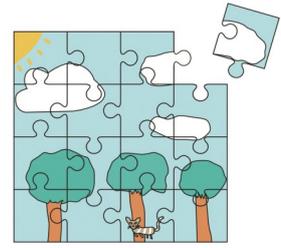


CommUnity News

Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust



Creating a better future together

Issue 9

6th November 2020

COMMUNITY FRIDGE

There have been a lot of things happening with our community's Food Share programme in the last few weeks. Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust is pleased to announce that we are in the process of opening a new Community Fridge project for the Kyle and Lochalsh area. The Church of Scotland in Church Road, Kyle has very kindly agreed to allow us to locate our fridge and freezer in their hall.

Dr. John Adamson said, *'I am very glad to announce that the Church of Scotland in Kyle will soon be opening its doors to Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust for the distribution of food to those in need. The church hall will be made available for this purpose. Several local groups who usually use our hall cannot at present do so due to current restrictions, but we are glad that we can try to help people who do not have enough food.'*

At present, we are continuing to run our Food Share programme, as developed by the Lochalsh Community Response and funded by the Scottish Government's Supporting Communities Fund, by delivering three days a week to those most in need and with mobility or access problems. We have also been placing food in both the Kyle and Kyleakin Blessing Boxes the other four days.

This new Community Fridge project will replace the previous programme and create a more long-term approach to helping those in need, to get food. The project will also have an added benefit of reducing our community's food waste.

This issue we focus on the lives of people in our community. We hope you find it interesting. We plan to do more in future issues. If you would like to be interviewed, please get in touch.

Active Travel Initiative for Skye and Lochalsh on **page 4**

Look out for our article inviting you to contribute to December's festive issue **on Page 9**

Find out what's happening in the Auchtertyre bus stop! **Page 3**

Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust will be formally taking over, from the Lochalsh Youth Community Trust, the collection of surplus food from the Co-op, as part of this new programme. We have obtained a Food Business Licence from Highland Council and have applied to become part of the Community Fridge Network. We are setting up strict Covid-safe protocols to ensure we keep everyone safe.

We will have a fridge and freezer for storing food, which means we will be able to keep food for longer, giving people in the area more chance to

make use of it. The refrigeration for the new Community Fridge is being supplied by the charity Hubbub which supports community food initiatives. The project will continue to be run by Annie Chalmers who has been running the Food Share and Food Vouchers schemes.

Annie is working hard to get everything in place to have the Community Fridge open before the Christmas holiday season starts. We plan to have it open for a couple hours a day from Monday to Saturday and people can call in to see what we have and take what they need.

We have also been the happy recipients of some lovely food boxes donated by the Co-op. These were delivered to us on Saturday and have been distributed to people in the area who could use a little treat during these hard times. The Co-op has been donating these boxes throughout Scotland as part of their Love Local Scotland campaign.

Since the beginning of the Food Share programme, our local Co-op has donated almost £30,000 worth of food. This food has been distributed each week and has gone out to households 650 times and helped an average of 2-5 people per household.

If you would like to volunteer for this new project, please see the advert on page 2.



New Community Fridge Project in Kyle Volunteers Wanted

We need people to help with the new Community Fridge Project in the Church Hall, Kyle, to:

- Man the hall during opening times
- Clean the premises and refrigeration units
- Help with pick ups or deliveries

If you can help, or to find out more, contact Annie Chalmers at food@lochalshcommunityresponse.co.uk

We are part of the
**COMMUNITY
FRIDGE**
Network

Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust



Creating a better future together

Lochalsh Craft Group is an informal group of Crafters, mostly from Skye and Lochalsh but also with a few members from further afield.

We hold monthly Craft Fairs throughout the season (Easter to October) at Dornie Hall or Plockton Hall showcasing a wide range of crafts including hand-made jewellery; jams and chutneys; award-winning marmalades; knitwear; Harris Tweed bags and other goods; candles; wood turning; photography; artwork and even dog treats! Refreshments and light lunches are also served.

Like most folk this year, we were all ready for the season with dates booked, flyers printed and adverts prepared when lockdown brought a halt to everything. However, Crafters keep crafting and the easing of restrictions has led us to trial something a little different.

We are holding an "Xmas Exhibition and Sale of Crafts" from 1st to 15th November at Plockton Hall. Around 10 Crafters will be exhibiting their goods, although social distancing means that only 2 or 3 of us will be present in person on any one day and a limited number of visitors will be allowed in at any one time! Please come along to support us and hopefully find a Christmas present or two!!

