

STRATHDEARN NEWSLETTER

February 2010

Volume 10, No 1.

In the bleak midwinter....

For the record, 2009 was a year to remember weatherwise. In February we had about 3ft of snow dumped on us that lay longer than usual, brought a lot of gutters down (notably the Hall in Tomatin) and kept many cars trapped on their driveways for over two weeks. We emerged from that thinking, goodness we haven't had that much snow for decades, must have been a one-off.

And then on 17th December it started all over again, but worse. Over the next few weeks something over 4ft of snow buried the area, settled down to two to three feet, and then it lay ...and lay... and lay! With a huge area of high pressure anchored over the north Atlantic, temperatures often dropped below minus 14 C and it was four weeks before even the beginnings of a slow thaw began. Christmas plans were scuppered, New Year celebrations muted, visits cancelled. Unusually, the problem was widespread, so services were stretched to their limits: the main road through Tomatin, being a bus route, was ploughed regularly but side roads were left longer, as the overstretched Highland Council struggled to keep up with the huge demands on its resources and workforce. As ever, Old Mill Road posed a particular problem for residents to traverse, whether on foot or by car. Keeping the beasts in the fields fed was even harder than usual. This was the worst snow event since the early 80's and unfortunately we've all got a bit complacent during the milder winters since then, so there were some shocks in store.....

All over Strathdearn roofs amassed a couple of feet of compacted snow and a foot or more of heavy water ice in the gutters that then brought its own problems: water running into houses, wallpaper peeling off or going mouldy, ceilings collapsing, conservatories and greenhouses smashed, vehicles and digital TV dishes damaged, slates broken and fascias ripped off. Once again all the carefully replaced wooden guards and metal gutters on the Hall crashed down - and brought a fair few slates with them this time - leaving access difficult for weeks. The good news is that no person nor any creature, as far as is known, was hurt by falling ice. And the Hall car park was cleared in time for the return of the Fish and Chip van mid-January (so that's all right then.....).

Several local gentlemen who owned mechanical diggers and snow-plough fittings did sterling work excavating those in difficulty, and there was much neighbourly digging and shopping done for more elderly residents. While one could argue that anyone who chooses to live in Strathdearn must be well aware of what to expect and prepared for the worst that the winter can throw at them, there were nevertheless instances of great fortitude shown, particularly by those left without the use of their car, and sometimes without heating oil, for weeks. The Shop was a lifeline, keeping open and stocked regardless, and many blessings must have been called on the heads of Angus and Tanya Macleod and their sales staff.

While this has been written in the past tense, it should not be inferred that the wintry problems are now over. The 4ft dump has slowly reduced to about 6 inches by the time of writing (29th January) but in terms of normal winter weather we haven't reached what's usually the worst time for snowfall and now the snow is falling again. But the days are getting longer and Spring is just round the corner (well OK, a few corners), so hang in there!

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

Needlecraft

Contact: Mrs Chris West 511412

3rd Monday of Month

7.30pm Findhorn Room
Strathdearn Hall,

Gardening Club

Contact: Mr Alex Don 511729

Every Wednesday

10.30am Findhorn Room,
Strathdearn Hall,

Community Coffee Morning

All Welcome

Every Wednesday

2pm Strathdearn Hall

Walking Group

Contact: Mrs Kathy Bonniface 511740

Every Thursday

11am – 12noon Tomatin Inn

Coffee Morning

All welcome

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

Every Friday

10.30am Findhorn Room
Strathdearn Hall

Exercise to Music group

Contact: Mrs Denise Barley 511733

(During Term-Time)

Fridays 12.15 – 2.15pm

Strathdearn Hall

Croileagan Tom Aitinn

(Tomatin Gaelic Playgroup)

Contact: Mrs Rosemary Dempster 531215

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: Trish (511486)

Beaver Scout Colony

For boys and girls aged 6-8.

Contact: Ruth Mantle 511287

ART IN STRATHDEARN

After the recent bad weather the art club has reconvened at the Strathdearn Hall and we welcome a new member, Bob Wilson, to our group. We look forward to a productive year for the club in 2010. Very many thanks to Val for the excellent Christmas lunch she provided for us. We and our guests enjoyed it very much and had a lovely time!

The Wednesday evening sessions that we launched in November did not attract any new members so they have been discontinued, and the Club continues to meet on Thursday afternoons from 1.30pm.

WRI Spring Programme

**March 1st : "Art" by Geoff Buttress
(Carrbridge Studio)**

Competition: a knitted toy

April 5th : The Nairn Spinners

**Competition: Easter Card in any
medium**

All welcome!

TOMATIN & DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB

Meetings in the Strathdearn Hall at 7.30pm. New members welcome.

