with the Highland-wide service offer their friendship to vulnerable people in isolated rural areas via phone, letter or e-mail.

The Co-ordinator of this initiative is Yvonne Reid and part of her role is to carefully match individuals with their volunteer

befriender so that they have things in common and there is a good chance that they will get on well together. Yvonne explained "When people are unwell there are often a multitude of professionals involved, but to have someone in regular contact not because they're paid, but because they WANT to be in contact, can be so important and make such a difference in the person's life".

Volunteers too seem to get so much out of it – a new friend, doing something worthwhile, developing skills and building their own self-confidence to name but a few. One volunteer with a vision impairment thought she would never be able to do any voluntary work. Now she's phoning her new friend once a week. They talk about their pets, what they've been doing and the general goings on in the world. It's a friendship they value and from which they mutually benefit.

"I like hearing from him – I'm wanting to read what he's written"; "We laugh a lot, and I mean a lot!"; "Just half an hour a week and she's come to be a real friend," are just some of the comments from the friends and volunteers.

If you can write letters or e-mails or are happy to chat on the phone then you could be a distance befriender. Our home learning training course gives you the information you need to volunteer from home with confidence. There is also ongoing regular contact and support from Yvonne, the co-ordinator.

Interested? Then you are just a call away from doing something different and having some fun along the way! Contact Yvonne at Distance Befriending on 01463 235675 or e-mail distance@befriendershighland.org.uk

A VERY SHORT STORY:

Yesterday I watched a man carving an angel. Through the dusty window I could see that he worked with a fierce intensity, his head sunk into his shoulders as he raised his mallet again and again, his chisel taking exact pieces out of the wood that were to be the angel's wings.

I passed the workshop the next day and saw that the angel was now complete and that it was polished and gilded. It was beautiful, the great sweep of wings, the hands folded in prayer, the little head tilted slightly had no expression, the eyes blank. The man rubbed his hands on his sacking apron and, opening the door, picked up the angel with infinite care and stepped out into The Square. The great marble Church of St Michael and All Angels dominated The Square. The café/bar was full of patrons and the bread and vegetable shops busy with customers. A party of Germans passed through taking photographs and a couple of tourists peered at a map as they drank glasses of beer.

No one seemed to notice the man and his angel on the shadowed side of The Square, outside the workshop. He held the angel above his head and all at once it lifted out of his hands and flew into the sunshine and into the clear blue sky. It dazzled my eyes, but even so, I saw that the angel was smiling and the man, his face wet with tears, was smiling too.

This, of course, could only happen in Venice.....

POETRY CORNER:

The visage of a Visigoth
is enough to make one cough.
His manners really are uncouth,
He very rarely tells the truth,
He lives a life that's quite obscene
His finger nails are never clean.
He smells quite bad; and what is worse
He can swear, blaspheme and curse!
He can pillage; he can rape
So my friends, make no mistake
Avoid this creature if you can
For he is a loathsome man.

EAB

Note: *The Visigoths sacked Rome in AD 410*

COFFEE MORNING FAVOURITES

The Wednesday Coffee Morning in the Hall has become so popular and is sometimes combined with a Sales Table so here are some recipes to try out:

WHOLEWHEAT SCONES

8oz wholewheat flour
3 tsp baking powder
2oz margarine or butter
Pinch salt
5fl oz milk
1 egg

Mix dry ingredients. Rub in margarine. Pour in milk and egg to make soft dough. Roll to half an inch thick and cut in rounds. Bake 10 minutes at 400 degrees F, 200 degrees C.

CHOCOLATE CAKE

Boil together 1oz cocoa, a quarter pint milk, 2oz sugar. Allow to cool.
Cream 4oz sugar, 3oz margarine, a quarter tsp vanilla essence. Beat in 1 egg.
Gradually stir in cocoa liquid alternately with 5oz flour.
Bake at 375 degrees F, 180 degrees C, for 20-25 minutes.

LOW FAT BLUEBERRY MUFFINS

8oz S.R. flour
1tsp baking powder
3oz caster sugar
Finely grated lemon rind
6 fl oz skimmed milk
2oz low fat spread (melted)
2 medium eggs
1 carton blueberries

Sift flour and baking powder. Stir in sugar and lemon rind. Whisk together milk, spread and eggs. Stir into dry ingredients. Mix in blueberries and bake in muffin tins 15-20 minutes at 200C.

TIP

A little sugar added to a vase of flowers makes them last longer.

BREAKFAST CLUB

Starting on Monday 12th March (and thereafter every second and fourth Monday in March, April, May and June) Moy, Dalarossie and Tomatin Church of Scotland is starting a Breakfast Club in the Strathdearn Hall. You are very warmly invited to join us for the whole morning, or to any one or more of the three parts of the morning which are:

- **9.30 – 10.15: Breakfast** - freshly brewed coffee, bacon rolls and croissants.
- **10.15 – 11.15: A very gentle look at a Gospel passage**, focussing on the life of Jesus and His relevance to our lives today, led by Vivian. Nobody will be asked any questions they can't answer during the discussion – and indeed you don't even have to speak during the discussion if you would rather just sit and listen!
- **11.15-11.30: Short time of Tea and Praise**
- **11.30 – 12.00: Prayer Time** – for people and situations known to us. If you can't manage along, let us know if you would like us to pray for anyone or anything.

Further details from Vivian on 511355.

..CONGRATULATIONS COLUMN:

Birth Congratulations to:

Erik and Corinne Fremont, whose son Andreas was born in November, a little brother to Calvin and Lucille.

Anthony and Diane Ross. Baby William Stuart weighed in at 7lb 8oz on 19th January, a little brother to Georgia, Sophie and Melissa.

Carol James, whose granddaughter (name still to be decided when information was given), and Matthew's little sister, was born on 25th January weighing 9lb, to Simon and Alicia.

Susan Mackintosh Grant, whose great-nephew Archie (little brother to Poppy) was born to Paul and Harriet Jones on 28th January, weighing just over 6lb.

Ewan and Karen Archer, whose first child, a daughter called Elspeth, was born on 31st January, weighing 7lb 11oz.

Marriage Congratulations to:

Duncan Hallam and Lisa Gordon who chose Las Vegas as the venue for their wedding on 24th January.

Congratulations also to:

Bob Couper of Glenan Lodge who becomes Captain of Carrbridge Golf Club for 2007 and 2008, this month. New members are always welcome. Contact Bob @ 01808 511217.

Nic Brown of Millcroft on his Passing Out Parade for the Navy (see separate report from his proud mum).

STRATHDEARN COMMUNITY COUNCIL REPORT

The **November** meeting of the Community Council was a long and lively one, with 28 members of the public in attendance, dominated by the topic of the **planning application addendum for Glenkirk Wind Farm**. Three representatives from Eurus Energy UK Ltd were present – Mr Sakamoto, Mr Garrity and Mr Grant. The matter in hand was to consider the planning application for the Wind Farm but the possible access route, which would be applied for at a later date, was also much debated. The hostility towards the Wind Farm project shown by the members of the public at the meeting was so deep that Mrs Roden suggested that it would be in the interests of democracy to hold a Community Ballot to determine if this were a reflection of the whole community's feelings, in which case it would be incumbent upon the Community Council to write a letter of objection to the Scottish Executive. This was duly agreed and Mrs Roden undertook to organise the printing and distribution of the ballot papers.

