

Strathdearn

Newsletter

November 2008. Vol 8 Issue 4.

Tribute – James Gordon Macpherson, Lord Macpherson of Drumochter

James Gordon Macpherson, Lord Macpherson of Drumochter, of Kyllachy House, passed away aged 84 years at the Highview Nursing Home following a long battle with ill health. He was born in Essex but educated at Kingussie High School and Loretto School in Musselburgh. While still in his teens, he turned down a place at Cambridge University to serve as a rear gunner with an RAF Liberator Squadron in the Far East for the last three years of the Second World War, for which he was awarded the Burma Star and the Pacific Star.

After the war he joined the family's London based colonial food export and import business where he rose to become Chairman and Managing Director before moving north to his beloved Highlands in 1975, when he and his second wife, Cathy, bought Kyllachy House where they lived happily until earlier this year, when failing health forced him to move into the nursing home.

A hereditary peer, he served the House of Lords for over 30 years until about 10 years ago, when he and 80 others lost their seats in the upper chamber in a round of parliamentary reforms that abolished the right of all but just under 100 hereditary members to sit and vote in the House of Lords.

Lord Macpherson enjoyed hunting and was an honorary game warden in Sudan, but also a founding member of the World Wildlife Fund. Physically strong, he was also a keen swimmer and had competed abroad regularly as a member of the Lords international ski-ing team.

News of his passing saddened many in the Macpherson Clan and the Board at the clan's visitor centre ordered that their flag be flown at half mast as a mark of respect. Many others also regretted losing a good friend and neighbour. His friend Lord Burton, who enjoyed shooting with him on many occasions, said he would be remembered as a very kind man who loved life and gardening; and John Tinsley of Corrybrough Estate was quoted in a local newspaper obituary as saying Lord Macpherson and his family had been the most brilliant friends and neighbours of his family for 30 years. He is also much missed from the pews of Dalarossie Church, where he worshipped faithfully for many years.

Our thoughts and condolences are with his widow, Lady Cathy (a hard-working community councillor and treasurer for a number of years up until last year's election), and his children Elizabeth, Wendy, Jenny, Annie and James, who now becomes Lord Macpherson of Drumochter, and his nine grandchildren.

Strathdearn Community Council

www.tomatin.org.uk

publishes the "Strathdearn Newsletter" quarterly, delivering it free to every home in Strathdearn. The Newsletter is sponsored by Tomatin Distillery and Mr & Mrs George McLeod. 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, nor of the Editor.

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Nature Ramblings.

In this issue, I thought I'd tell you about a couple or so trips I've made this year.

The first was an SOC (Scottish Ornithologists' Club) weekend to Westray, Orkney in May. There were 22 of us, in two minibuses, and we explored the islands of Westray and Papa Westray, the most northern of the Orkney Islands. Half of us stayed in a hostel and the others in the hotel, where we had dinner each night. The scenery was just magic – turquoise seas, white sands, steep cliffs, masses of flowers, including the tiny Scottish Primrose, seals and, of course, lots of birds. While some birds like the kittiwakes and guillemots are not doing so well, others like the gannets are increasing their nesting sites. It was wonderful to watch the delicate arctic terns diving into the sea and think that these beautiful small birds migrate huge distances from here in the north to the equivalent in the southern hemisphere. Orkney is certainly a lovely place to visit.

The next trip was sailing our boat, Annabella, down from Arisaig to Abersoch, North Wales. Most of you will remember she sat in our garden for a couple of winters! We had little wind as we headed out past the small isles of Egg, Rum and Muck and round Arnamurchan Point, but this changed as we turned into the Sound of Mull and we had a good sail down to Lochaline. The next day, another chugging day, but lots of sun, we headed due south, towards Jura and the turbulent waters found all round there to the Crinan Canal. Mike was glad it was neap tides, good visibility and no strong winds as this was a new area for us and can be exceedingly tricky and dangerous. This was the one day, Mike had really planned for the tides etc and all went well. Crinan Canal is a very picturesque and a real pleasure to potter through before our main journey across to Ireland. For the next few days, we were just the 2 of us as our crew had left us and the next one joining in Stranraer, so sailed to Arran and spent a couple of days exploring the island. I had never been before and I am sure we will be back. We took the local buses all around the island and visited Brodick Castle, with its lovely grounds. The rhoddy's were full out, so there was lots of colour. We saw two of the resident golden eagles, one in the centre of the island and one being mobbed by a pair of ravens, as they flew over our boat one evening as we were enjoying our dinner on deck. On past the massive cliffs of Ailsa Craig with its huge colonies of seabirds and after picking up Julia and a friend, we headed for Ireland. A basking shark swam by and several common porpoises were seen. We carried on down the coast to Hoath, near Dublin, had a days rest, and then set off on the long passage to Wales. We raised all 3 sails and with a good NW wind blowing, we raced across the Irish Sea! It was force 5 and the waves high, but the sun shone. Half way over we were joined by a pod of common dolphins, diving under the keel, through the waves along side us and giving us wonderful views of their white bellies under the water, before surfacing for air. Magic. Then on past Bardsey Island and into Cardigan Bay, where we were welcomed by the resident pod of bottlenose dolphins all the way to near our mooring. It took us 12 and a half hours, averaging over 6 knots – very good indeed as we had expected it to take about 15 hours.

The third trip was to Handa Island with Carol, Cathy and David. We set off at 8ish and got the first ferry trip over from Tarbet, past Scourie, Sutherland, to the island. We followed the path across to the top end of the island, with snipe, stone chats, bonxies and arctic skuas, 3 red grouse with at least 6 chicks each and flowers like marsh orchids, bog asphodel, marsh heath and lousewort all in flower. At the north end, there are huge cliffs full of seabirds and a large sea stack with puffins nesting in burrows on the top. As we ate lunch, we saw a bonxie (great skua) catch, kill, pluck and eat a puffin! Just nature really! On we went round the west side, past some ponds with newts and tadpoles in, and above more cliffs with sheer faces and arches, to the more gentle south side, with sandy beaches and machair flowers. A lizard was sunning itself on the wooden walkway and a flock of kittiwakes fed in the bay. Redshanks, oystercatchers and ringed plover fed in the seaweed and a heron flew past.

Back over to the mainland at 4.30 and we had a beautiful run home with the mountains in stunning clarity against the blue sky. Another great day.

The last wee trip was a prize I had won at the SOC conference in March – a night at Aigas Field Centre, Beaulieu and a chance to watch the beavers John Lister-Kaye had introduced there in 2006. The whole place was so calm and peaceful, the wooden cabin very nice, the house itself lovely and the food very good. After dinner, we had a private viewing at the beaver hide on the loch side and watched at least 4 different beavers – swimming, eating water lily leaves, climbing out and collecting bracken fronds to eat in the water, and coming out to groom and wash. There are now 7 beavers! It was just wonderful, and with a slight breeze, no midgies to be seen! The next morning we joined a group for a talk then walk on the nature track round the loch, seeing the evidence of the beavers, the regeneration of the trees felled in 2006, the wee dams which have created small ponds etc. Beavers do seem to help the

biodiversity of an area, by creating standing dead wood and dead wood lying into the water for invertebrates to colonise, which provide food for fish and birds and mammals like bats. Beavers are herbivores and need several different species of deciduous trees and lots of other plants. We then walked up to a hill fort and had nice views of the area, before driving home. John and his wife Lucinda, who has Tomatin connections with Balvraid, were very friendly and delighted that I had won the raffle prize and that I lived in Tomatin. She passed on her best wishes to all who know her.

