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Editorial

Welcome to the 2020 Christmas edition of Update...the 4th such edition. The first one in Dec. 2017 included:

- A report back by the village hall working group on discussions with Church of Scotland reps
- Plans to start an arts and crafts group
- Preparation of the Scottish Water Community Garden ground for planting
- Report on the success of the Auction of Promises.

The next issue of Update will come out in March 2021 – coinciding, we hope with a successful vaccine programme, and a lifting of some of the current restrictions on social gatherings!

LOCHGAIR LIGHTS UP FOR CHRISTMAS

Anyone driving through the village this month at dusk will enjoy the festive decorations displayed in gardens and windows of Lochgair ...a big welcome from Santa as you enter from Lochgilphead (thanks Alison and Dave)...the lights above the entrance gate to Lochgair hall (thanks Fred and Jean)... the beautiful star on the gable of Cherry Trees as you head towards Minard.

Walking after dark to the castle your route is lit by all the window displays, the Christmas tree at Lochside, the fairy lights on planters and at the footbridge....the Christmas tree at the bench (see extract below from the diary at the bench).

Further festive delights are in store if you walk through Upper Lochgair as far as Knock Farmhouse and Knock Steading .



December 2020

Week 50

8 Tuesday M.G. 2.15
(343 - 23)
Thanks to the
① Christmas elf for
decorating the tree
again. Looks lovely

This a first for Lochgair — promoting an eco-friendly approach to sending greetings at Christmas to friends and neighbours in the village (with illustrations from a selection of photos submitted as part of the Lockdown Creative Activities Project)



Festive Greetings to one and all! Jan & Dave



"A Very Happy Christmas and a Good New Year, let's hope things will be back to normal in 2021 and we can all meet up again. With best wishes to all," Douglas and Maggie



**Merry Christmas
Love Anna, Matt
and Sammy x**

" Best wishes for Christmas and a happy and healthy 2021." Duncan and Wilma"

"Ian and Jean Smith wish everyone in Lochgair a joyful Christmas and best wishes for 2021."

"Margaret and Bill would like to wish everyone in this lovely community a very Happy Christmas and good health in the New year. We are sorry we won't be able to invite you in this festive season, but we look forward to meeting you all outdoors meantime. All good wishes for Christmas and the New Year."



" Mick and Bev would love to wish everyone in beautiful Lochgair a happy and peaceful Christmas and a better year in prospect for one and all."

FESTIVE GREETINGS



"To all of you residing in Lochgair - GREETINGS. To those of my friends who have been especially kind during lockdown – my grateful THANKS. To all of you who have joined us this year – WELCOME, and hope you find happiness here. Wishing everyone a HAPPY CHRISTMAS. Let us hope and pray that 2021 is a more peaceful and settled year, with fewer cases of coronavirus throughout the world". Keep safe and best wishes." Elspeth

"Pete and Yvonne would like to send happy Christmas wishes to everyone in Lochgair and many thanks to those who have brought joy to our village through their continued support and community efforts. Merry Christmas x"

"Anne Norwell wishes all her friends and neighbours a very merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year."

"Kay and Michael would like to wish all of their friends and neighbours in the village a very Merry Christmas and good health, love and peace in the New Year."



FROM THE BENCH - December 2020 - by Michael Reid

It's been a while since I wrote one of these articles, so I thought I'd do a summary of the year. There has been fewer entries made in the diary and sketchbook, partly I'm sure due to the Covid situation, but maybe also the novelty has worn off a bit - please keep it up next year!

January got off to a good start with a little grebe, long-tailed tits and a sea eagle spotted on the first day! Also spotted were wigeon, goldeneye, buzzard, curlew, oyster-catcher, gulls, heron, mergansers, shag, herons and seals.

February was similar with goldfinch, robin, eider, curlew, great spotted woodpecker, and bullfinch also noted. A seal was seen playing with the buoys at the red catamaran and frog spawn appeared towards the end of the month.

March brought a similar range of species, along with black guillemot, great tit and redshank. Lockdown saw a dramatic reduction in ambient noise, but around the same time the winter birds all seemed to move away.