Regarding the **Community Plan**, Mr Hart reported that a Joint Working Party had been formed comprising members of the CC and the Charitable Trust. They had held a meeting and decided to employ a person to develop and deliver projects for the community.

The post of **Tomatin Tidier** had been advertised; the amount of £7.00 per hour was decided, for 5 hours p/week initially, plus travel expenses at 40p p/mile.

Mr Kippen reported for the sub-committee on **Sports/Youth Facilities** that at meetings attended by Colin Munro the architect they had discussed: the children's play area; the importance of having a green picnic environment with surrounding trees; and the nature of the proposed all-weather pitch, which he said would cost approximately £50,000 ex. fees and VAT for 36m x 18m with all-round fencing and floodlighting. Once the favoured plan was identified, this would be laid before the community for comment.

Mrs Roden reported that advice had been sought from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator as to whether **affordable housing** projects could be deemed 'charitable purposes' and so receive funding from the Charitable Trust. The reply was that provision of accommodation is usually covered by purpose 7 (2) (n) under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 – and the provision of accommodation has to be intended for those in need. "Need" can be variously defined, with disability and financial hardship specifically mentioned in the Act. This is the purpose under which most charitable housing associations operate – and is obviously not one of the purposes currently contained in the Strathdearn Community Charitable Trust's Deed. Were the Trust minded to pursue this activity, the consent of OSCR for a change of purposes would be required. Assuming the Trust wished to do this, and that OSCR approved the change, the other requirement of the 2005 Act, the provision of public benefit in line with charitable purposes (ensuring that accommodation is provided to those groups identified as being in need), would also need to be fulfilled. The other factor to be borne in mind in ensuring public benefit is whether the provision of the accommodation involved any private benefit to individuals other than as members of the public. There would be unlikely to be any issue with this regarding the provision of rented accommodation, but the position is less clear regarding the provision of low cost ownership. It was agreed to ask the Trust to consider this.

The proposed **Gaelic Playgroup** had applied for a Community Benefit grant of £1,080 to pay for a Gaelic Playleader and the application was approved to be passed on to the Trust.

Mrs Hodgson had written resigning from the Community Council as of December 2006 and Lady Macpherson offered to take over the **role of Treasurer**. The Chairman pointed out that the Community Council had lost two members: the late Mrs Wendy Duff and now Mrs Hodgson. He proposed Mr James Duncan as a co-opted member and Mr Hart proposed Dr David Bonniface – both were accepted by the meeting.

Although no regular meeting was scheduled for the CC in **December**, there was an Extraordinary Meeting to witness the counting of the **Community Wind Farm Ballot** and decide on the wording of the Council's letter to the Scottish Executive. The Returning Officer was the Rev Campbell, ably assisted by Mr Alastair Cameron, and while they counted up the votes the assembled Community Councillors and 23 members of the public passed the time discussing the ballot.

The eventual result in Ballot A was a clear majority objecting to the building of the Wind Farm; in Ballot B there was a split reaction to the proposed access from the A9 going past Invereen (presently a hypothetical question as this access has not yet been applied for):

426 papers were sent out and 217 replies received for Ballot A, 218 for Ballot B (51% response).

In Ballot A, 127 (58.5%) objected and 74 (34.1%) didn't object, with 16 spoiled papers.

In Ballot B, 96 (44.04%) voted yes to the proposed route and 92 (42.2%) voted no.

Rev. Campbell compiled summaries of the points made for and against the Wind farm on the ballot papers (copies of these lists are available on application to the Minutes Secretary, Denise Barley). The Community Councillors discussed and agreed on the wording of the letter of objection and Mrs Roden undertook to type out the final copy and forward it to the Scottish Executive by the morning.

The **January** meeting opened with the correction of a procedural error: under the terms of the new **Community Council Constitution**, adopted in May 2006, the maximum number of councillors was limited to ten so there was only one vacancy, not two. It was agreed to hold a ballot between the two proposed new members (Mr Duncan and Dr Boniface) at the February meeting.

Mr John McGlade of Tilhill Forestry addressed the meeting about the plans to fell 20% of the trees in **Distillery Wood** over the next few months and answered questions from concerned residents about noise, lorry speeds, road maintenance etc.

Mr Wallace reported for the **Sports/Youth Facilities sub-committee**. The Feasibility Study for the proposed development at the Hall was nearly complete. Approximate costs(excluding VAT) were likely to be: tennis court-sized pitch £50,000; curved floodlit roof £107,000; kiddies play area £15,000. By the time VAT, professional fees and contingencies were added in, the total would be at least £230,000. There was much debate about where all the funding should come from and who would be responsible for maintenance of the site.

The new photocopier was installed in the Hall and available for community use at times when the Hall was unlocked. It was agreed to charge 5p per copy.

There had so far been no applications for the post of Tomatin Tidier.

Windfarms Opposition Group Founded

In December a group of about 40 Strathdearn residents founded **S.A.W.D.** (Strathdearn Against Windfarm Developments) with the aim of opposing local environmentally damaging windfarm projects. The group's opening statement emphasises that "*SAWD recognises the pressing need for the generation of energy from renewable sources and supports such generation where the scientific evidence shows it to be significantly beneficial in the reduction of greenhouse gases.*" The statement continues, "*The generation of land based commercial windfarms remote from markets and suitable grid connections fails to meet this criterion, particularly where turbines are constructed on peat and access roads are constructed through the peat blanket. The negative impact of such developments far outweighs any advantages.*"

A spokesman went on to say that nationally people are beginning to question the 'green credentials' of these developments with particular concern about the large quantities of ancient peat dug out for the roads and foundations. The peat dries out and releases tonnes of climate changing carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere. It was calculated that the recently refused windfarm project on the edge of the Lake District would take at least 16 years for the turbines to redeem the carbon dioxide generated during the construction of the project. It is little known that a given surface area of peat bog holds 3 times as much carbon as a similar area of tropical rainforest. Methane is far more damaging to the atmosphere than carbon dioxide.

Closer to home, SAWD has great concerns about the lack of detail submitted by Eurus Energy for the Glenkirk project. At present, planning approval has only been requested for the power station site. No application or detail has been supplied for the access road to the site (apart from an inked line drawn on a small scale map) neither has any detail been submitted as to where the power lines will run that carry the generated electricity away from the power station. If approval for the site is granted by the Scottish Executive there will be tremendous pressure on Highland Council Planning to approve **any** access and power line routes. Furthermore, the proposed Tom-na-Clach development is immediately adjacent to the north and northeast boundaries of Glenkirk and the Tom-na-Clach scoping document indicates there will be 50 x 3megawatt turbines each 125 metres high (even taller than Glenkirk). The visual impact of this combined site of over 80 turbines and electricity pylons on the skyline will be awesome and hideous. A letter from the Area Roads Manager to Planning states "Provided all access to the site is taken directly from the A9 Trunk Road, I have no further comment on the draft scoping opinion." From this it is obvious that the same site access will be used for the two windfarms. Because Tom-na-Clach is bigger it will mean almost treble the constructional impact and duration compared with Glenkirk alone – noise, dust, fumes, lights, twilight and Sunday working etc., etc.