No-one knows what next year will bring, but hopefully we may be able to run our normal Craft Fairs again and a list of provisional dates will be advertised in the Spring. If you are interested in having a stall next year or would like further details, please contact:

Lenice Townend (lenicevt@btinternet.com) or
Shirley Godfrey (sagodfrey@btinternet.com)

Lochalsh Craft Group

Xmas Exhibition & Sale of Crafts



Plockton Village Hall



Sun 1st - Sun 15th November



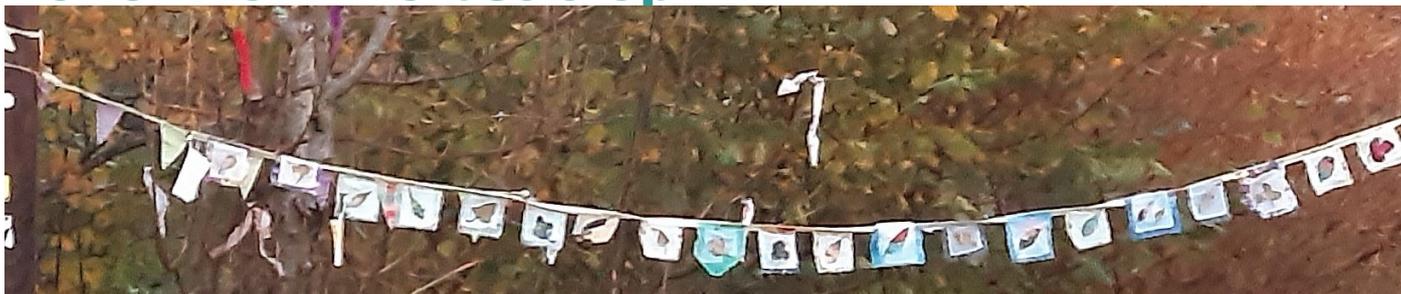
10.00am till 4.00pm

(Thursdays until 6.00pm)



Compliant with Scottish Government Covid-19 Guidance

Letter from the bus stop



Dear CommUnity News team,

Hi there. I send greetings from Auchtertyre! I always enjoy reading the community mag and all that folk are doing to help each other and keep us all buoyant. Keep up the good work, it is appreciated.



The Auchtertyre bus stop idea started when I got an email from the Parkinson's organisation that has a local group that meets every two months (until Covid), asking me if I could display a poster highlighting it

was World Parkinson's Day and just what is for those affected by it.

I decided the bus stop was the only place in the village where people were likely to see it, so I put a wee table in it and displayed some leaflets and info that have helped me since being diagnosed with Parkinson's 5 years ago. I put up bunting to catch people's eye and bunches of flowers and some poetry about dealing with it on a daily basis. My neighbour Holly saw it and promptly put it on her Facebook page to highlight and promote the group and encourage me.

I later took it down and when Covid struck and the food/blessing boxes started, I followed suit. Many neighbours have contributed in many ways: at Easter Heather knitted bus stop bunnies and the children so enjoyed trying to find them. We had a sea theme with crafted starfish and jellyfish...and on it went.

After some time I was thinking that it had outlived its usefulness but when clearing some of the stuff out, folk asked that we carry on saying it was a point of contact and it made them smile and they never knew what surprises were in store.

So, that said, we decided that we would set it up with an autumn display, with leafy bunting and new art work, an overflowing book box and a swap/lending of board games, art ideas, bric a brac and the ongoing groceries blessing box. It is all here for folk in need of a boost in any way. We have ideas forming in our heads for a Christmas theme in December and it remains to be seen just how much we manage to produce, but as Covid continues to take a grip again we will try where we can to lift each other's spirits and keep smiling!

The Bus Stop Janitor (aka Marion Butler)



The bus stop is crammed full of games, books and the blessings box.

New Active Travel Initiative for Skye and Lochalsh



Skye For All and Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations are working together to create accessible walking maps of Kyle of Lochalsh and Portree. These maps will show where critical access points, such as dropped kerbs and seating are, making every day journeys easier.