Janet Crummy.

School News.

Tae Kwon Do

The school has been very lucky to have Claire Crosby to come down to the school and teach us some marshall arts. Whilst there Claire taught us how to express ourselves in marshall arts by kicking, punching and the all important stretching. Claire also got Danni, Callum, Gavin and Keely to demonstrate a pattern called Dan-gun, Chon-ji, Won-Yo. Everyone enjoyed it!

By Hilary P6 & Alex P4

Hockey Tournament

The hockey team entered a hockey competition on the 4th October. It was held at the Astroturf pitch in Inverness. The team was – Callum, Gavin, James, Charlie, Olivia, Danni, Rebekah and Lewis. They came third in the overall event. Crown Primary 1st team won the shield. Well done to the team.

By Lewis P6

Beetle Drive

Thank you for coming to the Beetle Drive we raised £265.56. It was really good, lots of people came and we raised lots of money. The money is going towards a Valentines Disco. There was a raffle and there were good prizes as well as a booby prize which was a pair of gloves and a maths jotter!

By Louise P7 & Katie P4

Aigas Field Trip

Strathdearn Primary School P4-7 went to Aigas on September 9th with three teachers named Mrs Pringle, Mrs Ferguson and Mrs Bishop. The reason that we were there was to look at plants and insects. We had fun.

By Ewen P5 & Andrew P4

After-school Art Club

This term on Tuesdays for P1-4 and Thursdays for P5-7. The P1-4 have been doing paper fish and stuffing them with shredded paper. The P5-7 are making little cat heads. Then we are thinking of making a big fish together and getting chicken wire and shaping it with Papier Mache and then we

are going to paint the fish on after the October holidays. We are going to make a big mosaic out of tiles and preserve it.

By Sebastian P6 & Rani P4

Strathdearn Community

One afternoon in September everyone in our class went for a walk around Tomatin. We were looking for landmarks because we are finding out about Strathdearn for our project.

We took lots of photographs and found a dead frog! We saw some of our houses, the old shop, the pub, the recycling centre, the railway bridge, the church, the viaduct and the new shop.

We had a great time and are looking forward to finding out about Strathdearn in the olden days! Arran has already brought in lots of old photographs and we are planning lots more outings and visits for after the holidays.

By P1,2,3 & 4

Autumn Term News

This term Strathdearn Primary held a Beetle Drive on Friday 3rd October. We earned £265.56, the best adult was Sandy Dey, the worst adult was Kate Steer who got a pair of rubber gloves. The best child was Murray Fraser, worst child was Anna MacQueen who got a maths jotter!

Our class even got to go to Aigas it was excellent fun, we got to pick up spiders and creepy crawlies. It was fun but disgusting, everyone had great fun.

In Strathdearn Primary School we got some chalk to draw some masterpieces in the playground.

We are looking forward to the school garden it will look wonderful, we are hoping to get some of it done in the October holidays. We are also looking forward to the holidays. We are so lucky to have such a wonderful school.

By Kyle MacLeod P5

CONGRATULATIONS to Nick Crummy, who was awarded the prize for the best Scottish Vocational Qualification level three portfolio in Merchant Vessel Operations. The portfolio formed part of his studies at Glasgow College of Nautical Studies which he completed earlier this year. Nick received a cheque for £400 and a certificate at his prizegiving.

BLYTHSWOOD ROMANIA TRIP 2008

For the past five years, Millburn Academy and the Christian charity Blythswood have had strong links, resulting in the annual trip to Eastern Europe to help with the less fortunate. December 2007 saw 54 hopeful pupils of Millburn Academy narrowed down to an eventual team of 7, plus one leader, to be sent out.

After months of fundraising and raising awareness throughout Inverness and the Highlands, our team set off for Jimbolia, Western Romania, on the 22nd June, to spend 2 weeks with 15 under-privileged primary school children. Our time with the children was spent taking them on holiday to a resort within Romania, the idea to get them away from their difficult family backgrounds and very poor living conditions.

The fortnight we spent with these children was absolutely superb. Still so young, they appreciated all the little things in life that most people, my self included, take for granted, like being lucky enough to switch on a light, or to be served a plate of food.

Spending so much time with them only means growing closer, and finding out more about their backgrounds. One boy aged 8 didn't know his second name. A young girl was very violent, and she enjoyed hitting and punching people. We were told this was because she was used to being hit at home by her family.

The difference in lifestyles really hit home when we gave the children playdough to play with one evening. They were engrossed with it for nearly 4 hours. Children in the UK take Playstations and Nintendos for granted. Children in Romania are happy with playdough.

At the end of the two weeks we were given the chance to visit their homes. They lived within a gypsy slum just outside the main village of Jimbolia. You couldn't really call these buildings houses. They were run-down looking concrete boxes, probably the size of a garage, consisting of one kitchen, one living room, and one bedroom shared by, on average about 8 people. Several toilets were shared between a whole community. The contrast in living conditions between the UK and poverty-struck parts of Romania is unbelievable.

On the positive side, our team of 8 gelled immediately. Lots of fun and teenage banter was consistent throughout the 2 weeks! We set ourselves the challenge of eating the strange Romanian 'dishes' we were given every day – cooked breakfasts covered in cheese sauce and pancakes rolled up with cheese inside!

On the return journey home we all agreed that our time spent in Romania was the best two weeks of our lives.

We loved every minute and hope to go back one day. It was an experience of a lifetime, and one that I personally will never forget.

I would like to thank everyone in Strathdearn who helped with our fundraising in March at the Tomatin Inn, and also to the Charitable Trust, who gave generously and helped me participate in this worthwhile cause.

Fraser Manson

From Councillor Jim Crawford

The past year has been one of many highs and lows in the Highland Council. As you are no doubt aware the first administration made up of Independents and SNP members came to grief very early on. We now have an administration made up of Lib-Dems, Labour and Independents (except the Independents are no longer Independent, as they now have to abide by the majority vote of the administration) We also have a group of Independents who refused to give up their Independence and vote according to their beliefs - I belong to the latter. Is it any wonder that the constituents don't know what is going on? If it were not for politics, I am sure the Highland Council would work better for the people of the Highlands.

Anyway, nearer home we are starting to see some results. After 15 months trying to get Scottish Water to allow the Council to connect the four houses in Meg's Garden to the main sewer, enabling us to do away with the septic tank in the corner, we now have permission and I hope the connection will go ahead very soon. The ground to the South of Meg's Garden (the centre of Tomatin) is ripe for a facelift, and the Tomatin Estates have very kindly agreed in principle that the community could landscape this ground and make it into a communal garden. There are still negotiations to take place, however most people are behind the idea.

The 2+1 alterations to the A9 and the proposed wind-farms with associated river crossing are still to be determined. However the Community Council and your members are aware of what is going on, and will hopefully get the right results for Tomatin.

Finally if anyone has anything that they would like to discuss in private, please feel that you can call me on 01463 794941 or by email at jim.crawford.ellr@highland.gov.uk

Jim Crawford
Councillor. Inverness South
Highland Council

Date for your Diary

A CEILIDH

At the Tomatin Inn on Saturday 15th November at 7pm
To raise funds for Meallmore Lodge Resident Funds.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT SINGING

DANCING

PIPES

So dust off your dancing shoes and join us.