It is of concern to SAWD members that despite the proposed Tom-na-Clach development being referred to in Eurus Energy's Environmental Assessment for Glenkirk, the Business Development Manager Mr Sakamoto and the Scottish General Manager Mr Garrity, both denied all knowledge of the proposed development at a meeting with a number of local representatives in January 2006.

SAWD members meet frequently in the village hall and if anyone would like to join the group, membership details can be obtained from Mike Crummy (mike.crummy@btinternet.com) (511261) or Pat Wells (511351)

Article written by Mike Crummy on behalf of Strathdearn Against Windfarm Developments

GLENKIRK WINDFARM

Following on from recent meetings and correspondence, and the formation of the Strathdearn Against Windfarm Developments Group, Mr Sakamoto of Eurus Energy UK Ltd writes to advise the Strathdearn community that the details of the alternative access route are currently under review as part of the Environmental Assessment which includes an ecological survey and a geological survey. Eurus would like to emphasise again that the alternative access route avoids the traffic passing through the village from the former Little Chef. The separate application for the alternative access route will be submitted once the Environmental Assessment is completed.

Eurus also wish to confirm again that the alternative route will be used for the Glenkirk scheme alone and will not deal with the Tom na Clach scheme.

Mr Sakamoto continues, “there has been a range of recent concerns and statements made in regard to the release of carbon dioxide and methane from wind farms constructed over peat, with particular regard to calculations of ‘carbon debt’. In contrast to statements suggesting that wind farms may take up to 16 years to repay the carbon debt caused by loss of CO₂ from peatlands, calculations from a number of reputable sources indicate that the size of the carbon debt will be dependent upon the site, and only take from 7 months (*see Reference 1 below*) to 2 years (*see References 2 and 3 below*) to repay.

Recent scientific reports increasingly point towards climate change, with predicted temperature rises of between 1 degree centigrade and 6 degrees centigrade. These same reports suggest the need to act now rather than later in order that we can minimize, or even halt the effects of this climate change.

We see the Glenkirk Windfarm as an opportunity for Eurus Energy to become a long term contributor to, and member of, the local community and seek to ensure that the winfarm will benefit the whole of the local area.”

References quoted by Mr Sakamoto:

- 1 *Dargie T, Lewis Wind Power Environmental Statement 2004 and Addendum 2006*
- 2 *REF (2006) A guide to calculating the carbon dioxide debt and payback time for wind farms*
- 3 *The Case against Wind ‘Farms’ 2006 edition, Dr J R Etherington*
- 4 *Review of the Contribution to Climate Change of Organic Soils Under Different Land Uses Scottish Executive Central Research Unit Environmental Group Research Findings No 17 Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, Aberdeen.*

FROM DULNAIN BRIDGE TO NAKOM NYAH

Extracts from an unpublished book written by the late Murdo MacAskill, Alt-Dhubhag, recording his wartime experiences.

The afternoons in the stone built barracks about two miles from Ahamanager were very hot, but the mornings were much cooler and it was then that we did our route marching and signals training schemes. I remember a dry water course which in the monsoon must have been occupied by a very large stream. The adjacent countryside was stone and barren, supporting then only scattered scrublike bushes and small trees. Above a stony brae stood a square stoned building like a miniature fort from which some Indian men observed our antics. We once came upon a pathetic little piece of unenclosed cultivation not more than about ten or fifteen square yards. A part of this area was taken up by two rows of single stems of barley, nearly ripe, but only about five inches high. It looked as if someone was in the process of rediscovering agriculture.

Robbie and I spent a Saturday afternoon and evening in Ahamanager. Most of the place, consisting of narrow lanes lined with small, low, mud brick houses, was out of bounds to us. I remember a line of fine old trees, probably mango, lining a main road. We spent most of our time in the bazaar which in the evening became very crowded.

When we got back to barracks, I discovered that I had lost my pocket book. It was only a cheap imitation leather thing, and its money content about fifteen rupees was unimportant, but it also contained four precious photographs of Barby and the bairns. I thought of that bazaar crammed with Indian men, women and children of all sorts and despaired of ever finding them again.

Nevertheless at the earliest opportunity, I hired a gharry (a one horse buggy-like machine) and returned to the bazaar. On being directed to the police station I found that place in the control of a Sergeant MacMillan.

“Whit was the colour o’ it?”

“Black.”

“Whit was in it?”

“About fifteen rupees, and four photographs.”

He reached up to a shelf behind him, then handed me my pocket book. He told me it had been handed in by a young lad who worked in a shoe-making booth just across the road. I thanked the sergeant and made my way there. The booth proprietor called out a name, and a pleasant looking youngster of about sixteen came out from the rear of the place. I thanked him, profusely probably, and gave him all the money the pocket book contained.

After three weeks we returned to Bombay and found the ships of our convoy still there. We were instructed to go aboard and return to our old berths in the ship that was now like home to us. So the embarkation was smooth and speedy. Regarding the destination of this latest voyage, the rumour mongers soon got busy, the most fantastic being Northern Ireland!

STOP PRESS: TOM NAN CLACH WINDFARM

Johan Wich of Infinergy Ltd, the Project Manager for the Tom nan Clach Windfarm phoned as we were going to press to say Inergy was asked by Mr Sakamoto of Eurus Energy to contact the Community Council because he was concerned that the community thought that Eurus and Infinergy were working together, and the Glenkirk and Tom na Clach Windfarms were being seen as a joint project. Mr Wich stressed that the two developers were working independently on their own projects, and not together.

Mr Wich also wanted to say that although 50 turbines had been mentioned in the Scoping Report, Infinergy was presently in consultation with SNH, looking at sensitive viewpoints and trying to lessen the visual impact of the turbines, and it is likely that the number would be significantly reduced (although he could not at the moment say how many turbines would eventually be proposed).

Mr Wich also wanted to stress that Infinergy were looking at various possible access routes to the Tom nan Clach Windfarm, and it was not a foregone conclusion that the access to Glenkirk would be used.

Infinergy are still working on the Environmental Impact Assessment and do not expect to complete this until the end of the year. They will, however, keep the community informed, maintaining regular contact with Strathdearn Community Council. Once their plans are further advanced, they intend to hold an Exhibition in the Strathdearn Hall, and attend a meeting of the Community Council.