15th Feb AGM and arranging Flower Show
Schedule
15th March tba
19th April Mr Alistair Dowling, talking on roses.

Contacts: Sheila Don 01808 511729 / Kathy
Bonniface 01808 511740

2010 Flower Show – Advanced Notice!

This year the show will be held on Saturday 4th September.
Full details will be appear in the May Newsletter, with schedules and rules available from the shop and committee members from the beginning of June.

Step It Up Highland

Walking since Christmas has been rather more difficult than usual: a plodding knees up through thick snow typified by Wednesday Step It Up walks for a week or two! However on cold, sunny days we have been able to appreciate the beauty of our white world, even if our noses are freezing. We have confined ourselves to walking on lanes for the most part, but soon hope to be back onto the paths and tracks.

It is very encouraging that we have had some newcomers join us, but it would be good to welcome even more. Just remember that if you would enjoy the exercise and company on a Wednesday afternoon, just let Kathy or David know on 01808 511740, or Carol on 01808 531220.

PS – to the person who left a message on our phone before Christmas – please try again as we couldn't quite catch your name and phone number.

CAROL SINGING

The carol singing group that braved the snow and wind just before Christmas to cheer your doorsteps raised £100 for the Inverness churches' Help the Homeless project, which is still running and has no doubt been particularly appreciated during this unusually bad winter.

Natural History Club

2009 was our third full year as a properly constituted club and has continued successful in its aims of being both enjoyable and adding to our knowledge of local flora, fauna and landscapes and their underlying geology.

Highlights included otters at Aigas, a talk on the wildlife garden and logging wildlife with our own Spring, Autumn and Winter Watches.

We will be visiting Aigas again in May, hopefully to see pine marten.

NEXT DATE:

Thursday April 22 7.30pm

Strathdearn Hall -

Moths with Tom Prescott

David Bonniface – secretary.

STRATHDEARN HARDSHIP FUND

It has been a difficult winter, and if you are struggling to cope financially, the hardship fund may be able to help out.

Those in genuine financial hardship can contact Vivian Roden on 511355 or vroden@btinternet.com to discuss making an application, which would be means tested and treated in confidence.

BETTY'S RECIPES

Eat more fish and beat the winter blues!

SALMON WITH PESTO CRUST

1lb salmon fillet

Lemon juice

3 slices bread (rustless)

3tbsp pesto

Pour lemon juice over fish and season with black pepper

Heat 2tbspolive oil in frying pan and put salmon skin side down in pan

Cover and cook 8 mins

Process crumbs and pesto and spoon over fish

Place under grill to crisp

TROUT OR HERRING IN OATMEAL

Dip fillets in oatmeal and season. Fry quickly in hot oil for 3 mins each side

Namibia Sept - Nov 2009

They call it Africa's harshest paradise; four times the size of Great Britain. Less than two million people. Home to more deserts than cities. Dry and flat, impossibly flat. It's a part of the world where you can travel over 15km without a single bend in the road.

After some typical last minute packing and lots of goodbyes, I left Scotland on the 2nd September to go and live in Namibia for a year. I am volunteering at Gqaina Primary School, situated in the East and one hour drive from any form of major settlement. My role is to promote the use of the English language through all the avenues known to me, to set the kids up for a decent shot at life and to help them realise that there is world beyond their deprived lives.

There are many things that I could list that differ on this side of the world to the side of the world I was brought up in. Sand is not just next to the sea, sand is everywhere. If you want to wake up in a pleasant mood, you sleep under a mosquito net every night. Instead of seeing sheep by the side of the road, you see baboons. Unfortunately, football is called soccer and here, people say good things about the man who leads their country. Add to all this the lives in which some young children find themselves in and the contrast is about as big as Fish River Canyon. Several years ago the school was welcoming 6 year-olds at the beginning of their primary education who had not yet experienced the most basic of pleasures such as a pencil, a chair, or even a toilet.

When a class of thirty 9year-olds was asked if either of their mothers or fathers were dead, half the class raised their hand.

Most of the children can carry their entire belongings in a plastic carrier bag, while wearing nothing but a pair of old, muddy shorts and a torn T-shirt two sizes too small.

There is a 9 year-old girl attending Gqaina who, several months ago, was abandoned during the night in her own home, by her own parents and siblings. She woke up the next morning to find herself without a family.

Whilst on a school trip to a discipline camp, two of the older boys began fighting over a belt. This resulted in one of the boys taking a large knife from his pocket and stabbing his classmate in the side of the leg.

These are just a few of the 'normal' occurrences that, certainly in some areas, leave the continent of Africa falling far behind the western world. But what I still find remarkable, almost ridiculous, is the fact the children are taught that they lead lucky lives. They are told they should be grateful for the access they have to clean water and education they receive each day. It is explained to them that some people on this continent are unable to stay alive due to their limited resources.