Tickets available from **Bruce Harman 511328** on

Anne Hart 511724



Needlecraft

At present we are called Tomatin Piecemakers (Patchwork & Quilters). Due to a drop in numbers we are looking for new members to join our group. We would welcome anyone who is interested in any form of sewing or knitting. Why not come along? Bring your sewing, knitting, crocheting, cross-stitch or any other form of craft that you would like to do in the company of other like-minded people. Maybe you would like help with a project, new ideas, exchange patterns or pass on your own expertise? We are an informal and friendly group.

We meet on the 2nd and 4th Mondays each month at 7.30pm to 9.30pm in the Strathdearn Hall. The charge is £1.50 per session (this may be reduced if we have more than 10 members) - this includes tea/coffee and biscuits and of course good company.

Our next meeting is Monday 10th November, we look forward to seeing new faces.

Anyone wishing to know more information please phone Christine West on 01808 511412

WEDDING: JAMES/NIXON

On 10th October 2008 Lisa James and Ali Nixon were married at Cwrt Bleddyn Hotel, Usk, South Wales. Ali is the younger son of Evelyn and Bob Nixon.

Lisa and Ali were blessed with a beautiful, sunny wedding day and their families and friends enjoyed sharing in their special celebrations.

They chose the romantic Maldives for their honeymoon destination.

We wish Lisa and Ali every happiness for their future lives together.

TOMATIN DISTILLERY CO. LTD.

*Are you looking for ideas for Christmas Presents?
Why not indulge your family and friends and try our
"New Private Tour and Whisky Tasting"*

Tomatin Distillery is offering a Whisky Presentation & Tasting Tour at £30 per person.

The mysteries of whisky making will be explained during a private tour by one of our Managers. This specialised tour also includes "Nosing and Tasting" of our aged, single malts, ranging from 12 years old to 38 year old, in our new "Stillhouse Suite".

*For more information, and bookings please contact:
Gill MacLeod Tel: 01808 511 234 or e-mail:
gill@tomatin.co.uk*

*For more Christmas Gift ideas, come and have a browse in the Tomatin Distillery Visitor Centre Gift Shop. Open: Mon – Fri 9.00a.m. to 5.00p.m. up to 24th Dec. to 1.00p.m. Closed on Tuesday 16th Dec. From 1.00p.m. to 5.00p.m.
Manager: Marie MacLeod Tel: 01808 511 444*

Congratulations to Fraser Manson for achieving Deputy Head Boy position at Millburn Academy.

Strathdearn Youth Group News

Looking back through the logbook a lot seems to have happened since the last report, mainly because the old storeroom is functioning well for the junior youth club held every Friday evening, 6 -7.30pm. We have bought some more games equipment including ten pin bowling, giant 4 in a row, giant other games and circus skills tackle. Most of it noisy!

We made the news papers with a photograph of the graffiti artwork and some of the artists, thanks to the efforts of Dougie Mackay, the youth development officer with the Highland Council.

Friday nights have a very enjoyable buzz about them with sometimes over 20 bodies busily engaged in activities such as cooking, food modelling, softball tennis, unihoc, dongoball soccer, competitive photography, cartoon sketching and paper igloo building. The latter construction housed 14 people and stood solidly for a month before it had to be cleared for redevelopment. Strathdearn should not be short of good builders in the future.

The "Mobile" dance project is working well. The 10 dancers involved already have some dance sequences "in the can" and are working out more moves for filming. A pan Highland premiere to be screened at Eden Court Theatre should be worth looking out for.

With varying degrees of elegance 28 people took to the ice on a recent outing to the Inverness Ice Centre. There were one or two spins and arabesques and despite plenty of bruised buttocks most would not leave the arena until the full 2.5 hours were up. Sorry about that, adult helpers.

Cricket training is happening during school time in preparation for a competitive festival at the end of November and badminton for juniors re-starts Monday 3rd November in the school hall 6-7pm.

Forth coming events: 21st November a night at the Rollerball Inverness - could be fun; 3rd Jan a peek backstage at the Aladdin pantomime followed by a "giggling and greetin" workshop - will be fun, it is compulsory.

A small delegation attended the recent South Ward Highland Council Forum Somethingorother, focusing on youth work, and Strathdearn seemed to appear as an example of good practice, featuring in several slides in a presentation by Dougie Mackay. The general conclusions were that: discretionary money can be found for equipment; everyone wants facilities but not near them; volunteers to work with teenagers are in short supply; and councillors think something should be done.

Most exciting item was the "Street Football" project run by Action for Children. It is a portable cage with floodlights, 10m x 17m, which can be set up on a car park or even a tennis court. It is usually accompanied by a "girls only" campervan containing nail painting, make up, jewellery and other mysteries. We can borrow the tackle (which incidentally cost £16,000 to buy) for free for a one off event. We would need a towbar, 10 volunteers and 60-80 manhours for 3 hours of late evening fun. Anyone up for it? (please speak: 511766).

An idea under investigation is an off road and/or skidpan driving experience for prospective and newly qualified drivers. It may come to nothing or it could be an exciting opportunity for thrills and spills away from the highway, whilst learning how to stay safe on it.

Thanks as always to the people who make the activities possible, the Beaumont family especially and the ever faithful which includes Lynne and Rev. Reg.

I am not sure if it is news or just a reminder but the Youth Group was set up, not just to organise a "youth club", but to be an umbrella group for activities of all descriptions which are of benefit to the young people of the area. It has insurance cover, child protection procedures, a constitution, a bank balance and the means of asking for finance. The concern uppermost in people's minds, according to the community opinion survey carried out some time ago, was "things for young people to do". Strathdearn Youth Group is proving itself to be a useful organisation for that purpose. We have tackled the barriers that might deter anyone exploring new ideas for the benefit of youngsters, and SYG would welcome a lot more adults with ideas joining in. We have the necessary/boring/worrying bits covered for anyone wanting to organise the fun . (please offer: 511766).

FREEBURN FORSAKEN

All was still on Juniper hill
When the Braemore Boys hit town
Desperate men with a desperate aim-
To pull the old Inn down.

They showed us fancy building plans
With a brand new Freeburn Inn.
But they hightailed it up and o'r the Slochd
When the desperate deed was done.

A scene of desolation now
greet's the stranger's eye.
Is this the latest battle zone!
Have bombs rained from the sky!

Now the Sheriff has been notified
And a posse will be formed,
To apprehend the cowboys
Who vandalised our land.
D.MacAskill. 15.10.08

CONGRATULATIONS to Edward Cameron-Mackintosh, working with the Bank of New York in Edinburgh, who got engaged last month to Vicky Hutt, a graduate in Psychology and Sociology. Edward and Vicky intend to marry next March and our best wishes go out to them.

Natural History Club.

The Natural History Club continues to run a programme of enjoyable talks and events. In the past six months we have enjoyed watching and listening to bats, a talk on red squirrels, and an outing to Insh Marshes. A talk on mountain hare, grouse and ticks left us itching all over!

The next meeting is at 7:30 PM, Thursday 20th November when we look forward to Mark Courtney showing some of his wildlife photographs and hopefully to learning a little about improving our own efforts.

In December we hope to visit the Black Isle at dusk, on a date to be decided (weather!), to look for roosting red kite and whatever else is about.

January 22nd 2009 is our AGM - traditionally a light-hearted affair with a slide show and seasonal fare.