DRY STONE DYKING

Bring me boulders from yon brae;
Weathered field stone, lichen'd
grey.
Smooth slabs from the boulder clay
burn washed, all their colours gay.
Our foundation we will lay
on rock of gravel pan or clay.
First we must remove all soil,
sparing neither time nor toil,
Foundation stones are the elect,
the best we have we shall select.
The best side of each stone lay down
however rough the face may frown.
Hammer dress to clear the lime

Windows Vista, the new Windows – a quick introduction

Just recently Microsoft announced the launch of its new Windows Operating system called Vista. The first thing to say is don't panic. It will take a couple of years for Windows Vista to become established. There are no immediate plans to withdraw support for Windows XP and it will continue for at least another five years. If past experiences are anything to go by, the early days of Vista are likely to be blighted with technical problems, moreover there are bound to be compatibility issues with existing software and hardware. A PC now has to deal with Broadband Internet and wireless networking as a matter of course, plus a whole range of gadgets all demanding a connection to a computer. These include digital cameras, camcorders, web cams, personal digital audio and video players, PDAs, tablet PCs and mobile phones, to name just a few and the list keeps on growing. The boffins at Microsoft have decided that Windows XP will be unable to cope with the demands being put upon it for much longer. This is the reason for its launch and that is really all I know about it at present. (Mike Crummy)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Alt-Dhubhag
Tomatin
1st February 2007

Madam,

Diary of a Dedicated Windfarm Protestant.

On 19th August 2002 I wrote my first letter of objection to the construction of a Windfarm at Farr.

On 28th February 2003, at a Special Planning Committee Hearing in Inverness, the full Highland Council voted in favour of the Developer and the Committee made a recommendation to the Scottish Executive that the construction of the Farr Windfarm should go ahead.

Speaking in opposition to this development were 7 members of the Strathnairn community and myself, the sole protester from Strathdearn.

On 22nd December 2003 my first letter of protest about the proposed Glenkirk Windfarm was later published in the "Aberdeen Press and Journal."

During May of 2006 the completion of the Farr Windfarm ensured that the multi-national foot was well and truly planted in the Strathdearn door.

December 2006 saw the setting up of a new pressure group with the grand title of Strathdearn Against Windfarm Developments (SAWD) – which begs the following question: "Where were all those potentially SAWD people in 2003 when I stood alone in the Council Chamber when it actually mattered?"

1st February 2007 – Good Luck to SAWD and their belated campaign. Rip van Winkle himself, surely, would have been proud of them!

Yours etc
Donald MacAskill

STEP IT UP

We are still walking every Wednesday at 2pm, meeting at the Strathdearn Hall. We walk for about one hour and return for refreshments at the Hall. Kathy is back on both feet and keen to find new routes as well as repeating old favourites. Please join us for a good outing in lovely country, healthy exercise and good company.

David Bonniface

LOCAL EVENTS

First Monday of Month at
7.30pm, Findhorn Room,
Strathdearn Hall

WRI

Further information from
Anne Hart 511724

2nd & 4th Mondays of Month at
7.30pm, Findhorn Room,
Strathdearn Hall

Patchwork & Quilting Workshop

Further information from
Chris West 511412

3rd Monday of Month at
7.30pm, Findhorn Room,
Strathdearn Hall

Gardening Club

Further information from
Alec Don 511729

Tuesdays, 12noon – 1 pm,
Findhorn Room, Strathdearn Hall

Tomatin Tummy Tamers:

Healthy living advice and support
Further information from

Elizabeth MacKenzie 511410

Last Tuesday of month at 2pm
(Venue varies)

Strathdearn Book Club

Further information from
Michelle Bertie 511411

Every Wednesday at 10.30 am

Community Coffee Morning

Findhorn Room, Strathdearn Hall
Everyone most welcome – drop in for a
chat and a cup of delicious fresh coffee
with home baking.

Every Wednesday at 2pm

Walking Group

Strathdearn Hall. Further information
from Kathy Bonniface 511740

Every Wednesday during term-time

From 6.30 – 8pm

YOGA

Findhorn Room, Strathdearn Hall
Further information from
Pam Hardwick 511766

Every Thursday at 1.30 pm

Art Class

Findhorn Room, Strathdearn Hall
Further information from
Betty Watson 511271

A TALE OF TWO KITTIES (Part 3)

(I live with two charming little people, a brother and sister. To outward appearances they are cats, but they are actually very small children, heavily disguised. This is the story of their coming, their upbringing and education, and their transmogification. J Scarlett)

The kittens' primary education was first class and their mother deserves full marks for that; they were totally domesticated and well-behaved, nice little people from the beginning. Twinkle was a bit of a bother with his litter at first and would scrape a few grains of spillage into a heap on the floor rather than use the litter tray if it was even slightly soiled but that was a problem easily solved. They had been reared on water and dry food and did not greatly care for our fresh water straight from the hill spring, but they soon got used to country fare and thrived mightily.

I had no previous experience of animal siblings and expected that they would quickly grow apart, but this proved not to be so. As they grew up, Twinkle became head of the family, not ruler but patriarch, and it was sometimes obvious that he was having a quiet word with his sister when her daring outran prudence; it was equally obvious that he sometimes got a cheeky response which ended with a chase upstairs! He has certain privileges which have never been disputed or, even on invitation, shared. He sleeps on my bed and hops up on my knee whenever he feels like it; she will not get on the bed if I am in it and was nearly four years old before she would consent to being picked up and put on my lap.

As brother and sister they fight, but this is no longer a kittenish scrimmage, it is a ritual business, preceded by mutual face-washing and culminating in one of them being thrown over on its back and kicked vigorously. There is much bad language and name-calling, but no harm results, apart from my having to Hoover up all the fluff, and in everyday life they have continued to show care for each other in a mixture of the schoolroom, good old-fashioned working class family values and general good manners. On occasions when one has stayed out all night - once was usually enough to show the superiority of an armchair by the fire - the other would wait on the stairs close to the outside door and there was an unmistakable greeting in the morning. Qwerty stands back from her meal until Twinkle has at least started on his and, if one of them is indoors, I can always rely on it to come and tell me if the other is waiting to be let in.

There is no doubt that they have their own means of communicating, silently and over a short distance at least; they will sit facing each other across the driveway for a long time and then go off and do whatever they have planned and, if an offer

Church of Scotland
Parish of Moy, Dalarossie and Tomatin
Minister: Rev R F Campbell, Daviot Manse, Daviot. Tel: 01463 772242
www.strathsnairnanddearn.co.uk

Sunday Club:

Primary-school aged children are warmly welcomed to come along to Sunday Club every Sunday during term-time in the Strathdearn Hall at 10.30 am (except second Sunday in month when there is a Family Service). Further details from Mrs Sandra Edward 511237.

The Guild:

meets on the second Wednesday of each month between September and April (inclusive), usually in Tomatin Church at 7.30 pm. New members welcome. Further details from Mrs Sheila Don 511729. Speakers:

14th Feb: Mrs Karen Carson on Health

14th March: Mrs Kathy Boniface on Step It Up Highland

11th April: Annual General Meeting.

Sunday Services – all at 10.30 am

February:

18th Moy Church 25th Tomatin Church

March:

4th Dalarossie Church 11th Family Service in the Strathdearn Hall.
Tea and Coffee after the Service.