Spring arrived in April with greylag geese appearing on the corran between Redhouses and Pointhouse, peacock butteries, slow worm, lady's smock flowering, and a dipper at the ford. Gannets and swallows arrived on the 21st (right on schedule!) with cuckoo and whitethroat heard on the 27th and arctic tern a couple of days later. The first midges were noted on the 30th though!

In May we saw shoals of fry / sandeels in the ford at high tide, more cuckoos, sandpipers, mergansers, gannets, a wheatear, more canada geese, greylags and a sea eagle was spotted again.

Butterfly orchids appeared in large numbers in June, in the rough meadow between Pointhouse and the Castle. The sandpipers seemed to be nesting somewhere between the ford and Pointhouse and the mergansers bred successfully. A golden eagle was spotted flying from behind Redhouses, across Loch Gair and towards Gortonronach. The sea eagle was seen again, as was a barn owl.

July was a bit short of wildlife sightings, but there were several appreciative comments from visitors, after the lockdown restrictions were eased. Seals were seen with pups.

August saw some massive horse mushrooms appearing near the bench, they were very tasty! (Thanks Margaret!!) There were large flocks of gannets chasing shoals of mackerel and lots of butterflies (tortioseshell, peacock, whites, scotch argus). A huge yacht was anchored in Kames Bay, and its passengers were seen exploring the area from a launch and a rib.

There seems to be a hen harrier, or maybe even a pair, settled in the moor to the south of the village, possibly in the MacArthur's reserve. Sparrowhawks and buzzards have also been seen frequently around the village, and the sea eagle appears from time to time.

September saw more dabchicks, merganser chicks, otter, porpoises, shearwaters, gannet, hen harrier again and more horse mushrooms (and lots of other fungi). The autumn migrants appeared around the middle of the month: long-tailed tits, greenfinches and geese overhead. A flock of little auks was seen out in Loch Fyne.

Some mysterious stacked stone sculptures appeared on the beach in October, but were gone in a few days, knocked over by the tide. Birds spotted included a diver (red-throat?), goldcrests, the hen harper again, and a wren. November and December were very quiet, probably a consequence of increased restrictions and some rotten weather!



Douglas' bench received admiration for its grey oak and medullar rays from a cabinetmaker from Kent.

There were only a few notes of otters this year - the best time to look is 3 hours either side of low tide.

Postscript to 'From the Bench' by Michael Reid.

No room for pictures this time, I'll maybe do a gallery on the website instead. The box has sprung a bit of a leak so I will order a replacement, along with a new diary and sketchbook for a fresh start at the New Year.

I think this article highlights the amazing wildlife we have here. Please keep up the reporting and sketching next year. I will try to focus more on mammals and wildflowers, which haven't been recorded much this year.

All Winters Work by Mick Cuthbert

**THE COLD IT BITES THE WIND A RUSH,
OF NOISE AND SHARDS OF FROST TO BRUSH.**

**WE CANNOT LEAVE THIS SHIVER THIS BREATH,
OF FROZEN LAKES AND CRUNCHING STEPS.**

**THE LIMBS OF TREE BARE AND STARK,
THE MOONS BREATH IN THIS FROZEN DARK.**

**WE CANNOT LEAVE THIS SHIVER THIS PLACE,
THE STARS THAT LIGHT MY EYES MY FACE.**

**THE WOOD BARE BRANCH OPEN TO ALL,
THE DARK THAT LIGHTS THE OWL TO CALL.**

**WE CANNOT LEAVE THIS SHIVER THIS COLD,
THE LOVE OF LIFE IS ALL SO BOLD.**

**GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO WARM MY SOUL,
THE SENSE OF FUTURE THAT FILLS MY BOWL.**

**WE CANNOT LEAVE THIS SHIVER THIS SOUND,
THIS HOLLOW BEING OF WINTER AROUND.**

Reflections on 2020 by Bev Cuthbert
(including book and film recommendations)

We've found that this year has whizzed by, which seems counter-intuitive, but it really doesn't seem a moment since we last cursed the Christmas tree lights!

In a strange way, we've been grateful that our house needs a little TLC, as there's plenty to do to keep us out of mischief and we've plans afoot for more improvements in the New Year.

There's still been time to read (there are some great titles in the " library") and I think my favourite book of the year is *Girl, Woman, Other*. by Bernardine Evaristo, which shared last year's Man Booker prize.