As an ongoing project we keep a record of interesting sightings throughout the year – first signs of Spring, birds, flowers animals etc. Over the next year we would like to broaden this by engaging more people in the area to get a feel of the distribution of various species – it is noticeable for example that crested tits are very localised, but common species such as jackdaws, and even blackbirds vary greatly in density up and down Strathdearn. We are considering ways of doing this, and will develop the idea in the New Year.

Meanwhile, remember the Natural History Club is open to all, young and old. Don't just watch nature programmes on the telly - enjoy our local wildlife – it's very special.

David Bonniface (secretary) 511740.

BETTY'S WINTER WARMERS

VENISON CASSEROLE

3 tbsps sunflower oil
4 venison steaks
1lb potatoes, halved
1 level tbsp plain flour
1pt beef stock
4 tbsps port (opt)
Salt and ground black pepper
1tbsp juniper berries
Fresh thyme

Brown venison in hot oil. Transfer to casserole. Sauté potatoes till golden and add to casserole. Add flour to pan, cook 1 min, blend in stock, port and seasoning. Scatter berries and thyme over meat and pour sauce over. Cook till venison is tender.

STOVIES

1lb cold roast beef or lamb
1lb sliced raw potatoes
1 large onion, sliced
Salt and pepper
1tbsp dripping
2 carrots and piece of turnip

Melt dripping in large pan. Layer onion, meat, diced carrots, turnip and potatoes. Cover and cook over low heat for about 30 mins. Serve hot with oatcakes.

SPECIAL EVENTS

SONGS OF PRAISE evening

Wed 12th November, Strathdearn Hall, 7.30pm
Cup of tea afterwards!

CEILIDH

Saturday 15th November, Tomatin Inn, 7pm
Fundraiser for Meallmore Lodge Resident Funds.

Tickets £12: Bruce Harman or Anne Hart

HOSPICE COFFEE EVENING

with Sales table and Christmas Cards.

Friday 14th November, Strathdearn Hall, 7pm

Organiser: Anne Hart

CRAFT FAIR

Saturday 6th December, Strathdearn Primary School

Organiser: May Buckle

CAROL SINGING

Thursday 18th December, meet Strathdearn Hall 7 pm

Wear warm clothes and bring a torch!

(All proceeds to the Bethany Pilot Homeless Night Shelter Project)

Tomatin and Moy WRI

After discussions with all our members, we have decided to broaden our horizons this year, by having more trips to places and events of interest, as well as our regular monthly meetings on the first Monday of the month.

Our future monthly meetings include a Christmas dinner for members on December 8th; a talk on February 2nd 2009 by Mr Frank Roden on the Drugs Problem, and on the 2nd of March a special meeting in celebration of the 60th anniversary of Tomatin and Moy WRI, when we hope that many past members of the Institute will come along to help us celebrate. On April 6th Ms Sarah Smythe from Scottish National Heritage will come to talk about its work and we shall finish on the 11th May with our AGM.

In addition, however, we intend to organise an interesting and informative trip to the new Culloden Battlefield Centre, perhaps a theatre trip or visit to an Art Gallery or behind the scenes at a big store. There are many more ideas, which I am sure would appeal to many women in our community, of all ages and interests. The WRI is NOT just for older members of the Community!

If you, too, would like to broaden your horizons amongst a group of very friendly, welcoming people, why not come and join us?

TOMATIN INN AND SHOP

We would like to inform you of some changes that will be taking affect as of the 1st November 2008. The first major change is the new shop opening hours: as of the 1st Nov we will be closing from 12noon to 3pm daily, and the new shop opening hours will be as follows-

Monday to Friday 8am to 12noon open
 12noon to 3pm closed
 3pm to 6pm open

Saturday 9am to 12noon open
 12noon to 3pm closed
 3pm to 5pm open

Sunday 9am to 12noon open

We have been asked regularly to keep a stock of fruit and vegetables, milk, bread and other essential items. Because these items go out of date quickly and we are unable to return unsold items, the only way we can provide these items is to take orders for them.

We will therefore be giving priority for these items to all those customers who pre-order; if you have not ordered the item and we sell out then there will be nothing we can do until our next delivery. Further information about orders and collection times can be obtained from the shop.

We have also been asked to stock more stamps, which we will try to do for the community. However we ask that you bear in mind that the shop can only buy and sell these at cost, which means it is only able to buy a limited amount each week.

There may be some minor problems during this transition period and we would ask that you be patient with us while we iron these out and streamline your shop services.

PUB EVENTS

TRY OUR NEW WINTER MENU WITH CHEF JOHN MORRISON

8th Nov FREE Fireworks display, starting at approx 9pm

Also: We will be providing a BBQ, candy floss, toffee apples, soup and jacket potato all at reasonable prices, plus cocktails in the bar and free play on the juke box.

Throughout Nov and Dec - Darts and Pool Competitions and WII night with prizes

6th Dec - Live Music

20th Dec - Kid Christmas Party

20th Dec - Live Music

24th Dec - Christmas Eve - see in Christmas day with us, enjoy a drink and the open fireplace

25th Dec - Christmas Day Lunch, open from 12noon to 3pm with lunch being served @ 1pm Booking is essential, with only 40 places available and filling fast, Three course meal, with glasses of mulled and house wine all for just · £29.95

26th Dec - Free Cold Finger Buffet

31st Dec - Hogmanay - See in the new year with us, come try our Hogmanay set menu, enjoy our friendly atmosphere and free music

In the New Year - Burns Night Supper- Valentines Special Set Menu

FOOTBALL REPORT

Since the last Newsletter, Tomatin have completed their Strathspey Welfare season by winning the new Stuart Cup, beating Cromdale by 3 goals to 1 in the final. The last match of the summer season involved a lengthy trip to Cullen in the semi-final of the Highland Welfare Cup. A tense game ended 3 - 3 after extra time, but unfortunately Tomatin lost the penalty shoot-out, thereby missing the chance to appear in a second consecutive final.

The players decided they wanted to continue playing and gain experience against different teams so they entered the Inverness Welfare League for the winter season for the first time. Games will continue, weather permitting, until February. At the time of writing, Tomatin have won three of their first four league games.

STRATHDEARN BOOK CLUB

Dear Worms,

By the time you read this we will have just finished "The Dig" by John Preston. It is described as "a little masterpiece of fictional archaeology" by P.Kemp of the Sunday Times, so here's hoping!
Next we cross to "Brideshead Revisited" to keep times with the current cinema trend and then, in January, we switch genres to "Absolute Friends" by John Le Carré - hope you will join us!

Friday November 7th 2 - 3.30pm at Sheneval, Corrybrough: "The Dig"

Friday November 28th 2 - 3.30pm at Alt Dubh: "Brideshead Revisited"

Friday January 30th 2 - 3.30pm at Sheneval, Corrybrough: "Absolute Friends"

Phone 511411 for details/lifts, and watch community notice boards.

YOUTH SPORTS FACILITY

On 15th September a successful meeting was held in the hall when it was established what arrangement would be adopted for the sports pitch in line with the particular requirements of Sportscotland who we hope will be our principal funder.

The pitch, approximately 17metres x 37metres long, will be synthetic turf with silica sand infill bounded on all sides by rigid fencing to a height of 3 metres with special arrangements at the ends for access and to suit all ball games.