**Follow our project on
www.skyeforall.co.uk
www.slcvo.org.uk**

SLCVO Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations

With grant funding from Paths for All Smarter Choices Smarter Places and the Highland Green Health Partnership, Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations (SLCVO) has teamed up with local group Skye for All to complete an active travel project. The focus of the project is to create maps of both Portree and Kyle of Lochalsh highlighting the accessibility of both village centres. These locations have significant accessibility issues, therefore the new maps will show people where critical access points, such as dropped kerbs and seating are, making everyday journeys easier.

The aim of the project is to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of getting outdoors and help people incorporate walking into their daily routine. By teaming up with Skye for All, SLCVO hope to encourage people to feel more comfortable going out for short walks. Jo Ford, SLCVO's Chief officer, said "There are many websites and leaflets promoting walking in Skye and Lochalsh. Our project however is much more focused on short daily journeys for those who may struggle to participate in longer walks and whose mobility is restricted. Working with Skye For All will help us create very unique maps of Kyle and Portree that can be used by individuals, cyclists and walking groups."

The brainchild of good friends Sarah Lister and Melanie Moss, Skye for All specialise in identifying short walks that are

suitable for people of all abilities and sharing these on the website www.Skyeforall.co.uk. "We want people of all ages and abilities to be able to enjoy Skye and Lochalsh and experience some of the quieter hidden gems. Enjoying the scenery and its beauty on foot, in a wheelchair or on a mobility scooter. We want to share the many beautiful places that our home has to offer." Melanie & Sarah, Skye For All.

For her work with SLCVO's Active Travel project and Skye For All, Sarah was recently awarded Path for All's Active Travel Volunteer of the Year. Sarah, the inspiration behind Skye for All, was left with mobility issues after multiple surgeries for a brain tumour. She is only able to walk short distances with an aid and needs a mobility scooter for longer journeys, however this has not stopped her. Jo Ford, who nominated Sarah for the award said " I am so pleased Sarah won, she often just tells people she just does Skye For All walks because she likes it and is very humble about the impact she and Melanie have. Sarah is an inspiration and a very valued volunteer; she deserves this award many times over."

For more information about the project visit Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations website www.slcvo.org.uk of follow Skye For All on twitter <https://twitter.com/skyeforall>

A Day In The Life Of... An occasional look at some of the younger generation who are making a life for themselves in the area.

Jen Carr and Tina MacLeod of Stròm in Kyle

We were both raised in the Lochalsh area and after graduating from university and art school we each made a conscious decision to continue to live and work in this special corner of the west Highlands.

Jen - I worked for several years at Ragamuffin in Armadale and also ran my own pop up shops, selling my own textiles and work by other makers, so it was a natural progression to open a permanent shop.

Tina - Before graduating from Glasgow School of Art, where I studied silversmithing and jewellery, I ran my own gallery, Highland Origins, in the Dornie area. I now work from my home studio and exhibit work at shows and galleries across the country.

We both have a passion for beautifully crafted textiles, homeware and jewellery and wanted to share this with residents and visitors to the area. In 2019 Stròm was created, bringing a taste of contemporary lifestyle to Kyle. Running a business in the Scottish Highlands can have challenges. Distance might be the main one, deliveries can take longer, attending exhibitions or shows can be more difficult and time consuming but the benefits outweigh the challenges. It is a very sociable job, getting to know regular customers and building relationships with makers and designers all over the country.

As makers ourselves, we appreciate that working alone in a studio can become quite isolating and how important these relationships are. By working as a partnership, not only can roles be divided, working to each other's strengths, but the workload can also be shared allowing both of us to continue to work on our own designs, as well as enjoying the benefits of living in such a beautiful place.



Jen and Tina

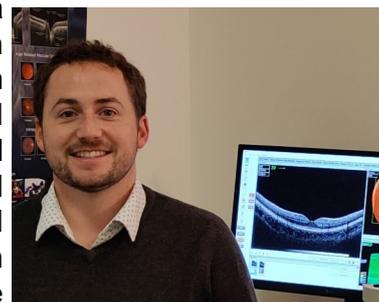
Craig Campbell, Optometrist, Kyle

The fascinating thing about Optometry, as a profession, is it encompasses two very different disciplines. Most of what I do would be classified as health care - looking after the health of people's eyes but the second is the world of retail – the sale of glasses and sunglasses. This variety keeps the job exciting.