When it comes to films... Christmas favourites are the current order of the day- punctuated of late by *Fisherman's Friends* and *Hillbilly Elegy*, both of which we loved.

It's been a funny ol' year, but we all seem to have staggered through it - the " virtual" Lochgair activities are great; projects to get involved in and a sprinkling of Zoom socialising! Smashing. Bev

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF LOCHGAIR – PARADISE FOUND - BY DAVID DUNLOP



[A photo of our favourite walk just moments from our new home]

This time last year Lochgair was completely unknown to us. Then living on the east coast, we made our first trip to Lochgilphead at the start of the year taking in the scenic drive from Perthshire, through to Loch Fyne, and would often reflect on that 'small beautiful bay with the boats'.

Soon after, while holidaying in Oban, weather warnings advised against travel during the height of Storm Dennis, but we spotted a house for sale, and the pull to explore this area was almost as strong as the gales outside. The minute we turned into the village of Lochgair and saw the woodland and garden that surrounded the property, we were in trouble. Wanda was brave enough to knock on a neighbour's door, and a friendly Margaret and Bill gave a good first impression of life in Lochgair.

Aside from some notorious small flying insects, there was no doubt that this is where we wanted to be. A friendly email from Michael set us straight on the midges, and we still apply his sensible logic of them being 'a type of weather'.

Now there was nothing stopping us from trying to make this move a reality, but a few weeks later the world changed. Finally in late summer we were elated to be driving from the east coast towards the best thing that has happened to us in 2020 (and then some).

We received the warmest of welcomes from all of our neighbours, including Brian's furry pal SeamusJ. We will never forget the home baked pie that May brought us on moving day, delicious and so thoughtful.

We were sold on Argyll from our first visit and everything about the 'beautiful bay with the boats' has surpassed our expectations. A big thank you to everyone who has made us feel so welcome, and we look forward to more friendly chats on our weekend walks to the shores of Loch Fyne!

Stay Safe and roll on more positive times in 2021.

David & Wanda

LOCHGAIR SOCIAL OUTLETS

Notwithstanding restrictions imposed by covid, Lochgair residents have been very busy this Autumn.

THE LOCKDOWN CREATIVE ACTIVITIES PROJECT

17 took part in the WOOD CHALLENGE

And 15 in the recent FESTIVE THEME..

This is the youngest participant (Sam Watkiss') hedgehog, and snowman footprint cards.

Maggie Murray, whose idea this was, says

“ Thank you all for your wonderful creations.

Keep well and Happy Christmas and New Year.”

You can see all the exhibits either on Lochgair Village Facebook page or on the events page of Lochgair Website—lochgair.org



WELCOME TO
LOCHGAIR

LOCHGAIR QUIZ NIGHTS ON ZOOM

“The Quiz Nights in November and December (hosted by Jennifer and Alison, respectively) were great fun and enjoyed by everyone who took part. It didn't matter who were winners or losers, the banter was great! We are looking forward to our next get together on: **SATURDAY 16TH JANUARY**” Marion & Robert



LOCHGAIR AMBLERS

The Lochgair Amblers resumed walks in September. The challenges caused by Covid, regarding car sharing and social distancing, means we have been mainly walking to interesting places local to Lochgair.

We meet on alternate Thursdays and the walks vary in length from approximately 2 to 4 miles. The number of Amblers varies each outing so always space for others to join in. Anyone wanting more information contact Jean Smith.

[The monument is to the Gaelic poet Euan MacColl, and overlooks Loch Fyne at the little hamlet of Kenmore, on the shoreside track from Furnace to Inverary]

THE STONES AT ST. BRIDES by Ian M Smith (2006)

As I leave the south shore on this breezy day,
I turn for St. Bride's and Cemetery Bay;
A brisk south-westerly blows up Loch Fyne:
Too rough for a craft unstable as mine.

I'll stay in Loch Gair and these waters I know,
My kayak's course sheltered from the worst of the
blow;
The power station's running, to my left the tailrace.
I paddle hard on the right, the wind half in my face.

Then in a short time, as I near the north shore,
Three seals swim to greet me, as often before.
One youngster, a mere suckling two months in the past:
Now weaned from its mother, a fish-eater at last.