Due to our local weather conditions, a cover is wanted over the whole pitch with adequate height clearance including 7.5 metres at mid width. Three schemes for the cover have been investigated: namely, the original radial curved steel portals in seven bays of 5.6metres with a single skin aluminium roof; second a traditional pitched steel portal with similar spacing and a plastic coated steel roof; third was a stretched canvas type roof on a laminated timber frame structure by Agoraspace from France. Their agent in UK is Playdale Playgrounds Ltd. who constructed our children's play area.

Sportscotland have indicated that, subject to assessment by their board, they would be prepared to provide 50% for a scheme costing £120,00 to £160,000 in total. Of the three schemes the second or traditional roofed cover is the only one which can be accommodated within the overall budget.

Colin Munro, our Architect for this project, has been asked to prepare a price not exceeding £150,000 for the whole scheme together with updating his layout drawing. These items will then be submitted to Sportscotland with our updated application for funding. Since the above meeting other cover systems have been suggested and are being investigated.

At one stage it was thought that the whole scheme could be carried out in two stages with the pitch and building foundations forming the first stage. While this is still possible, it is very much more costly as it would involve constructing a building over the pitch. The demands of Health and Safety during construction would require the use of heavy wheeled vehicles which the pitch could not sustain without special protection.

It is not possible to set a completion date for this project until the overall funding package is secure.

YOGA

in the Village Hall 5.30 - 7pm Wednesday evenings,
term time £3.00 per class

Fancy having a go at yoga but feel you are not bendy enough and might be turned into a vegetarian?

Why not come along to a class and enjoy trying out some poses that don't require much flexibility, but which give an insight into improved posture (such as standing on your own two feet)

As you ease yourself into more complicated poses your flexibility will improve and poses can be adapted to suit all abilities.

There is no competition, no pressure and no dogma - just movements synchronised with breathing, stillness with observation of the breath and relaxation in a comfortable, friendly environment.

Sleep better, breathe more fully, move more easily and still eat steak!

Further details : Pam Hardwick (Qualified Yoga Scotland Hatha Yoga teacher) 01808 511766

We are sad to note the passing of:

Mrs Sheila Bell MacDonald (nee MacAskill), 30 Beaufort Road (formerly of Moybeg and Lynbemore, Moy) who died in her 97th year on the 28th May, widow of John MacDonald (Invergarry). Sheila was the eldest sister of the late Murdo MacAskill, Alt-Dhubhag. She trained as a schoolteacher in Edinburgh, taught in several schools including Ardersier, and had the distinction of being the last Schoolmistress at Coignafearn Primary School just before the Second World War. She is much missed by her surviving brother and sister, Norman and Margaret, and her many nieces and nephews.

Mrs Ann Johnston Miemczyk of Balloch passed away aged 80 years at Raigmore Hospital on 28th August. She was the sister of Mrs Harrie Bell, and mother of Richard Miemczyk, formerly of Dell Cottage, Marion and Ann. Our sympathy goes out to her friends and family.

Family Announcements?

We are always happy to publish births, engagements, marriages and tributes to those who have died in the Newsletter, as well as news of graduations, special prizes, etc and this edition carries a sample of these. We don't get to hear of all of these events though, so if you have had a special occasion recently or are going to have one in the near future, please e-mail or phone the Editor with the details. It's such a shame to miss these out.

A Londoner by birth, Jamie Scarlett joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve after leaving school and served in the RAF as an aircraft fitter throughout the 2nd World War. After demob, quantity surveying was his profession, but a chance encounter in the 1960s when on holiday in Perthshire roused a latent interest in tartan and put him in contact with the then newly-founded Scottish Tartans Society and later with Donald C. Stewart, whose book “*The Setts of the Scottish Tartans*” was the foundation stone of modern tartan research. This led to an effective co-operation until Stewart’s death in 1977. Jamie married Meta MacBean in 1973, and they moved from Edinburgh to Milton of Moy in autumn 1976. Jamie was already a published author on the subject of tartan, starting to establish a deserved reputation as a tartan expert in his own right.

In the long decades of his working life, Jamie conducted ever-deeper research into the whole subject of tartan: delving into all aspects of tartan history; and building and using his own weaving loom and experimenting with original dyes as used by the Highlanders in centuries gone by. He became a much sought-after designer of new tartans: the American Bicentennial was a notable example, and he handwove a reproduction of a 1745 plaid for the Culloden Battlefield Centre. In 1998, his work was recognised by his being made M.B.E. He was also a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

He was widely published throughout his career, not only in various journals (the Inverness Courier carried a series of articles by him) but also as the author of several books, including “*Tartans of Scotland*”, “*The Tartan Spotter’s Guide*”, and “*Scotland’s Clans & Tartans*”. The fruits of all Jamie’s studies, an archive covering more than a hundred years of serious tartan research and including the work of Donald C Stewart and the surviving work of his father, Donald William Stewart, went to make up the SCARLETT TARTAN ARCHIVE, which was given to the Highland Council Archive in 1994.

Jamie and Meta (who predeceased him in 2000) were ever hospitable in their cosy home near the confluence of the Funtack Burn with the River Findhorn. In their time they played a very full part in local life, helping to organise events. Jamie served on the Community Council and was an elder of the Church of Scotland. He was also a long-time member, latterly a Vice-President, of the council of the Clan Chattan Association and was always heavily involved in their activities at Moy Hall, the seat of Clan Mackintosh.

His years as a widower were much enlivened by the companionship of his two cats, Twinkle and Qwerty, whom he adored, and regular readers of this Newsletter will have read Jamie’s story of how he and Meta came to acquire them! Jamie contributed many other articles to the Newsletter and kept himself particularly busy committing to paper all the results of his ongoing research into tartan, much buoyed in recent years by collaboration with the Scottish Tartans Authority in helping to compile a long-overdue, authoritative register of all Scottish tartans.

And, speaking of Jamie’s writing, locals always smile on recall of the wonderfully concise couplet penned by Jamie years ago in reference to the snow-bound road conditions we all oft encounter in mid-winter and know all too well: “When the Slochd is blochd, Drumochter is blochter!” (Years later, in a folksy Scottish magazine, Jamie was amused to read his very same couplet described as ‘an old Highland weather saying’.)

All local people who knew Jamie will remember him for his unflinching, old-fashioned good manners as well as his thoughtfulness and generosity, despite limited means. Scotland has lost its leading tartan expert and historian, and Strathdearn has lost one of its most modest yet distinguished and well-liked residents. We are all truly poorer for his loss.

ODE TO A LAMB

Marie’s lambs, they like water
Bet they would taste good in batter
Their nice white fleece, just like snow,
Put them in the oven and cook them slow.
Kill them first, slit their throat
And put the meat beside the gravy boat –
Somebody said it should be mint
But it’s expensive, I’d be skint.
The lambs can be seen up the Glen
At Marie’s wee But & Ben.
by Charlie Edwards

IN REPLY TO CHARLIE’S ODE

So Charlie thinks lamb tastes good?
Put them in the oven I never would.
Just as you say, their fleece is white,
Their bellies are big – they look just right.
You won’t be skint, this I know –
No lamb like this in the oven would go.
You are so naughty, saying them to eat –
They are beautiful and really sweet!
by Isabella Taylor

Moy, Dalrossie & Tomatin Church.