After completing 5th year in Plockton, I left school to experience the world of work and followed in the footsteps of my dad and uncle and went prawn fishing for two years. This gave me a lesson in hard graft and dedication. I just needed something of my own to apply it to. I had had problems with my own eyes as a child and the entry requirements for Optometry at Glasgow Caledonian Uni were within my qualification range. I'd always really enjoyed working with people and so it felt like a suitable fit for me. I realised that people will always need their eyes tested and so I figured it could be a job for life!

Coming back to Lochalsh I opened an optician's practice with my girlfriend Shannon, a marketing graduate, from Kyleakin. I spend my day examining various aspects of people's vision. I will test their requirement for glasses and subsequently advise them on suitable frames and lenses, if required. I assess the health of the eyes using specialist imaging equipment, monitoring for signs of conditions like cataract, macular degeneration and glaucoma. We will often have to deal with emergency appointments that are referred to us by GPs or pharmacists. These cases can range from mild eye infections, requiring simple eyedrops, to sight threatening conditions like retinal detachments that need referred immediately to Raigmore for surgery. You never know what case may come through the door and that makes the job interesting, albeit at times, challenging. Doing monthly home visits for people that cannot make it into practice is also a rewarding part of my job.

Setting up a business in Lochalsh has been such an exciting project and we are very grateful to the local community around Skye and Lochalsh for the way they have supported us.



Craig in the consulting room

Hugh Campbell Marketing was key in establishing Lochalsh Community Response's website and initial marketing, ensuring the community had key information at its fingertips during the Covid pandemic. It was a huge job, done voluntarily. We thought it would be interesting for our readers to meet the man behind the name.



Q. Tell me a bit about yourself

My name is Hugh Campbell and I run a marketing company on the Isle of Skye. The company provides an entire suite of business marketing services from website design, print design, event marketing to video production. I am also an elite long-distance runner and am passionate about encouraging the

benefits of health and fitness to others.

Q. What was the path that brought you to establishing your own business? I was made redundant from my job as a graphic designer at Pelican Design. I had worked as print designer for 5 years but sadly the work dried up and I found myself washing dishes to make ends meet. It was a tough time but it was the catalyst to establish my business. It is not easy to start a business. I liken it to trying to start a fire in the wild by kindling two sticks of wood together. Progress was very slow and can be frustrating but eventually the business became established and I now work with clients across the Highlands.

Q. What is the greatest thing about having your own business? Being able to direct the business operations is by far the largest benefit. I have worked in many jobs where operational procedures were not what I would have agreed with in terms of how services are provided and the standard of customer service. By running my own business I can control these elements and offer a service I believe my customers deserve. The ethos of my business is honesty and value for money. By providing my customers with high quality marketing in the form of graphic design, photography and video I allow them to maximise their business potential at an affordable cost.

Q. How did you get involved in helping Lochalsh Community Response and why did you want to help? In March as the Pandemic hit the world I was involved in the rapid set-up of Skye Community Response. Essentially I had to build a large website of important information in the space

of a few days. I worked very long hours but we managed to get the site up with an emergency phone number. Initially I contacted the Lochalsh Development Officer to see if the area would like to fall under the Skye Community Response catchment. The decision was taken that Lochalsh would have its own response team which sounded sensible. Again we were up against things time wise and key information and publication of the areas emergency number needed to be promoted. I was able to pull together the site design fairly quickly and we also created a double sided A5 flyer to promote the new organisation in the area. I felt I wanted to help because it was the right thing to do. I was able to adapt the designs for Skye Community Response to fit Lochalsh Community Response which speeded the process up immensely which at this particular time was critical. The Lockdown required all regions of Scotland to work collaboratively and it was also good that I could act as a contact for Skye Community Response with Lochalsh.

Q. Are you involved in Skye Community Response too? In what capacity? My primary involvement with Skye Community Response was handling all the communications and marketing. This ranged from video production covering fundraising events, website maintenance and design, print design and social media management. I also provided an IT support service which included programming tablets which were provided to care homes to allow residents to communicate with family members. I did also find myself getting involved in some unique activities such as rescuing a cow stuck in a bog and conducting a search and rescue with a drone on Marsco looking for a lost dog!

Q. What difference do you think the Community Response groups have made? The Community Response groups were absolutely essential. It was a particularly chaotic time and it became evident a significant amount of people were being missed by larger organisations who had been impacted by the pandemic. The response groups essentially filled many of these gaps be it in the form of food provision, prescription delivery and many other support services. Without these groups in place a large amount of people in the area would have struggled. The other critical aspect of the groups was the response time. By creating local response groups with local knowledge based on a common

Continued from previous page

emergency number any problems or issues that occurred could more often than not be dealt with on the same day.