In Cemetery Bay, flocks of birds take to flight;
Eider, curlew, gull and oyster-catcher, their wings
gleaming white;
I land on green turf, for the tide's on the flow-
Pull the kayak up safe until I'm ready to go.

I walk through long grass to the Cemetery gate;
Before me St. Bride's ruined kirk seems to wait;
The headstones catch the last of the westering sun,
And remind me that this day is near done.

There are two stones I visit again and again:
The first is the Collards' - he a captain RN,
She a gardener, a writer and gracious housewife;
I now live in the house where they passed from this life.

I feel I know Pat Collard, somehow this place we share;
One book set in her early life, the other in Lochgair;
She lived for ninety summers, and I feel her influence
still: A benign presence the whole house seems to fill.

Rachiel Ballantyne's stone is weathered, Letters faint
but ornate
Died Anno Domini Seventeen Hundred and Eighty Eight
Lived and died in Knock croft, a mile up on the braes;
Killed at eighteen years by smallpox, Incurable in those
days.

What was life like for Rachiel before the plague's on-
slaught?

She might count and write, these were skills that all were
taught;

A tenant farmer's daughter, hard work would be her ken;
Hauling wood and water, and feeding beasts and men.

My mind is still with Rachiel as I head back to the shore,
Slide my boat into the water - choppier than before;
Brace with paddle, quickly seated, and spraydeck fast in
place,
Before the first big wave stings spray into my face.

With foredeck awash and progress slow, I keep a steady
stroke.

One bigger wave strikes my chest, the spray like silver
smoke;

The adrenalin rush helps keep me warm, each paddle
sure:

A swim here in December certainly has no allure!

At first I head direct for home, but soon I change my
course:

The wind's now in the south-east, waves pluck the bow
with force;

I swing the head a few points east, setting the skeg to fine:
Cutting the waves at an angle, but paddling a straighter
line.

A hundred metres from the south shore, the wind begins
to ease:

The waves drop too, soon I turn west and land in that shel-
tered peace;

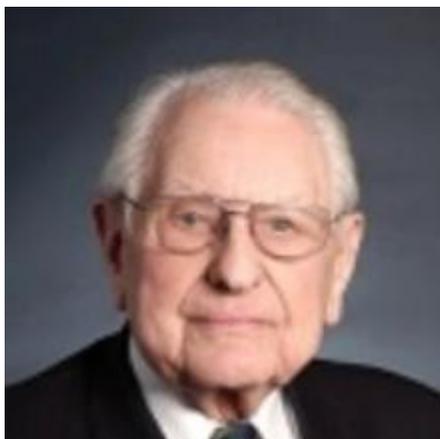
I feel again the connection with Rachiel Ballantyne:
Rowing her boat ashore from a stormy trip on Loch Fyne.



NOTICEBOARD

A FOND FAREWELL

Professor Wallace Stewart Foulds died peacefully in his sleep on Thursday 12th November, beloved father and father-in-law of Margaret and Will Rudd. Born in London in 1924, he lived life to the full well into his 90's—founder and president of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and co-founder of the Singapore Eye Research Institute, tributes came in from across the world at the news of his death. We in Lochgair knew him better in relation to his love of sailing (many remember the regattas he helped to organise in the loch), his love of natural history and gardening, and his pride in his renovation of Melford Cottage. Our thoughts are with Margaret and Will and their family at this time.



DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

THE 2021 JANUARY QUIZ
SATURDAY 16TH JANUARY AT 7 P.M.
ON ZOOM

A BIG THANK YOU TO MICK AND BEV CUTHBERT

For setting up THE LIBRARY @ THE HUB (former phone box if you're new to Lochgair) and for repairing and making water tight the Noticeboard at the bus stop.



AMAZON SMILE.

Remember you can donate to the Association via Amazon Smile. 0.5% of the net purchase price of eligible purchases are donated to the Association, though you're welcome to choose an alternative charity of your choice.

THE TRUSTEES OF THE LOCHGAIR ASSOCIATION (SCIO) are

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 Bev Cuthbert, Rosemary Dargie, Elsie Freer, Maggie Murray and Alison Wilkinson