*SONGS OF PRAISE EVENING
WEDNESDAY 12th NOVEMBER
in the STRATHDEARN HALL at 7.30 pm
Stay for a cup of tea afterwards.*

And

You are invited to join us

CAROL SINGING

on **Thursday 18th December**

Join us at the Strathdearn Hall at 7 pm

Wear warm clothes and bring a torch!

(All proceeds to the Bethany Pilot Homeless Night Shelter Project)

This snippet from a newspaper was sent in by a local reader:

WIND TURBINES FAIL TO SCARE BIRDS

Farmland birds are not afraid of wind turbines, according to a study by scientists from Newcastle University. They found that the sight and sound of ranks of whirling 330ft high turbines had little effect on birds around two wind farms in the East Anglian fens during winter. The results, published in the British Ecological Society's "Journal of Applied Ecology", will disappoint conservation groups, who claim wind turbines pose a threat to birds.

Tribute – Alasdair Bruce (1945 – 2008)

On Thursday 16th October Plockton Church was packed with people from near and far mourning the passing of Alasdair Bruce (popular Mine Host of the Freeburn Hotel 1976 – 1985 and subsequently of the Plockton Hotel 1985 – 1991). His Service, ably conducted by the Rev John MacDonald, reflected Alasdair's philosophy in life – 'human existence is a serious business, but for heaven's sake, let us not be too serious about it!' So it was not surprising that there was more laughter than tears at the ceremony.

Alasdair was born in Glasgow and educated at Giffnock Primary School and Hutcheson's Grammar School, following which he went to Strathclyde University, graduating with an MA in Business Management. His first job was with Honeywell and then as a systems analyst with Lanarkshire County Council. He married his wife Lynn (whom he met at Giffnock South Parish Church's youth fellowship) in 1970, and six years later voluntary redundancy allowed the couple to venture into the hotel trade when they bought the Freeburn where they spent 9 happy years. After the Little Chef succeeded in persuading him to sell the Freeburn, Alasdair and Lynn bought the Plockton Hotel in 1985, which they ran for 6 years, Alasdair immediately becoming a great asset to the village, becoming fully involved in the life of the community. In 1991 Alasdair started a new business as a consultant, mainly to the local enterprise company. Latterly he held a major contract for HIE delivering advice throughout the Skye and Lochalsh and Lochaber areas, managing 9 advisors. By the time the contract ended his health was failing and so he retired to enjoy spending more time with his family and two much-loved grandchildren.

One example of his quick wit and humour was quoted where, one busy lunchtime at the Plockton Hotel, a harassed waitress asked him what the soup of the day was. "Oh," said Alasdair, "It's second day soup. Tell them they'll have to come back tomorrow." I well remember another incident at the Freeburn when a waitress tripped on the notoriously uneven bar floor and deposited Tommy Fraser's (Tomatinard) daily lunch upside down on the floor directly opposite his table. Alasdair, peering over the bar, casually remarked, "Will it be alright for you there, Tommy?"

The first time I called on him at the Plockton Hotel and congratulated him on choosing such a beautiful location I received a typical Bruce reply. "You know," he said, "if it wasn't for your custom at the Freeburn I couldn't have bought this place!"

Alasdair's Annual Ceilidhs in the Freeburn Lounge were a great attraction highlighted by his carefree rendition of his latest poem, usually aimed at local worthies which both amused and offended in equal measure.

The sympathy of the Community Council and the Strathdearn Community in general is extended to Lynn, his daughters Louise and Sarah, his son Euan, and his two grandchildren.

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:

welcomes primary-school aged children every Sunday morning during term-time in the Strathdearn Hall at 10.30 am (except for the second Sunday of the month when there is a Family Service). Further information from Sandra 01808 511237.

The Guild:

Meets on the second Wednesday each month between September and April, usually at 7.30 pm in Tomatin Church. New Members welcome.

12th November: Songs of Praise Evening Strathdearn Hall.

10th December: Members' Night Mrs Buckle's home.

14th January: Discussion Topic Tomatin Church

All welcome. Further information from Sheila 01808 511729.

Breakfast Club:

Join us for freshly brewed coffee, bacon rolls and croissants, (as well as healthy options) followed by discussion of a Bible passage from Matthew's Gospel, and a time of singing and prayer. Come to the Strathdearn Hall for all, or some of the morning (9.30am for Breakfast/10.30am for the Bible passage/11.30am for singing and prayer) On

Mondays 17th and 24th November; 19th and 26th January – and thereafter on the last two Mondays of each month up until and including June. Further information from Vivian 01808 511355.

Services (all at 10.30 am unless stated otherwise):

November:

9th: Strathdearn Hall Family Service for Remembrance Sunday with Rev
Bart Buell.

Strathdearn War Remembrance Day Service 3 pm

16th: Moy Church Service taken by The Guild

23rd: Tomatin Church

30th: Moy Church

December:

7th: Dalarossie Church

14th: Strathdearn Hall Nine Lessons & Carols

21st: Moy Church Family Service

Christmas Eve:

7pm: Christingle Service

11.30 pm: Watchnight Service (both in Tomatin Church)

28th: Tomatin Church

January:

4th: Dalarossie Church

11th: Family Service in the Strathdearn Hall

18th: Moy Church

25th: Tomatin Church (Sacrament of Holy Communion)

February:

1st: Dalarossie

8th: Family Service in the Strathdearn Hall

All are most welcome to join in any or all of our Services or Activities

TOMATIN COUNTRY SHOP

Cost-cutting measures have recently had to be introduced to make the Shop more viable, including cutting the opening hours. The Shop is a valuable asset to Tomatin and so, to ensure its viability, please make the effort to use it when you can.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

First Monday of the Month
September to May (ex.January)
7.30pm, Findhorn Room,
Strathdearn Hall

WRI

Contact: Mrs Carol James 531220

2nd/4th Mondays of Month

7.30pm, Findhorn Room,
Strathdearn Hall

Patchwork & Quilting

Contact: Mrs Chris West 511412

3rd Monday of Month

7.30pm, Findhorn Room
Strathdearn Hall,

Gardening Club

Contact: Mr Alex Don 511729

Every Monday

Lunchtime, old Strathdearn Hall

Line Dancing

Contact: Mrs Jean Macrae 511314

During Term-Time:

Tuesdays 1 - 3 pm and

Fridays 9.45 - 11.45 am

Strathdearn Hall

Croileagan Tom Aitinn

(Tomatin Gaelic Playgroup)

Contact: Mrs Rosemary Dempster 531215

Every Wednesday

10.30 am Findhorn Room,
Strathdearn Hall,

Community Coffee Morning

All Welcome

Every Wednesday

2pm Strathdearn Hall

Walking Group

Contact: Mrs Kathy Bonniface 511740

Every Wednesday during term-time

5.30 - 7pm Findhorn Room,
Strathdearn Hall

YOGA

Contact: Mrs Pam Hardwick 511766

Every Thursday

11am – 12noon Tomatin Inn

Coffee Morning

Every Thursday

11.30am – 1.30pm Tomatin Inn

POST OFFICE

Every Thursday

1.30pm Findhorn Room,
Strathdearn Hall,

Art Class

Contact: Mrs Betty Watson 511271

Last Friday of Month (venue varies)

Strathdearn Book Club

See Notices for details.

Monthly, various dates

Natural History Club

Some indoor, some outdoor, events.

Days vary, so look out for posters.

Contact: Mr David Bonniface 511740

or Mrs Carol James 531220

1st Strathdearn Rainbow and Brownie Unit

for girls aged 5 - 10.