Despite all the hardship and lack of privileges I am overwhelmed by the positive environment in which I am surrounded. Having so little means everyone makes the most out of what they are given. Hours can be spent playing games made out of sticks, stones and the earth, footballs are created rolling carrier bags inside carrier bags until they are big enough to play with . . . who needs Adidas?! Before living here I used to dispose of my fairly sizable apple cores in the bin, never again, here that is a sin - it's edible.

At the end of my first three months in Namibia I have learned many things that I might never have discovered had I not chosen to take a gap year with Project Trust. As well as many other important truths, I have discovered that no matter who you are or where you come from, a person can take a massive sense of satisfaction from helping those who have landed in less fortunate circumstances.

Thank you to everyone who played a part in getting me here! I'm loving every minute and doing incredibly worthwhile work.

Fraser Manson

FISHING ON THE FINDHORN

The end of September can be a prime time of year for the upper reaches of the Findhorn, with good water and plenty of fish to be caught!

After a frustrating start to my ten days with very little water and few fish showing, I walked down to my favourite pool. It was a fine sunny day and I was keen to get my two friends their first fish. We spent an hour there with no activity but suddenly my heart missed a beat as my line tightened and a decent sized fish started to take line.

As my two friends joined me, I asked for the net to be ready to get the fish in quickly, but it had other ideas. For the next hour and forty-five minutes we ran up and down stream, being watched by three carloads of people, until we finally managed to net the fish. With the mangled Orange Ally Shrimp removed, the Paparazzi above took a few quick photos before the 19 lb cock fish was returned and swam back into the stream.

A hugely exciting time for me but not the result I wanted for my friends!

Alexander Leschalles

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONDOLENCES:

We are sorry to note the passing of:

Mrs Margaret MacDonald, just before Christmas, who had moved to the Highlands to be with daughter Lesley and son-in-law Ian at Fraoch, Station Road some years ago.

Ian MacKenzie, formerly of 14 Distillery Cottages where he was brought up with brother Douglas by his parents, the late JD and Mrs Sadie MacKenzie, before marrying and settling in Edinburgh with his family.

Mrs Jean Clarke (nee Duncan) of Grantown-on-Spey, who was brought up at Milton of Moy. Jean left Moy in the 1970s but is still remembered for her kindly nature and winning smile.

Our thoughts are with all their families and friends.

BIRTH CONGRATULATIONS TO:

David and Annalise Cameron-Mackintosh on the birth of their daughter, Anna Catherine.

And to new grandparents **Philip and Emma MacKenzie, Glenkyllachy** who gained no less than three grandchildren in one week - eldest daughter Lucy giving birth to a daughter on Christmas Eve, and her sister Sabrina to twins on Hogmanay!

Our best wishes go to all these babies and their families.

WEDDING CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Karen MacRae and Ali Cameron-Mackintosh who were married at the Free Church (Continuing) on 20th November.

Andrew Purves (son of Ian & Lesley Purves) married Jacki Ferguson on 25th December

Martin Crummy is to marry Gillian Smilie on April 23rd 2010 in Dunfermline where they both live.

We wish them all every happiness.

THANK YOU:

To the WRI for the delicious lunch which they organised for the Senior Citizens at Christmas-time. It was enjoyed by all!

To the volunteers from Tomatin who have been going into Inverness on various evenings during the past two months to cook a hot meal for the homeless at different locations. They should indeed be praised for their good works.

To the Strathdearn Hall Committee and Duncan Hendry, Community Development Worker, for securing £35,000 towards the construction of a new multi-use sports facility from Leader, a European grants programme specifically designed to promote economic and community development in rural areas. The new sports facility will make a big difference to our isolated community and is a key project the local community wished to see happen.

Mrs Susan Mackintosh-Grant wishes to thank everyone who kept an eye on her during the frosty and snowy weeks after Christmas. You were all so kind and thoughtful in so many ways. Thank you all.

Mrs Lesley Purves would like to thank everyone for the kind words, cards and gifts of flowers and home baking after her mother, Margaret McDonald's death on 17th December 2009.

Thanks to all who battled through the bad weather to get to the funeral parlour!

Can I also thank Rev Reg Campbell for conducting the funeral service and Tomatin Inn for supplying very welcome soup and sandwiches afterwards.

THANKS TO TOMATIN SHOP

May I express my sincere thanks to the MacLeod family and staff for managing to keep the shop open and for the unfailing supply of milk, bread, papers and all necessities during the worst storm in years. It was very much appreciated! **Betty Watson.**

STRATHDEARN COMMUNITY COUNCIL NEWS

The first meeting of the New Year on 19th January had to be cancelled because the entrance to the village hall was blocked by a fall of snow and ice with accompanying broken fascia boards from the roof – and also because the car park was reduced in size and very icy!