18th Moy Church 25th Tomatin Church

April:

1st Dalarossie Church 8th Easter Sunday Family Service in the
Strathdearn Hall. Tea and Coffee
after the Service.

15th Dalarossie Church 22nd Moy Church

29th Tomatin Church

May:

6th Dalarossie Church 13th Family Service in the Strathdearn Hall.
Tea and Coffee after the Service.

20th Dalarossie Church 27th Moy Church – Sacrament of Holy Communion

All warmly welcome

PRAYER MEETINGS:

in Tomatin Church at 7.30 pm on Wednesdays 21st and 28th February – and then on the first and third Wednesdays of March, April, May and June – at 7.30 pm in Tomatin Church. If you would like prayer for anyone or anything, please let the Minister or one of the Elders know.

NIC'S JOURNEY

Last September Nic left Tomatin on an exciting new journey that will take him all around the world serving his country in the Royal Navy.

The first eight weeks saw him learning about the Navy, its traditions, and how to become a sailor, also learning a bit about himself along the way. Now he is almost at the end of his trade training and is looking forward to starting his submarine training which should take almost a year to complete.

As all parents know we are always proud of our children (well nearly all the time), however my ultimate moment came when we travelled to HMS Raleigh in Cornwall for Nic's Passing Out Parade (although actually it's a Passing In To The Navy Parade). I have never been so proud to watch him march in along with his fellow classmates. They all looked wonderful. The Royal Marine Band played and the Captain inspected all those passing out. It was a fantastic afternoon for us all.

The next instalment will be written in a few months.

PHOTOCOPYING

As reported in our last edition, the Strathdearn Community Charitable Trust gave a grant to the Community Council to buy a new photocopier to produce this Newsletter. This is a community resource, funded from community benefit, and members of the community are welcome to use the photocopier at a cost of 5p per A4 copy. The Hall is open:

- every Monday evening between 7.30 pm – 8.30 pm (except for months when there is a fifth Monday)
- every Wednesday morning between 10.30 – 11.30 during the Community Coffee Morning, and
- every Thursday afternoon between 2pm – 3 pm when the Art Class meets.

The key to the Clune Room (where the photocopier is kept) will be on the keyring given to whoever is organising the meeting on Monday evening; the Community Coffee Morning organisers on Wednesday evening; and the Art Class on Thursday afternoons.

Please record number of copies taken in the

STATION ROAD

John Ferguson (Pedlar) writes that "in the late 1940s and early 50s the Station Road was a magical place for any young boy to grow up in, and I was one of those lucky lads."

*Here is **Part 2** of his childhood memories of Station Road.*

About two or three hundred yards down the road on the right was a wooden cottage where first the Ross family stayed, and after them, the Nicholson family. The next building was the sawmill on the right. It was a busy sawmill with pit props, posts and boards mostly going by rail. Across the road was what was no more than wooden huts for the sawmill workers. There was also a nissen hut where the MacGillivray family stayed. Finlay was to become my best friend in my teenage years.

The next cottage was on the left just before the Station Cottages. This was a beautiful little wooden cottage, known only as "Famie's". Famie Morrison who lived there worked as a clerkess at the Distillery. She had a nephew who came to stay with her a lot. His name was Hamish Mac and he kept a lot of pet rabbits at the cottage. Alistair and I also kept rabbits and we would all have a lot of fun racing them.

The Station Cottages were two semi-detached houses. In No 1 lived the Macleod family. I always admired Jock for his skill as a salmon fisher. His wife, Nan, was one of the Ross family and they had five children: Betty, Lilly, John, June and Collie.

No 2 was where I was brought up with the MacRae family – Sattie, Duncan, Alistair, Cathleen and Robin, who died as an infant. Duncan's father, Old Tom, also lived with us. He had been wounded in World War 1 and had some great tales of his life as a farm worker and horse-man.

One of the stories he had was of how he used to drive a lorry from Inverness to Glenmazeran when they were building the lodge, carting wood and stone. I could not imagine Old Tom driving a lorry as he hated machinery. It turned out that the lorry he drove was a four wheel horse cart, pulled by six horses which had to be changed at Drumossie, Meallmore and Freeburn. The drivers got no rest until they got to Glenmazeran, then back to Inverness the next day.

No 2 was where the Tomatin Concert Party practised as Sattie had a piano which was not only used for practice, but was also loaned to the Hall for concerts and dances, etc, and the transportation of this piano at such times was quite a feat! Mrs Latham, the Exciseman's wife from the Distillery, was a very good pianist and played for all the concerts.

No 3 was the home of the Macs. Mrs Mac was just called that. I do not remember anyone calling her by any other name. Jockie Mac was called Sporrán, and apart from working on the railway he was the mobile barber. He would set off on his bicycle, hand clippers and scissors in his pocket, bowl to be supplied by the household he was visiting. The Mac children were Sandy, Marie, Kathy and Jean.

No 4 was where Jake and Anna Noble lived. Jake was ganger of the P way squad and I remember one time he set up a radio aerial with a metal pipe holding the two wires apart. This worked well until one night there was a fair wind which made the pipe sound like someone playing the flute. They had two sons, Jackie who went away to the RAF and came back to be the

The Strathdearn Newsletter is sponsored by Tomatin Distillery and Mr George and Mrs Tania Macleod.

IT IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY IN FEBRUARY, MAY, AUGUST AND NOVEMBER BY STRATHDEARN COMMUNITY COUNCIL (PRODUCED BY IAN MEARN, PRODUCTION EDITOR,

EASTER WOODEND, TOMATIN IV13 7YA, E-MAIL kickstart1@onetel.net), AND IS DELIVERED FREE TO

EVERY HOME IN STRATHDEARN. CONTRIBUTIONS BY WAY OF ARTICLES, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND LETTERS ARE WELCOMED BY:

VIVIAN RODEN, NEWS EDITOR, 15 OLD MILL ROAD, TOMATIN IV13 7YW, E-MAIL favr@roden15.fsnet.co.uk

BY 1ST FEBRUARY/1ST MAY/1ST AUGUST/1ST NOVEMBER.

This is a community newsletter, and the views and opinions expressed in contributions submitted by members of the community are not necessarily those of Strathdearn Community Council.

TOMATIN DISTILLERY VISITOR CENTRE AND GIFT SHOP

Open all year: 9.00 am – 5.00 pm
Free Tasting and showing of Distillery DVD

TOURS twice a day MONDAY TO FRIDAY

11.00 am and 2.30 pm
(Advance booking only) £2 per person

Saturday & Sunday opening from Easter to October

(No Tours)

VISITOR CENTRE TEL: 01808 511 444

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH ANNIVERSARY

A newspaper report, a few months ago, described the dismantling, transportation and rebuilding of St Michael's Church in Inverness. The Church celebrated 120 years since its rebirth on the other side of the River Ness. The Church of St Michael and All Angels, as it was later renamed, began life in 1877 in a thatched cottage on the direct opposite bank of the River Ness on the Maggot Green when a Sunday School for the children of the "poor neighbourhood" was started by Canon Edward Medley.