Q. How does it make you feel to see how our community in Skye & Lochalsh responded to the emergency? The response from the community of Skye and Lochalsh has been incredible. Lochalsh Community Response in particular were very innovative in the services being offered. The videos produced covering a range of activities that were posted regularly were an excellent example of this. The response groups offered a centralised management vehicle during the pandemic that was critical. What we found at the start of the lockdown was there was a lot of community members doing a lot of good work but they weren't really communicating with each other. Skye Community Response and Lochalsh Community Response essentially pulled all this good work together under one roof. The result was the community shone and pulled together in a way none of us had really seen before.

Q. I know you really enjoy running and have had many successes in the Skye half marathon over the years. How important has running been during Lockdown restrictions? Running is very important to me. I recently published an article in the local press on how I use it to manage my mental health. This became even more important during lockdown where I could sometimes go a week or two without seeing anyone except for a trip to the shops. Exercise is key for not just physical health but also mental health. We are living in a time at the

moment where there is a mental health epidemic. Exercise is without a doubt the single best thing you can do for your mental health. Outside of this I would always encourage people to seek professional help and even more important if you are struggling speak to somebody. Nobody should suffer in silence. There is help available and I would strongly encourage people to seek it if they feel they need to.

Q. Once Lockdown lifts entirely what would be your idea of a perfect day - where would you go? What would you do? A perfect day for me would be an easy paced long run in the sun in a scenic location. Running is the only thing that's ever made any sense to me really. I also feel much better for hours after a run. It's a key part of my life now.

And finally, on behalf of everyone who has benefitted from keeping in touch by email and using our website, we'd like to thank you for giving your services free of charge to enable this. I was delighted to help Lochalsh Community Response during a very difficult time. I would just like to say well done to everyone involved in the Lochalsh area for pulling together in a remarkable way during such a difficult time in all of our lives. The community spirit shown and the amount of people helped who would have otherwise struggled has been truly incredible. A legacy you should all be proud of.

Interviewed by Aileen Turnbull



“Community Philosophy steadfastly focuses on process – not outcomes. That process is caring, collaborative, critical and creative. Together, people work out what really matters, what’s possible, and what they can do. It’s a rich, deeply rewarding experience.” Graeme Tiffany, Community Philosophy Pioneer and Education Consultant.

Rosamonde Birch, a new resident to Lochalsh, is gifting Community Philosophy Workshops based on *SAPERE Philosophy for Communities* in support of post-Covid wellbeing. The PLACE TALK workshops offer an online space to explore important themes affecting our personal, communal and global lives.

These will be: *Hope and Imagining Futures; Community Sustainability;* and *Trust and Resilience.*

Participant experiences can include insights into ways forward for themselves, our communities, and offering supportive connections to renew our energy in living through such uncertain and disruptive times. The process can offer healing, inspiration, empowerment, reflection and wellbeing for our minds, hearts and bodies.

Rosamonde has a background in Education, Learning for Sustainability and Democratic Education, as well as recently researching the importance of 'hope' and co-creative 'futures thinking'.

You can learn more about her work on her website: www.rosamondebirch.space and can book a place on the workshops by clicking on the PLACE TALK tab or by visiting her Facebook Page: FutureCraftEarth. Booking is first come first served:

Workshop 1: November 12th 13:00 – 14:30
<https://fb.me/e/3foxePniN>

Workshop 2: November 25th 19:00 – 20:30
<https://fb.me/e/3oPelwNkf>

One man and his dogs - Alasdair Earnshaw on life with his Search and Rescue dogs

Interviewed by Aileen Turnbull

Tell me a bit about SARDA and what it does

SARDA (Search And Rescue Dog Association) Scotland (SCIO) is a Scottish charity which trains dogs and their handlers to search for missing persons. We are part of Scottish Mountain Rescue. The handlers are all volunteers. SARDA Scotland currently trains air scenting search dogs who look for anything human rather than looking for one specific scent – like bits of you that are being ‘shed’ all the time (dead skin, bacteria, fungus, etc) and carried in the wind, spreading in a cone from the source. The dog picks this up and works its way back to the source of the scent. The dogs are particularly valuable in searching areas where visibility is poor and where the ground is complex. Our dogs are also trained to search areas following avalanches where they are able to locate people under the snow.