Our November and December meetings had, as usual, been well attended by members of the public, and a variety of issues were discussed.

The November meeting saw the co-option of Gavin Edward to the CC. We're glad to welcome Gavin, but sad to see Andy Brown go, due to a new posting to the Scottish Police College at Tuli Allan. We wish him well in his new post.

At the same meeting we were pleased to hear from PC Munro that statistics showed that Strathdearn was the most crime free area in his beat. Long may that continue! Speeding traffic in Tomatin, however, continues to give concern. We hope that the "Smiley Face" now in situ at the Hall will help with this. It can be swapped between the Hall and a location to the north near the school in the future.

Strathdearn Community Council also played their part in Tomatin Estate's Community Consultation on their development plans, putting forward a Sports Field with adequate parking and asking for consideration to be given to safe access as our preferred option for planning gain.

Chris Cairns is presently carrying out survey work for our Paths Project and will be making a presentation when this is finished at either the February or March CC Meeting.

And we are starting to look at whether or not we wish to consider the implementation of a new Community Plan, since the current Strathdearn Community Plan is now 4 years old. Ideas and potential options are to be brought to our next meeting on Tuesday 16th February at 7.30 pm in the Strathdearn Hall. All welcome!

Tom nan Clach Windfarm

Photographs showing the impact of the proposed Tom nan Clach windfarm from various view points around Tomatin and Lochindorb are available for inspection in the Tomatin Country Store.

Dunmaglass Wind Farm

On the 26th of March in the main committee chambers in Glenurquhart Road, Inverness the Highland Council is holding a public hearing on the proposal to site a 33 turbine windfarm on Dunmaglass (near the Upper Findhorn on the high ground between Coignafearn and Strathnairn). The site is not in Strathdearn but is considered sufficiently close to have an impact on community interests and the Strathdearn Community Council has lodged an objection to this application.

SCOTTISH BOWEL SCREENING PROGRAMME

NHS Highland has written to the CC advising that men and women aged 50 – 74 years will be invited to participate in the Programme through completing a home test kit every two years. The Scottish Bowel Screening Centre in Dundee will post test kits, with instructions, to people's home addresses. Test kits should be completed at home and returned to the Screening Centre in a pre-paid envelope. It has been estimated that screening programmes can reduce deaths from bowel cancer by approximately 16%. Additional information about the Scottish Bowel Screening Programme is available on the internet at www.bowelscreening.scot.nhs.uk

STRATHDEARN DISTRICT NURSE: SERENA FERGUSON 07824 605644

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 511246.

The Guild:

Meets in Tomatin Church at 7.30pm on the second Wednesday of the month between September and April inclusive to hear some interesting talks and enjoy a time of fellowship. Further details from Mrs Sheila Don 01808 511729.

Breakfast Club:

Join us for breakfast (healthy options available!) in the Strathdearn Hall on the last two Mondays of February, March and April, beginning at 9.30 am. Stay for a discussion of a Bible passage, and a time of praise and prayer. Further information from Vivian 01808 511355.

Services (all at 10.30 am unless stated otherwise) Please Note: the recent wintry weather has disrupted some of our Services which have had to be moved to Tomatin. If in doubt, please phone to see where the Service is to be held.

February and March:

1st Sunday of the month: Dalarossie Church
2nd Sunday of the month: Family Service in the Strathdearn Hall with Tea
3rd Sunday of the month: Moy Church.
(and 5th Sunday):
4th Sunday of the month: Tomatin Church

April and May:

1st & 3rd Sundays: Dalarossie Church
2nd Sunday: Family Service in the Strathdearn Hall with Tea.
4th Sunday: Moy Church
(5th Sunday) Tomatin Church

Special Services and Events:

Friday 5th March: WORLD DAY OF PRAYER SERVICE
Tomatin Church at 7.30 pm

Thursday 1st April: MAUNDY THURSDAY INFORMAL COMMUNION SERVICE
Strathdearn Hall at 7.30 pm

Friday 2nd April: JOINT GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE
Daviot Church at 7 pm

Summer 2010: "COUNT ME IN!" STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMME
As part of our Stewardship Programme,
Moy, Dalarossie & Tomatin Church will be staging
an Exhibition of the work of the Church in the Hall
and serving Cream Teas to the public.
Dates and further details in the next edition of the
"Strathdearn Newsletter!"

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

TOMATIN DISTILLERY NEWS

Retirement: Alistair Sutherland will retire from Tomatin Distillery Company Ltd. on 29th January after 10 years working in the Warehouse/Filling Store. A gathering of Management and Staff on Friday 22nd January, presented Alistair with a parting gift, and bouquet of flowers for his wife Margaret with a fond farewell from all. We all wish Alistair a happy and healthy retirement.