Contact Alison (511369)

or Trish (511486)

SPEEDING CONCERNS!

Following on from the concerns about the awful standard of driving in the village highlighted by Ian Bishop when he spoke to the Community Council about road safety matters after teaching the children cycling proficiency - we asked the Parent Council to get some feedback from the children. Here it is:

“The landrover was too fast for the single track road.” (Hilary, Lewis, Fraser and Tom)

“People are going too fast on the single track road.” (Grant and Gwen)

“The Millburn bus goes too fast,” said Lewis, (and Mrs MacRae agreed).

“The traffic isn’t slowing down to 30 mph.” (P4 – P6 pupils)

“Certain drivers go too fast.” (Kyle)

“Some cars don’t slow down for horses.” (Georgia)

“People don’t slow down to 20mph at the school.” (P4 – P6 pupils)

“Teenage drivers within the village are taking too many risks.”

Seb mentioned the Grants’ Trucks. It was one of these that caused him to come off his bike.

So there you have the concerns of the youngsters in our community – who regularly walk and cycle round the village and see all these things. Added to the concerns flagged up in our main CC report in this issue, the message to all drivers has to be:

CONSIDER OTHER ROAD USERS MORE – AND SLOW DOWN!!

HIGHLIGHTS OF COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Upgrading of Strathdearn Primary School Grounds

At our July meeting, 31 members of the public joined community councillors and Councillor Crawford to listen to a presentation by the Strathdearn Parent Council who wished to apply for funding from the Strathdearn Community Charitable Trust for the upgrading of the school grounds, including playground equipment, the creation of three gardens (sensory, wild-life and vegetable), outdoor seating and playground painting, all of which satisfied the outdoor aspects of the curriculum. The playground painting had already been completed and cycle training had taken place. Help was being sought for the funding of the playground equipment. The CC noted that the Parent Council had managed to raise an impressive £10,000 themselves, leaving a balance of £22,827.15, for which funding was being sought. The children had helped to choose the equipment, consisting of a tower assembly with slides and climbing wall; an adventure fitness trail; and seating. Following a full discussion in which members of the public participated, the following points were raised:- No VAT would be incurred if the equipment was bought by the Highland Council and sold on at cost. The question of maintenance had to be resolved. There had been no liaison between the providers of the new Hall Play Area equipment and the Parent Council. It was hoped the playgrounds would be complementary. After further discussion the CC approved the application in principle on the understanding that a final decision would be taken at the following meeting, before a final recommendation was made to the SCCT.

The Parent Council made a return visit to our August meeting where the Community Council, three Highland Councillors and 15 members of the public were given further information in the course of which they learned that the matter of VAT had been resolved (Duncan Hendry, our Community Development Worker, had helped bring this about); and the Parent Council expected a positive resolution to the question of maintenance of equipment and insurance. Plans of the proposed activity area were then presented to the meeting following which views were sought from members of the public present. The necessity of two play areas in the village was questioned, but following discussion it was accepted that the Parent Council had made the case that the school project would be complementary to the school curriculum, that activities would be supervised 100% of the time, the project would encourage play centred learning, and there would be accessibility for the children. It was also established that the play equipment proposed for the school was not the same, and therefore would not duplicate, the equipment already installed at the Hall.

The CC suggested that a letter be sent from the Parent Council to the Director of Education re: unmet need from the Highland Council, as this facility should have been provided when the school was built. It was also suggested that the position regarding insurance should also be put in writing to ensure that there was a clear record of this, in order that the organisation should not be left in a vulnerable position. Having considered all the facts in detail, the CC agreed to recommend to the Trust that this application be supported, subject to the above conditions being met. At the time of writing, the latest update received by the CC from the Parent Council at the beginning of October stated that things were progressing well. Someone had been appointed within Highland Council to co-ordinate things from their end and as a result it looked as if the Council will take up the ongoing maintenance and insurance themselves but the Parent Council was awaiting confirmation of this in writing. The garden area was to progress in October – and the Parent Council had attended the Gardening Club to gather advice on this – with the playground following. We wish the Parent Council well in their endeavours and hope the outstanding matters will soon be resolved and the SCCT enabled to fully act upon our recommendation.

Speeding Traffic in Tomatin:

This continues to be a problem – how **do** you make speeding socially unacceptable? In recent months we have had the person training our children in cycle proficiency horrified by the speed and standard of driving he saw in the village; and anecdotal reports of near misses and almost daily frights abound! So, once again, we appeal to motorists – think of other road users, especially children and cyclists – and **SLOW DOWN!**

30mph Repeater Signs at the Southern Access to Tomatin:

Highland Council has agreed to 30mph repeater signs on the unlit section of the 30mph zone, and we hope this will help remind motorists to keep their speed down!

“Smiley Faces” may help too. John Cameron-Mackintosh, our newly appointed Road Safety and Roads Contact Person is to meet soon with Councillor Pedersen and Les Houliker of TEC Services regarding the installation of Smiley Faces, possibly powered by wind or solar power to make them more easily movable.

Data Protection Act:

At our September meeting Councillor Crawford pointed out that the CC should be using a separate laptop computer for its business, and not the home computer of the Secretary. At present we are apparently breaking the law by not providing this and expecting our Secretary to use her own home computer. Breaking the law, that is, in the sense of breaking the law of the land – the Data Protection Act – an Act of Parliament – not Highland Council rules! CCs have no choice other than to comply with this – a potentially serious problem for some CCs, given that the cost of a laptop would eat up approximately half of a CC’s annual grant, leaving a scant amount to meet the costs of hiring halls for meetings, meeting secretarial and other expenses, etc. Were Strathdearn CC not able to apply for funding from the SCCT we would be in this position, and forced to fundraise. Given the amount of work coming our way these days (as borne out by the length of some recent meetings) it really is a blessing to be able to focus on the work in hand, without the distraction and extra work involved in fundraising – accepting, as always, that all applications to the SCCT received by the CC are considered in the public gaze, and in the full expectation that every penny asked for will be used to benefit the community of Strathdearn. A laptop for our extremely hard-working and committed secretary, who makes the journey from Daviot after a hard day’s work for each meeting – also keeping us on the right side of the law, Data Protection-wise – is community money well spent, given the impossibility of

recruiting a Secretary locally, and the splendid job Elspeth does in facilitating our administration. We would be lost without her and probably don't tell her often enough how much we appreciate all her hard work!

WRI Christmas Dinner for Senior Citizens:

At our October meeting we recommended approval of an application for funding from the WRI for a Christmas Dinner for Senior Citizens, and we hope all goes well with this.

Also in October, we asked Duncan Hendry to look at community transport options, possibly in conjunction with neighbouring Strathnairn to help those without transport to more easily access appointments, etc in Inverness, and Alex Eldridge of the Tomatin Inn came to talk about some necessary cost-cutting measures he is having to introduce at the Shop, including closing in the afternoons. The meeting was supportive of the Shop, the general consensus being that it would be a great loss, were it to close.

Ending on a happier note, just when we had almost run out of funds for the **Newsletter**, Gill MacLeod of the Tomatin Distillery very generously offered £500 in sponsorship! Their timing could not have been better and we are most grateful for this.

REPEAT PRESCRIPTIONS

This year Christmas Day and New Years Day fall on Thursdays, resulting in two four-day closures of GP surgeries. Every year NHS24 receives a large number of calls from patients who have run out of their medication and/or cannot find a local pharmacy open during the holiday period. This puts an extra workload on an already very busy service as well as being stressful for patients and their carers.