What interested you to get involved? I joined Calder Valley Search and Rescue Team in 1978, when I was 16 and still living in Yorkshire. I believe you should put something back into society. I enjoy the mountains and wild places, and I’d like to think that if I got into difficulty someone would come and help me out. If I expect that from other people, it’s only reasonable that I should be prepared to do that in return. I like dogs and I’d worked with a dog handler we had on our team previously.

How do you go about training a dog? For the dog, it’s just a big game. While we’re encouraging the dog’s natural friendliness, we get them to play with a toy. Through either ‘tuggie’ or ‘fetch’ with lots of different people, we get the dog hooked on the game. We progress the game with people running away with the toy and dropping out of sight. The dog is released and once it finds the person (or ‘body’ as



Torin at work

we call them) it barks for the toy and the game. The bark is the way that the dog will tell us that a missing person has been found. Gradually we send the dogs to hunt without having seen the person run away. It crosses the scent coming from the person, so it learns to use its nose to help with the hunt. Once the dog finds them it’ll bark for its game which doesn’t start until the handler arrives. Finally the dog will start to come back and bark to collect the handler and take them to the body. I’d like to say a big thank you here to all the ‘bodies’

who give of their time to help us train our dogs. It wouldn’t be possible without them. To be an effective dog handler, you have to be able to read the dog. If the weather is hot, the dog might start to lose the bark or need time to communicate. The handler has to learn to

‘see’ the path of the air over the land and know how the weather and the terrain might affect it. The easiest comparison we have is the flow of water. Just like a river or the sea, the air can loop in swirls and eddies. We have to learn to put the dog into the places that it will pick up the scent coming from a particular piece of land. In effect our job isn’t really looking for people, it’s clearing ground and identifying where people are not. If we find, that is a bonus. If the wind is very strong, the scent gets broken and fragmented and is harder for the dog to follow. A good breeze is ideal for us.

What are the key characteristics of a good S&R dog (and human)? Are some breeds of dog better than others? A good dog handler has to choose the right sort of dog for them and be able to read their dog and to be able to recognise that while yes, the dog is a tool that can do a job effectively, to get the best from it you have to be prepared to listen and learn and develop as a team. You need to have the skills and the confidence to work alone in difficult terrain and conditions, knowing when to draw a line and retreat. The right dog? In short, if it’s agile enough for the mountains, trainable and has a good nose it should be in with a chance. I have had several dogs over the years and currently have Torin (German Shepherd/Golden Retriever cross) and am waiting assessment for Cridhe (German Wirehaired Pointer-Labrador).

How long does it take to train a dog until it’s ready to go out on a rescue? I’d say the minimum time for training a dog would be 9-12 months. I also wouldn’t want to work a dog on callouts at less than 18 months since it’s too young for the bones to be properly set.

What is involved in being part of the team? Aside from Mountain Rescue Team training (I’m a member of Kintail MRT) SARDA training involves one weekend monthly at various locations throughout Scotland. At the early stages with a



Cridhe, Alasdair’s German Short-haired Pointer crossed with a Lab. The Lab helps calm down the ‘game drive’ of the Pointer

Continued from previous page

pup, you really need to be training for 30 minutes or so 3 -4 times each week. As things progress, sessions become longer and less often.

Funny story? My dog Torin picked up a scent and followed it for 1.2km, only for me to find out that he'd picked up the scent of two members of Dundonnell Mountain Rescue Team on a call out that day. Sadly they weren't who we were looking for and we had to back track and start over.

Scariest moment? An avalanche tip fairly high in a couloir. Having got up there, the tip was covered in windblown snow, so the scent wouldn't be coming out of it without us disturbing it. The slope was steep, it was snowing heavily, it had already avalanched once – it was a time for self-preservation.



Cridhe with Alasdair

Best moment/achievement for you or your dog? Informally, away from the scrutiny of assessment, getting to that point where I look at my dog and know that I really trust him (mine have all been him – it suits me)

At home, is the 'off duty' relationship with a S&R dog different to that of a non-working pet?

Difficult question really and yes, I suppose it is a bit. There's a different level of trust required, a bit like when you climb or kayak with someone. If you're out on a shout on a wild woolly night, its pretty much just the two of you and that creates a stronger bond. I'm totally sure that for the dogs, they know it's different. The dogs have harnesses for working, with bells on. If you move your dog's harness, no matter how asleep he is, he will be there!