Congratulations to Tomatin Distillery Golf Team for winning the Association of British Maltsters Cup at the end of season last year. The team consisted of Charlie Edward, Kevin Taylor and Alan Watson. Alan Watson also won the ABM Handicap Shield in the same competition.

Runners up in the Malt Distillers Association Golf League to Glenrothes were Tomatin Distillery. The team consisted of Charlie Edward, Richard Nixon, Martin Hendry, Steve Thomas, Alan Watson and Kevin Taylor. Well done boys, better luck this year. (Or better golf this year)

THE TOMATIN DISTILLERY VISITOR CENTRE & GIFT SHOP

Open 7 days per week from Easter (3rd/4th April)

Shop Opening Time Monday to Saturday 10.00a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Shop Sunday Opening: 12.00p.m. to 4.30p.m. (No Tours at Weekends)

Public Tours: £3 per person Private Tours with Tastings : £30 per person

For information please phone Marie MacLeod on : 01463 248144

HIGHLAND FOOD BANK

The Highland Food Bank (part of the work of Blythswood Care) works in collaboration with partner agencies (both statutory and voluntary organisations) who refer clients who for various reasons are facing financial crisis and are unable to buy food for themselves. These clients are either given a voucher which they can bring to the Food Bank Centre in Inverness (open 12 noon - 2 pm Tuesday - Friday) to exchange for non-perishable food items, or (if they live outside Inverness or are facing a crisis on a day when the Centre is not open) they are provided with an 'Emergency Food Box'.

Each client receives for themselves and for their family (where appropriate) a three day supply of food together with suggested nutritious recipes to help them make the best use of the food. The intention is that this three day period should provide the client a 'breathing space' enabling them to find help to put their finances on a more stable basis. However, it is recognised that some clients may require further vouchers and each client is limited to a maximum of three vouchers within a given space of time.

During 2008 the Highland Food Bank helped nearly a thousand more people than in 2007. The most common causes of their financial difficulties were delays in payment of benefits (36%), homelessness (18%), low income (16%) and debt (7%). And the current recession has meant that this year many more people are needing their help. Already in 2009 2,588 people have received food - an increase of 49% over the same period last year.

The Highland Food Bank depends on donations of food via collections at churches and supermarkets. Moy, Dalarossie & Tomatin Church supports the Food Bank and collects donations of food at the Family Services held in the Strathdearn Hall on the second Sunday of each month at 10.30 am. Anyone wishing to donate food (from the list of food items listed below) - please contact Vivian (511355), Sandra (511246), Michelle (511411) or Jackie (511325).

Items Requested by the Highland Food Bank

Breakfast Cereal; 500g/1kg Packets of Pasta; 500g/1kg Packets of Rice; Tinned Potatoes; Oatcakes/Crackers; Tinned Vegetables; Tinned Tomatoes; Tinned Fruit; Long Life Fruit Juice; Tinned Ham/Corned Beef; Tinned Creamed Soup; Tinned Soup; Tinned Tuna/Salmon; Tinned Mince/Stew; UHT Whole Milk; Tinned Custard/Rice; Teabags/Coffee; Sugar.

**Best Wishes from a wee peninsula which happens to
be in Wales!!
(Apologies to Bill Bryson!!)**

First of all I would like thank all my friends in Tomatin for all their kind thoughts, wishes and their generosity in giving me such a lovely bouquet of flowers and the gift from M & S. I really appreciated them both and I feel very humbled that I have such good friends. I am much better now, more like my old self. For those that don't know, I had a wee stroke in November – luckily in the cerebellum so that some co-ordination was affected but not main speech or movement. I sound a little slurred when I am tired and a wee bit of hand to eye co-ordination is lacking, although I am pleased to say that I am hand quilting again!! With Martin's wedding in April, and with a part-finished wedding quilt it was a little worry for a while. I also tried some quilting this afternoon and am pleased with the result.

Anyway, I gather you have been having some snow up there in Tomatin! I even made a snowman here on the Wednesday, took a photo, and it was gone by the Sunday – only his carrot mouth, coal eyes, very wet scarf and his sorry looking hat remained! The rest of the folk down here blame me as they haven't had snow like it since 1982 and I must have brought it down to make me feel at home! We are having a Burn's Supper in our house, with proper Charlie Barley's haggis and cock a leekie soup! Of the 14 of us, only Nick and I are true Scots but Mike is nearly one and is addressing the Haggis and also doing Tam o' Shanter. I am doing the Immortal Memory and we have two of the guests lined up for the toasts. It should be a good night with plenty of good company and plenty of good Scotch on the go.