NHS24 has a national media campaign during the run-up to Christmas to encourage patients to make sure they have sufficient medication to last into January, but people still run out! There is particular concern when the holiday period involves weekends (like this year) because surgeries (and some pharmacies) are closed for a longer period of time. (For information, Boots Pharmacy in Eastgate Centre will be open every day except Christmas Day and New Years Day and other pharmacies will be open on a roster basis.)

During discussions at a recent NHS Highland meeting I was assured that most GP's are alert to the problem when issuing prescriptions to patients in December. However, patients themselves need to plan ahead, especially if they use the postal service to request repeat prescriptions. The advice is to request your repeat prescription well before Christmas to allow for postal delays and the 48 hours notice required by GP Practices to process requests. There will be very little time between the surgeries opening on 29 December and closing again on 31 December to get repeat prescriptions processed and sent out.

Concerns have been raised by some members of the community registered with the Aviemore Practice regarding difficulties obtaining repeat prescriptions, especially in wintry weather. You can post (or email) your request to the surgery and ask to collect from the pharmacy in Aviemore thus avoiding one journey south. The address is *Aviemore Medical Practice, Grampian Road, Aviemore PH22 1SY*. Alternatively the surgery will post your script to you if you enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope and medication can then be obtained from the most convenient pharmacy.

I am checking out a service offered by Boots whereby repeat prescriptions can be posted out. Controlled drugs and those requiring refrigeration cannot be sent through the post but most others can be. Patients register by completing a form (which I hope to have a supply of soon) and then simply post their signed script to the Boots despatch centre. If you would like further information please contact me on 511 351.

FOOTNOTE: NHS24 is working very hard to provide a first class service. As a member of the Public Partnership Forum Working Group I welcome any comments - good or bad - from anyone who has had cause to use the service, either in- or out-of-hours. Feedback is always very helpful and appreciated. Comments are treated in confidence and anonymously .

Pat Wells (NHS24/RCGP Patient Rep.)

District Nurse Serena Ferguson: telephone 07824 605644

From Dulnain Bridge to Nakom Nyah

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

The Rice Grinder

Shortly after we settled in the rifle range at Changi, I took a leading part in organising an Evening Club (I cannot remember exactly what we called it) to help pass the hours of darkness before 'lights out' time. Quizzes, spelling bees and such like alternated with volunteer talks on one's job, home countryside, city, holiday or other special interest and so on. Our secretary was Bill, the oldest man among us - a pleasant, intelligent Londoner who had held a good job in the paint trade before the war. Whenever the promise of a talk was volunteered or extracted by

persuasion from a member, Bill made a note of it and when he was sure the talk would be forthcoming, put it in his programme for a certain date a week or so ahead.

Arthur Hargreaves, a quiet spoken North of England chap, told us the story of “The Monkey’s Paw” which none of us had ever heard before. I thought it a faultless performance. Wee, short-sighted, bespectacled Stan Whittock spoke one evening for about two hours on his hobby, Atlantic Liners. He seemed to know the yard where built; tonnage; length; breadth; cost; launching date; ownership; flag; badge; colour; funnel type, etc etc of every steam propelled large ship that ever sailed that ocean. I had long forgotten the name of the boat I had first crossed to Canada in in 1929, but as Stan rhymed off all the Cunarders that were ever built, when he said “Anclania” I remembered, and somehow have never since forgotten it.

One day Vic Hipple said to me, “Come and see this, Mac.” In an out of the way corner lay part of a big lawnmower. “Do you think you and I could make a rice grinder out of that?” he asked. I was interested at once. “I’ll put it to the Colonel and see what he says,” he said. Colonel MacOstritch was Irish, and a regular. He was a very humorous, good sort, but showed plenty of temper when annoyed by anything. Vic must have managed to get some sort of consent to begin taking the old mower apart, but I can remember the Colonel remarking irritably to someone as he walked past us, “That damned old fool thinks he can make a rice grinder out of that!” He must have been several years older than Vic, who was then thirty-two. I was nearly thirty-three.

About a year before I was called up I conceived an idea for a turnip clipping machine and had spent a lot of time thinking out simple mechanical problems, some of them by geometric drawings on paper.

The roller of the lawnmower was in three sections each about a foot long and nine inches in diameter. Their surfaces had shallow, horizontal corrugations to grip the grass on sloping ground. I could see that if Roller B was positioned to rest on Roller C and Roller A to rest on Roller B, then if Roller C was revolved clockwise, B would revolve anti-clockwise and A above it, clockwise. A trickle of rice passed between A and B and then directed to pass between B and C would probably be well crushed between the corrugated surfaces. With some lengths of 4” x 3” timber we constructed two Capital A design frames five feet high with a spread of three feet. We fixed these on sills of the same material. We then stood the two frames facing each other fourteen inches apart, and joined them with cross pieces, leaving a clear space for the rollers. We then set the bottom, or driving, roller in position. Its axle passed through bearings set in holes bored in the horizontal bars of the A frames and had a hand crank fitted to one end. When you faced the side of the machine from which this crank projected the sloping arms of the As to your right were the ones which held the other two rollers in position. The short projecting axle ends of these rollers were set in slots chiselled out of the wood in such positions as to allow the middle roller to rest on and engage the bottom one, 7 o’clock to 1 o’clock, and to support and engage the top one 11 o’clock to 5 o’clock. The rice was directed to pass between the rollers by two tin chutes, the upper one being fed from a hopper with an adjustable opening (to follow 5 o’clock).

Nobody was now happier about the rice grinder than the Colonel and he seemed to regard Vic and me as near geniuses. He was trying to organise a band and commissioned Vic to make him a drum. In the meantime I carried on with further improvements to the rice grinder. I punched thousands of holes in a sheet of tin to make a sieve bottom. Tacked to a wooden frame this was hung on four swinging arms below the bottom roller, and was moved rapidly back and fore by a rod connected to a crank on the end of a spindle which had a small sprocket on its other end, chain driven by a large sprocket fixed onto the end of the bottom roller axle away from the hand crank. Still later I made a finer sieve and fixed it on to and below the first one. But it took a lot of time and effort to get any large quantity of crushed rice to pass through the bottom sieve.

The Colonel boasted about his rice grinder to all the senior officers, and had several of them in to inspect it. There was talk of ROAC personnel making drawings of it and using it as a model for similar machines. Vic and me spent half an hour several evenings per week operating it and thus got access to a little extra rice and odd titbits. Had it not been for our machine building effort, we may well have been sent away to work camps near the city where my old shipmate Robbie and many others landed, after a brief spell at Changi.

The cooks eventually gave up trying to make any kind of rice bread. They concluded that the best and easiest way of cooking rice was to accept and use it as it was. Our crushed rice was used only for making the morning pap, and even that was easily produced by watering and mashing up pre-boiled rice. The rice grinder ended up just an interesting curiosity.

STEP-IT-UP-HIGHLAND

This is just a short reminder that the group meets every Wednesday at 2:00PM usually at Strathdearn Hall. From here we walk a variety of lovely routes to help us stay healthy, but also to enjoy looking at the world around us, and to chat with friends as we go along. All are welcome! If you are interested, please contact Kathy or David Bonniface on (01808)511740, Carol James on 531220, or Lesley Smithers on 511217, or just turn up on the day.