Soon a new congregation was established but it quickly outgrew the thatched cottage and a new stone church was built in 1886. In the late 1800s that part of town suffered great problems of dampness, caused by the Ness frequently overflowing its banks. As the people around the church began to move to drier land on the other side of the river, it was decided in 1902 that the church should follow its people.

Under the careful direction of Canon William Lachlan Mackintosh (great-uncle of Mr Patrick Mackintosh-Grant and also of Lt Col Donald Grant) the building was dismantled stone by stone and moved to its present location at the corner of Abban Street and Lochalsh Road. The whole task took 6 months. The church was re-dedicated on 6 March 1904 as the Church of St Michael and All Angels.

Canon Mackintosh's father built Balvraid Lodge, and his brother George built on to Balvraid Lodge after he had sold Clune. Canon Mackintosh owned Balnespick and left it to his sister, the grandmother of Mr Mackintosh-Grant and Lt Col Grant.

STRATHDEARN BOOKCLUB

Us bookworms have been exploring more modern writers recently. We read Ian McEwan's 'Saturday' before Christmas which was an excellent, intelligent book with a good twist in the tale. Be warned; those who don't like medical descriptions, don't read it!

In January we read 'The Sea Pond' by Margaret Elphinstone, an historical novel set in Iceland/Greenland during Erik the Red's time. It explores the Vikings' probing of Vanland (Nova Scotia to you and me) and is told from a women's point of view. An excellent saga, based on old Nordic tales and full of interesting historical information.

This month we are reading 'Shalimar the Clown' by Salman Rushdie. No idea what it is about for I never read the blurb first! If you want a review, go to the Tomatin website at www.tomatin.org.uk

Our programme over the next few months is as follows:

February 27th: 'Shalimar the Clown' by Salman Rushdie

March 27th: 'We need to talk about Kevin' by Lionel Skinner

April 24th: 'Old Filth' by Jane Gordon

We are a friendly club, meeting in houses so come and join us (tea and biscuits compulsory!) For more details call Michelle Bertie on 01808 511411.

STRATHDEARN COMMUNITY COUNCIL CAN YOU HELP US TO TIDY UP TOMATIN?

Self-employed local resident required for up to 5 hours work per week @ £7 per hour, gathering litter from the following areas within Tomatin:

Old A9 from Free Church to A9 north entrance to Tomatin

Balvraid loop

Station Road

Old Mill Road

liaising with Highland Council's TEC Services Department to obtain the necessary litter picking equipment including spares – black bags, spring-loaded litter pickers, rubber gloves, yellow waistcoat/jacket together with waterproof clothing.

The job will also involve:

Strimming the grass when necessary around the Tomatin signboard at the north entrance to the village

Clearing pavements in Old Mill Road of snow

And any other appropriate duties agreed by the Community Council.

The person contracted to be responsible for his or her own insurance. He or she should have a clean driving licence and be able to provide a suitable vehicle. If necessary, in due course, a secure place will be provided for storing items of equipment.

The person will report to a nominated member of the Community Council, or other person nominated by the Community Council, and will provide a simple written statement at the end of each month showing the hours worked, difficulties experienced and any ideas for improving the environment in Tomatin.

Notice for disengagement should be one month on each side. Applicants should contact Mr John Cameron-Mackintosh,

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN LECTURE

UNDERSTANDING THE SCOTTISH LANDSCAPE

Speaker: Peter Reynolds

7.30 pm Thursday 22 February 2007 in the Strathdearn Hall

Details from Mike Crummy 01808 511261

Admission: £3

Tomatin Country Inn

As many of you will now know Del Graham and his family have left the Tomatin Inn on 31st January as they decided that they could not run the business any longer.

This left the Owners, George & Tanya Macleod, with a decision as to whether they looked for another tenant to Lease the premises or indeed run the business themselves. The decision was made that as the village needs a well run local pub/restaurant with good country food at really good prices we had to keep control of it. The decision was then made that the Tomatin Inn would be re-branded **Tomatin Country Inn** and the Management would be undertaken by George and Tanya's son Andrew who will take over the Inn on 1st February.

The plans are to re-look at what the village wants in terms of food and entertainment and try and develop the business around that philosophy while also catering for the tourist trade particularly in the summer months. Entertainment will continue and a programme of events is currently being planned.

The Menus are being changed to have a Country Pub feel to them with things such as Steak and Guinness Pie, Gammon Steak, Whole Tail Scampi as well as the old favourites such as Homemade Apple Crumble, Sticky Toffee Pudding etc, on the menu. Prices for main courses will be in the region of £5.00 and Desserts about £1.50. Home Baking will available and we will continue to have a Carry Out menu.

The Inn plans to have a Community Coffee morning in the restaurant each week during February and March for villagers which will be FREE OF CHARGE. It is recognised that we are there as a major part of the community and we want you to feel the facility is there for you. All attendees will get a free Coffee or Tea and a Cake. If you find the home baking as good as we think it is you will surely buy some more but it lets us meet you all and allows a forum for you to give us the feedback we need to make this a really top quality local pub/restaurant for you all.

WE WELCOME YOU ALL ALONG TO THE FIRST COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNING ON THURSDAY 8TH FEBRUARY AT 11AM.

A COPY OF OUR NEW MENU IS INCLUDED WITH THE NEWSLETTER WHICH WE ARE PLEASED TO

YOUTH SPORTS FACILITIES

The Community Appraisal in Tomatin established that one priority was a central facility for unsupervised sports activities for teenagers who currently use the tarmac tennis court. The existing tennis court area is scheduled to accommodate a new Community Centre which will replace the existing sports hall.

Early in 2006 our Community Council proposed and agreed that a Feasibility Study should be carried out to establish the best way of carrying forward the findings of the Community Appraisal. A small group was elected to carry this forward and the contract for this feasibility study was awarded to Thomas Munro & Co., Inverness who had been responsible for the existing 1998 hall and for the preliminary plan drawn up for the new Community Centre.

Monthly meetings have been held with Colin Munro, the Architect present on each occasion and the group has

expanded considerably to include those already involved with youth sports. Members of the Hall Committee have also attended in an advisory capacity.

The Feasibility Study is now substantially complete and on 6th February a meeting was held to finalise the layout. With Colin Munro present some twelve Tomatin residents attended, including three teenagers who provided valuable advice for the Architect regarding details of the scheme.

An open sided, covered all weather pitch is planned, netted to contain balls and sufficient area outwith the pitch, but covered over for spectators. Pitch is to about 19m wide x 39m long with a radially curved roof 3m high at eaves and about 10m at the centre. Thanks to the boys, provision will be made within the netted area for 'sin-bins' and some surrounding seating for mums and dads. Floodlighting will be provided and will be triggered by tokens. This proposal will be submitted for planning approval as soon as possible. From receipt this approval could take three months during which time application for funding will take place.

In addition the children's play area will be redeveloped with new equipment and construction of this is expected to be coincident with the covered pitch.

The total cost of the project is estimated to be £245,000 of which the teenagers plan to raise £5,000. So, during the next three months or so, please be prepared to help them achieve this.