I am also giving a talk to the Abersoch Ladies Luncheon Club on the 29th January and my topic is "A Taste of some Scottish Islands". It is the first power point presentation I have given and the problem has been to cut down on the number of pictures I want to include! They might expect some whisky, but it is a dry talk! It starts with Ailsa Craig and finishes with Shetland, mostly with the SOC, some like Handa with friends, one with the Botany group and the rest on our yacht Annabella. It does not include the Outer Hebrides where Mike and I met and lived for 12 years before coming to Tomatin. That is another talk if they want it next year!

Now to Nature! Yes there is a big difference in the weather down here – a lot warmer! However the garden birds remain mostly the same – all the tits including long tailed, green finches, chaffinches, dunnocks, robin, blackbirds, collar doves and of course herring gulls and magpies! I go to Mike's cousin in the next village for my fill of nuthatch – even on the feeders. I am sorry to say I don't have them in my garden but they need big trees close by. Also, my two cats have become very good hunters, or at least one has, and the numbers

of garden birds have dwindled. So much for indoor cats!!

However the plus side is that I watch a pair of buzzards from the now finished attic conversion, and the jackdaws and the gathering flocks of starling swirling around just before they roost for the cold winter nights. They roost communally, partly for warmth, partly for protection in numbers and partly so that they pass on the best places to forage the next day.

Janet Crummy

SNOWBOUND BLUES

Snow used to come in blizzards,
Sweeping low and drifting high.
But now it's dumped upon us
In a suffocating way.

It's dumped upon our rooftops.
It's dumped upon our trees.
It fills the open countryside.
It reaches to our knees.

Now the powers-that-be in Inverness
make only two proposals –
to please the inter-city folk
and aggravate the locals.

Go out and plough the A9
and scrape that highway bare.
But leave the snow on side roads
a foot above the tar.

Sprinkle on a little salt
to make a slippery slush.
And never mind the footpaths –
they are just for summer use.

If Councils cannot clear the snow
the remedy is simple.
Please hire some idle local plant
to help the stranded people.

Donald MacAskill

[I'll second that – Ed]

Strathdearn Primary : After-school Art Club

The art club, which ran from 2008, was suspended due to it being a victim of its own success! It was grossly over-subscribed (28 children) to the point of being impracticable.

Happily, it was started up again early November 2009 but with various changes. A limit of 12 budding artists covering years P1 to P7 were democratically drawn from the interested children, with the unsuccessful ones being promised a place in the next phase, due to start within the next few weeks.

The other major change was the able assistance of Pam Hardwick, to add her expertise to the activities, variety and creativity within the club. Hilary and Sebastian, both from P7, help us with a lot of the preparation work.

The pre-Christmas sessions had the members involved in producing scenery and props for the school concert, which was for reasons well known, postponed until Easter !

Since the turn of the year, we have given the children a challenge of learning some serious watercolour techniques. As we have now managed some community funding, the children are experiencing using artist quality brushes, watercolour paper and paints. It is still early days, but the results from such young people are most encouraging...with lots of enthusiasm and originality. Each child is concentrating on producing a watercolour landscape worthy of a signature and a frame!

If this continues, we hope to expand their artistic talents into serious work in other media.

2010 Village Art Exhibition and Flower Show ... Watch this space !!!

Stan Beaumont

Tomatin Country Store

As we are fast approaching being open one year, all of us at the Tomatin Country Store would like to thank you for your continual support since our opening back in April of last year. Having the level of support we have has given us great pleasure as we have been able to see the shop develop with new ranges being introduced every month. From day one we have encouraged, and will continue to encourage, our customers to offer suggestions of products and ranges they think we should stock. We have striven to keep our prices as low as possible to remain competitive with the supermarkets and we will endeavour to continue to do this. Please don't hesitate to use our A&I Quality Butchers meat orders service whereby orders must be in by 1pm on Wednesday ready for collection after 11am on Thursday – perfect timing as Harry Gow still continues to bring his delicious cakes and bread to us every Thursday morning. We look forward to seeing you in the shop in the near future.

Tel: 01808 511 283

TOMATIN COUNTRY INN

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the locals for giving us such a warm welcome back. Since taking over in October of last year, we have had tremendous support and we have been delighted to see the great turnouts at our Hallowe'en, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve parties despite the weather over Christmas and New Year. We are still offering our takeaway menu – copies of are available from both the Tomatin Country Inn and from the Tomatin Country Store. Although we have added on the price increase of food due to the rise in VAT from 1st January, we are holding off any price increases on alcohol until nearer the Budget when we will adjust the prices to take into account all recent rises.

A big thank you to all the staff and customers.

Tel: 01808 511 291

WINDFARM UPDATE

Corriegarth - The proposed 20-turbine Corriegarth development near Gorthleck was approved by the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (INBS) Planning Committee on 19 January.

Dunmaglass - The 33-turbine proposal on Dunmaglass Estate in the heart of the Monadhliath hills will be considered by the INBS Planning Committee at the Highland Council Chambers at 10.00am on 26 March. Strathdearn Community Council and Strathdearn Against Windfarm Developments (SAWD) objected to the proposed development, which will impact visually and environmentally on Coignafearn and surrounding estates. This is a Section 36 application because the proposed installed capacity is greater than 50 MW and therefore the final decision lies with Scottish Ministers. Highland Council is a statutory consultee and if the INBS Planning Committee recommends refusal it will trigger a Public Inquiry.

Tom nan Clach - The developer's original Scoping Report referred to a 50-turbine development. The current application is for 17 turbines and therefore falls under the threshold for a Section 36 application. Consequently Highland Council will be the determining authority. A second Addendum was published in November 2009 to provide some of the information omitted in the original Environmental Statement and the first Addendum. In addition Highland Council has required the developer (Infinergy Ltd.) to provide new visualisations which comply with the standards set out in the Council's Scoping Opinion. These can be viewed at Highland Council's Planning Dept. The Community Council and SAWD have copies available locally. Highland Council has agreed that visualisations will be provided showing the cumulative impact of the proposed Glenkirk and Tom nan Clach windfarms but these "visuals" have not been completed yet. The Environmental Statement for the proposed development was re-advertised in the Inverness Courier on 22 January and the final date for timeous submissions to Highland Council is 22 February 2010. Strathdearn Community Council and SAWD have both objected to the Tom nan Clach application.

Glenkirk - The developer, Eurus Energy UK Ltd. has now been required to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed access route via Invereen. This route involves construction of a raised road across the

river floodplain and a bridge over the Findhorn. In its original Scoping Report supplied to Highland Council Eurus stated "The Balvraid Road will be used for the construction of the south abutment (of the new bridge over the Findhorn)". The developer conceded that no EIA had been carried out but it was estimated there would be 1,900 vehicle movements over a four-week period, mainly carrying aggregate to build an access road from Edinchat to the south abutment site. (Currently there is a 7.5 tonne weight limit on the Edinchat bridge.)

In November 2007 Eurus changed its plan and advised Highland Council that the new bridge over the Findhorn would be built entirely from the Invereen side of the river. However, in its most recent Scoping Report to Highland Council the original plan to use the Edinchat route has been resurrected. The lorries will travel from the A9(T) through the village, across the river and turn left onto the Balvraid Road half way up Drumbain Brae. The recent Scoping Opinion issued by Highland Council requests clarification and requires impact assessments for this proposed route. A third Addendum (addressing omissions in previous documentation in support of the windfarm application) is now expected, together with an Environmental Statement to support the Invereen access route and use of the village and Balvraid roads. Strathdearn Community Council objected to the original Section 36 application and the Section 34 Planning Application for the Invereen access route and SAWD has submitted numerous objections during the past four years.

Moy Hill - Preliminary scoping is underway for a 50-turbine windfarm proposal on Moy Estate and a final Scoping Opinion is expected shortly. This will be a Section 36 application determined by ministers and Highland Council will be one of the statutory consultees.

Further information from Pat Wells tel. 01808 511351

Lessons learned

During the recent 'big freeze' I had some time to consider my approach on how best to tackle the conditions.

Getting Around!

After snow in early 2009 I ordered a pair of snow chains and a pair of 'snow socks' for the car. I was impressed with both until the snow got so deep that the car 'bellied out'. Apparently snow tyres provide 51% more pull in snow and 28% more pull on ice than regular tyres. However tyre chains provide 300% times more pull in snow and 600% times more pull on ice and can cut your stopping distance in half but they have to fit properly. Snow socks are much more simple to put on and take off but they make a huge difference. I will be using them both again.

Working that shovel!

Like many people I shovelled plenty snow. The bad news is that the number of fatal heart attacks among snow shovellers apparently increases after a heavy snowfall. Snow shovelling increases heart rate and blood pressure. In fact, one study showed that after only a couple of minutes of shovelling, sedentary men's heart rates rose to levels higher than those normally recommended during aerobic exercise. I am going to investigate snow blowers before next winter.

Discovering ice dams!

Like me, many people had a build up of ice in their gutters and discovered the phenomenon known as ice dams. Ice dams arise from a complex interaction between the heat loss from a house, snow cover, and outside temperatures.

For ice dams to form there must be snow on the roof, and, at the same time, higher parts of the roof must be above 0° C (often where the chimney is) while lower parts are below 0°C. For a portion of the roof to be below 0°C, outside temperatures must also be below 0°C. The snow on the higher surface raised above 0°C from heat within the house melts. As water flows down the roof it reaches the portion of the roof that is below 0°C and freezes. Voila!—an ice dam.