TOMATIN AND DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB

The Gardening Club was founded and run for many years by Janet Crummy and Helen MacLennan, who provided a programme of entertaining and informative talks and outings, as well as running the annual Flower Show.

The present Committee would like to thank them for all the hard work they put in and pleasure they gave.

The Gardening Club meets every third Monday in the month at 7.30pm in the Trachea Hall. New members and visitors are always welcome!

Once more it is planning time for the Flower Show and the Schedule is printed elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Copies of the Schedule including Rules and Display hints will soon be available as a brochure at the Shop and from Committee Members: Alec Don (Chairman); Sheila Don (Secretary); Kathy Boniface (Treasurer); Carol James and David Boniface (Flower Show Co-ordinators).

ARE WE INDISPENSABLE?

The start, if unwelcome, fact is that no-one is indispensable. Whenever tempted to think otherwise, read these lines to yourself:

“Some time when you feel that your going
would leave an unfillable hole –
Just follow these simple instructions
and see how they humble your soul.
Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Put your hands in it up to your wrists,
Pull them out – and the hole which you see there
is the measure of how you'll be missed.”

NATURE RAMBLINGS

With the snow on the ground, sitting watching the birds at the feeders eating as if there was no tomorrow, I thought I would have a wee change in my ramblings and quote a piece out of a book that Mike received as a Christmas present. It is called *Black Cats and April Fools* – all about old wives tales and superstitions.

The first cuckoo of spring.

Hearing the first cuckoo of spring is said to be of great importance, since the circumstances may reveal the hearer's future. To hear it from the left is unlucky, whereas on the right it denotes luck for the year to come. Those looking down at the ground on hearing it will be dead within the next twelve months. Another old wives' tale states that what someone is doing when they first hear the cuckoo sets the pattern for the year ahead. Accordingly, it is considered lucky to be carrying money at the time since this indicates a year of prosperity. Turning over the coins in your pocket brings good fortune at this moment, and it was common for someone who had no coins quickly to borrow one for this purpose. It was also well known for people to break into a run on hearing the first cuckoo, so as to avoid being idle in the forthcoming year. For similar reasons it is supposed to be bad luck to hear the cuckoo while lying in bed, since this indicates a year of illness or laziness, although possibly this tale was designed to encourage those reluctant to get out of bed.

The length of the cuckoo's song is also important. In the nineteenth century, a children's rhyme asked,

Cuckoo, cherry tree,
Good bird, tell me,
How many years I shall be,
Before I die?

The number of notes sounded by the bird then indicated the number of years before death. A similar rhyme was also used to tell how many years before marriage. A more unusual marriage superstition, dating from the seventeenth century, dictated that, on hearing the first cuckoo, the hearer should take off their right shoe, and would find a strand of hair. Its colour would be that of their future spouse. It is difficult to see why superstitions, especially marriage superstitions, are attached to the cuckoo, since its distinctive call is one of the first signs of the arrival of the season associated with fertility and growth."

I hope you enjoyed that quotation and trust that when you hear the first call of the cuckoo, you are jingling money in your pocket, looking right and out for a walk!!

Janet Crummy

The Computer Console - What to do when things go wrong

Windows XP is a very reliable and stable system but it is not perfect and still suffers from occasional hang-ups and crashes and this and the next article deal with taking the sting out of your computer failing to work.

First and foremost, you must "back-up" your work. By this I mean take copies of all your folders and files that are precious to you. CDs (and DVDs) are so cheap nowadays that popping one into the disc drive and copying your files onto it is very quick and simple. If you are using your computer daily then I suggest a weekly back-up. If you use it less often then a back-up once a month or so is perfectly adequate. If you are doing vital work i.e. business accounts then a daily back-up is advised.

To copy files, go into "my computer", click on "my documents", on the top level where it says "*file – view - edit – favorites – tools – help*" click on "view" then "toolbars" then "standard buttons". Then click on "view" again then "explorer bar" then "folders". You should now have a list of all your files and folders on the right hand side and on the left-hand side a complete list of all the drives and discs etc on the computer as well as the folders etc. To copy your files, left click and keep your finger down (on the mouse) on the folder you want to copy and drag it across to the drive that you have put in your blank CD or DVD for backing-up. Sounds a bit complicated so I'll give an example using my own computer. My CD drive is called "CD Drive (F:)". If I wanted to copy all my pictures they are in a folder called (very surprisingly) "My Pictures". So to back-up My Pictures, I click on the "My Pictures" folder and drag it across to "CD Drive (F:)", release the mouse button and wait for all the pictures to be transferred. When that's done, check that it has all been copied by clicking on the "Drive F" by seeing what is in there. Double click on a picture and see what comes up. All being well what you see is what you were expecting to see. Backing up is doing this with all the files and folders which are precious to you. If you want to select several folders at once, hold down the control (Ctrl) key and press the left-hand mouse button on each folder you want. When you have selected all the folders you want to copy, then just click on one of them and drag them across to the (in my case) "CD Drive (F:)". In very basic terms, the difference between a CD and a DVD is that a DVD holds a lot more information. However you can't put a DVD into a CD drive as different technologies are used to input and retrieve the information on the respective discs.

Most computers have an inbuilt back-up facility. If you go into "My Computer" and click on the "Help" button on the top and type in "back up" into the keywords you'll get a step-by-step guide. What I've shown above is a simple way to back-up an individual file or folder.

The next article will deal with resetting your computer when it stops working properly.

Mike Crummy

TRIBUTE TO PATRICK HUGH MACKINTOSH GRANT MC DL

We are grateful to Lt Col D J A Grant for contributing the tribute he paid at the funeral at Dalarossie Church, where a large crowd gathered to celebrate the remarkable life of Patrick Hugh Grant, latterly Mackintosh Grant, head of the Grants of Tullochgorm.

“To many he was Patrick, to others he was Pat, to us he was always PH.

He was born at Hove, Brighton, on 25 September 1924. He was educated first at New Beacon, where he was head boy, and then at Wellington College.

In 1937, not long after arriving at Wellington, he had the devastating news of the death of his father, who was killed in Wazirstan (on the Afghanistan border) commanding the Guides, a unit of the NW Frontier Force.

For the next few years PH, my brother and I spent most of our school holidays here at Balnespick which we all loved. We used to go shooting under old Macrae, and then Tom Jack.

PH was amazingly generous – so much so that though he was the eldest by several years we had to establish a family rule that everything was shared evenly! Even latterly I had to remind him of our rule! After he left school we used to get things like Creamola crystals which were not allowed at school and were smuggled in, hidden in doctored paperbacks, as parcels were searched for food.

He joined the Army in 1944, went to OCTU (Officer Cadet Training Unit), and was commissioned in the Seaforth Highlanders. He joined the 5th Battalion at Wimbish, in Essex, prior to the Normandy landings.

That Battalion was part of the renowned and reformed 51st Highland Division. They landed in Normandy very shortly after D Day. The Battalion then took part in every advance through to Germany, rejoicing in liberating St Valery, then le Havre, then Holland, before their toughest action which was in the Reichswald on the German border. It was a close quarters battle with some of Germany’s crack troops, young paratroopers with nothing to lose.