The dam grows as it is fed by the melting snow above it, but it will limit itself to the portions of the roof that are on the average below 0°C. So the water above backs up behind the ice dam and

remains a liquid. This water finds cracks and openings in the exterior roof covering and flows into the attic space. From the attic it could flow into exterior walls or through the ceiling.

I am still wondering how I can solve this issue, although perhaps it might not occur again for another 30 years.

Duncan Bryden

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.

Editor: Mrs Denise Barley, Lauriston, Tomatin, IV13 7YN.

Tel. 01808 511733 e-mail
Barley@btinternet.com

Printing: Mrs D.Barley & Mrs D.Usborne
Distribution: Mrs S. Mackintosh-Grant

Strathdearn Community Charitable Trust

At our last meeting the members of the Trust took the opportunity to review the list of those who have benefited from a grant since June 2006. The list is reproduced here for your interest, together with one of grants pending.

As you will see the Trust has supported many local projects and initiatives, and has facilitated the opening of several new groups in the village. However it was noted that relatively little funding has been directed towards the more mature members of our community. The Trust would like to promote applications from adult groups and individuals so that it can support all sections of the community. For example would there be an appetite (!) for an occasional lunch club with the meal being provided by outside caterers, or would vouchers for pensioners which could be used at the visiting fish and chip van or coal man be appreciated?

The Trust members would be happy to discuss this with you, and we can help with the completion of the application form; all discussions will be treated confidentially. Contact: Penny Sutherland 01808 511327, 3 Forestry Cottages, Moy, Inverness-shire, IV13 7YQ

STRATHDEARN COMMUNITY CHARITABLE TRUST

Grants Pending

	£
Sports pitch	40,000.00
Speed limiter sign	6,000.00
School playground equipment	22,827.15
Safe paths survey	760.00
Traditional Music classes	200.00
Strathdearn Hall for roof repairs	761.00
Strathdearn primary School for computers	10,404.00
	<hr/>
Grants pending at January 2010	<u><u>80,952.15</u></u>
Total grants paid and pending at January 2010	<u><u>179,813.57</u></u>

STRATHDEARN COMMUNITY CHARITABLE TRUST

Grants Awarded

			£
2006	June	Coffee maker for Strathdearn Hall	159.99
		Link Overseas Exchange (John Hodgson)	800.00
		Marie Curie Cancer Care (Christine Smith)	511.00
	July	Heaters for Sports Hall	2,559.15
	August	Strathdearn Primary School (cricket trip)	342.00
		Blythswood Care (Alex MacQueen)	251.30
	October	Strathdearn Youth Group	2,000.00
		Photocopier for Community Council	3,932.00
	November	Strathdearn Natural History Club	200.00
2007	March	Strathnairn Farmers Association	2,000.00
	April	1st Strathdearn Rainbow & Brownies	1,500.00
		Tomatin notice board	834.25
	May	Baden-Powell Challenge (E Cameron & L Sutherland)	190.00
	July	Tomatin Sheepdog Society	1,000.00
	August	Planning permission for Sports Pitch	1,160.00
	November	Remembrance Day Wreath	22.50
		Architect re Youth Facilities	4,406.25
		Strathdearn Primary School (transport grant)	7,000.00
	December	Data projector for Moy, Dalarossie & Tomatin Church	475.00
2008	May	Blythswood Care (Fraser Manson)	250.00
	June	Strathdearn Youth Group	2,000.00
		Strathnairn Farmers Association	1,000.00
		Gaelic Playgroup	1,080.00
	July	Tomatin Football Clubs	4,230.00
	September	Community notice boards	1,797.75
		Children's play area	36,044.00
	October	Repair of mobility scooter	205.00
		Tomatin WRI (senior citizens' Christmas lunch)	430.00
		Laptop for Community Council	450.00
	December	Remembrance Day Wreath	21.00
		Traditional Music Classes	200.00
		Community contribution to local shop	260.00
2009	January	Strathdearn Primary School (transport grant)	8,000.00
		Community contribution to local shop	260.00
	May	Architect re Sports Pitch	2,328.74
		Architect re new hall feasibility	1,317.49
		Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme (4 x £120)	480.00
		Project Trust (Fraser Manson)	1,000.00
	June	Art in Strathdearn	600.00
	August	Strathnairn Farmers Association	1,000.00
	September	Strathdearn Primary School (transport grant)	4,200.00
	November	Tomatin WRI (senior citizens' Christmas lunch)	700.00
		Remembrance Day Wreath	22.00
		Strathdearn Beavers	1,092.00
	December	Strathdearn Primary School After School Art Club	550.00

Grants paid out to January 2010

98,861.42