PH was a platoon commander and as such was right in the brunt of it throughout the campaign. He was awarded the Military Cross for his gallantry in the Reichswald. He sadly received his head wound in that action on 9 February 1945 (almost exactly 62 years ago and when he was still only 20 years old). Understandably that wound was to affect the rest of his life.

He was evacuated to a Canadian Hospital called Park Pruit outside Basingstoke. As it happened I was still at school at Wellington, while his mother had a cottage nearby so, even with petrol rationing, I had the fortune to be taken to see him within days of his wounding and to see for myself the severity of his wound.

When sufficiently recuperated, he served at the School of Infantry as a Captain for a short period before he left the Army and had to replan his life.

He had intended to read Classics at University after the War but this was no longer a realistic course to take. So there was much soul searching. He swithered over training for the ministry (like his great uncle), which I think was his real inclination, or to return to take on Balnespick, his grandmother’s family estate.

The latter course won and so he embarked on a Cirencester Course on Farming and Estate Management together with practical Estate Management Training with Seafield Estates and elsewhere.

When that was finished he came back to Tomatin, staying with my parents at first, then with his mother who by then had moved to Croft Dhu, and then moving into Balvraid.

When he inherited Balnespick in 1960 from his grandmother who was a Mackintosh he changed his name to Mackintosh Grant which was his great uncle’s request.

He has always been a devout Christian, and after deciding not to try to join the Ministry he has devoted much of his energy to supporting the Church. This has involved both a serious commitment to the Episcopal Church and a very serious effort in supporting our Church in Strathdearn.

I am always reminded of his spiritual commitment when I think of St Paul’s letter to the Galatians where he writes, “But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control.

It seems to me to be the almost perfect description of Patrick though I would like to add bravery, heroism, and sense of duty.

His interest in his Regiment, the Seaforth Highlanders, has never diminished over the years and indeed latterly he devoted all his attention to books on the War and reminiscences about his friends in the War.

He had the most amazing capability to take an interest in everyone and their families so that when he came back to Tomatin he immediately made himself so involved with everyone in Strathdearn that it seemed to us that he would spend all the day helping and visiting others and their families, and then spend all night out working on Balnespick.

In 1975 the most wonderful thing happened. He married Susan Kinahan. I am forbidden to comment on her fantastic contribution to his life.

He and Susan both loved their farming and enjoyed many happy years with their ponies, sheep, ducks, geese, hens and dogs.

He carried out many improvements to Balnespick, one of the early ones was the hill road. My mother teased him by calling it the "dry" road as there was no dram at the opening. That was never a failing at Balvraid.

He was appointed a Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Inverness-shire and carried out those duties with a very full commitment.

Recently, as his health deteriorated, he was "confined to barracks" at Balvraid with spells in Raigmore and the Northern Infirmary. Throughout all these vicissitudes his patience and tranquillity never faltered. Time and again he pulled through each bout in hospital with a remarkable display of willpower and determination and returned to his beloved Balraid. As General John Hopkinson put it, "He was a great survivor."

Throughout all his ill health and whether in hospital or at home he was always looked after with wonderful care and the local team of nurses and carers deserve the highest praise for their patience and kindness to him.

Our thoughts go out to Susan at this time.

STRATHDEARN FLOWER SHOW 2007 - SATURDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER 2007

Baking & Produce Section

1. 1 Chocolate Cake
2. 3 Viennese biscuits
3. 3 Pancakes
4. 3 Plain oven scones
5. 3 Oatcakes
6. 3 Flapjacks
7. 4 Squares Raisin Fudge
8. 1 Childs Birthday cake
9. 1 Jar Raspberry Jam
10. 1 Jar Strawberry Jam
11. 1 Jar Blackcurrant Jam
12. 1 Jar Marmalade
13. 1 Jar Gooseberry Jelly
14. 1 Jar Lemon Curd
15. 1 Jar Chutney - Any Variety
16. 1 Wholemeal loaf

Art Section (any medium)

1. Animal
2. Still Life
3. A Local Building
4. Water Scene
5. Your Choice

Children's Sections (8 Yrs & under, 9 -12 Yrs)

1. Animal made from fruit and/or vegetables
2. Egg Cup Flower Display
3. Garden in a Tray no bigger than 15" x 10"
4. Grown from seed bulb or tuber by Me
5. Painting or drawing -Your Choice- A4 size or less
6. Photography - Your Choice- (Mounted see notes)
7. Challenge: Bush Tomato Plant

Handicrafts

1. Exhibit of Patchwork and/or Quilting
2. Exhibit of Knitting- for Adult
3. Exhibit of Knitting- for Child
4. Exhibit of Embroidery, Cross Stitch, or Tapestry
5. Exhibit of a Soft Toy
6. Exhibit of a bibbed apron (pinny)

Photography (mounted - see Notes on Exhibits)

1. Picture of a Tree
2. Picture of Autumn Scene
3. Picture of 2007 Holiday
4. Picture of a Garden Flower - Close Up
5. Picture of a Pet
6. 3 Pictures on A4 telling a story

Floral Art (to be viewed all round)

1. Single Colour Arrangement
2. Foliage arrangement
3. Arrangement incorporating a terracotta pot
4. Table Arrangement incorporating fruit

Flower Section

1. 5 Sweet Peas - Mixed
2. 3 Antirrhinums
3. 3 Carnations/Pinks
4. 3 Calendula (Marigold) Stems
5. 3 French Marigold Heads
6. 3 Pansy Heads - Same Colour
7. 3 Pansy Heads - Different colours
8. 1 Rose Stem - Single Bloom
9. 3 Rose Stems - Floribunda
10. 1 Rose Bloom - for scent
11. 3 Fuchsia Heads - same colour
12. 3 Fuchsia Heads - different colours
13. 1 Fuchsia Bush - trailing or standard
14. 3 Begonia Heads
15. 3 Dahlia Stems
16. 1 Gladioli Stem
17. 1 Vase - 4 Perennial Stems same species and variety
18. 1 Vase - 4 Perennial Stems mixed species
19. 1 Vase - 4 Annual Stems same species and variety
20. 1 Vase - 4 Annual Stems mixed species
21. 1 Vase - Mixed 6 stems of 6 different species
22. 1 Pot Plant - Flower
23. 1 Pot Plant - Foliage
24. Any Other Flower - Single Stem
25. Planted Container up to 18" diameter

Vegetable Section

1. 1 Cabbage
2. 1 Cauliflower
3. 3 Carrots
4. 3 Onions
5. 2 Leeks
6. 3 Potatoes - White
7. 3 Potatoes - Coloured
8. 3 Beetroot
9. 2 Turnips
10. 1 Lettuce
11. 3 Tomatoes
12. 2 Courgettes
13. 1 Pepper - any colour
14. Basket of 5 kinds of Vegetable not decorated.
15. Any other Vegetable
16. Display of 5 different cut Culinary Herbs
17. Parsley grown in pot
18. Novelty Vegetable