Can people donate to SARDA (details)? The easiest way to donate to SARDA Scotland is through our Just Giving Page, following the link on our website <https://www.sarda-scotland.org>

GEARING UP FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON



We're not quite there yet, though shops and ads are trying to tell us that it's time to feel festive. However, the team here at the newsletter realised that our next issue will, in fact, be out in December. Throughout this year I think as a community we have seen a great deal of goodwill towards friends and neighbours, so, with this in mind, we'd like to invite you to help us build on that and share some festive warmth within our communities.

We're looking for tasty recipes, homemade crafting ideas for cards, wrapping paper and decorations, details of any events and perhaps festive reminiscences, funny stories or messages you'd like to share as we head into what will be a festive season unlike any we might have imagined a year ago.

So, please help us to stay connected over the festive season - get in touch and share with us so that we can, in turn, share with our community.

By Aileen Turnbull



Zoom art classes are engaging with all ages

Local artist Sarah Longley's Zoom art classes have proved extremely popular with young and old(er) alike. Look out in future issues for artwork created by the attendees. Here is Nell MacDonald (photographed by her mum Yvonne) during one of Sarah's classes.



Camanchd gu bràth - by Duncan Ferguson

Kinlochshiel, shinty and all that....

'Lean gu dlùth ri cliù ar sinnsearan' ('follow closely the glory of our forbears')

"Who's going to mark the Kinlochshiel bear?" (from Runrig's shinty anthem 'The clash of the ash')

As we put the clocks back and Halloween is upon us it is hard to believe that no shinty matches have been played since the first weekend of March; but of course in common with the other sports in our area outdoor and indoor – football, sailing, badminton, bowls etc. – our great Highland sport has had to be stopped as a result of Covid-19 and the sport's ruling body - the Camanchd Association - early on in the pandemic sensibly decided to cancel all this season's competitions.

It is frustrating to see young players especially missing out on the sport to which they are so devoted and for which they have trained so hard and for Kinlochshiel's five teams, including our keen ladies' team now in their fourth season, it is most disappointing as players and coaches looked forward to playing the full season on our new Rèaraig pitch. Indeed, although not explicitly predicted by the Brahan seer(!), I was convinced this would be our big year with the current 'golden generation' in the first team winning the Camanchd Cup for the first time having already won the premier league title (in 2017) and the MacAulay Cup twice (in 2016 and 2018) but that dream has to go on hold till 2021; however, there are plenty of reasons to be positive about our club's future with, inter alia, our under-14s convincingly winning the MacMaster Cup last September.

It is generally agreed that of all our local sports shinty is the most distinctive pursuit in our community life and culture: many a tourist from all corners of the globe has stopped to watch matches at Kirkton – an iconic ground among the

shinty fraternity famous for its changing-rooms in the barn and the only shinty pitch nationally at right angles to a major road! – always intrigued by our 12-a-side sport, the camans, the speed of the ball, its connections to hurling etc.

For a club only founded in 1960 – a union of the Glenshiel, Kintail and Lochalsh district teams – Kinlochshiel has an impressive history with the Sutherland Cup (for junior level adult teams) triumphs in 1962 and 1977; and the Balliemore cup (the top trophy for intermediate teams) wins in 2007 and 2010 were important markers on the way to becoming a leading contender in senior competitions alongside the national titans in the sport such as Newtonmore and Kingussie. It is a success story thanks to the players, coaches and dedicated servants of the club over the years.

The first official mention of the club is a notice in the Inverness Courier of 4th October, 1960: Junior section – Kinlochshiel v Lochcarron. I am grateful to Katherine Loades for this information from her archive of material about the club. Nothing else is known about this match of sixty years ago and any recollection would be welcomed.

The club's progress has also benefited from encouragement of shinty in our primary schools and the high school and the collaborative approach to coaching, first shinty – many a Friday night the high school games hall has been full of parents



Triumphant winners of the 1977 Sutherland cup winning 9-0 against Glenorchy

Back row L-R: Neil MacRae, Johnda Byrne, Grantie Mitchell, Andrew Mackenzie, Johnnie Ach, Murdo MacRae, Billy Taylor
Front row L-R: Chitty MacRae, Doe MacRae, Keith Loades, Innes MacRae

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supporting primary school pupils honing their skills – and other tournaments has been great for promoting sport in our community.

When I came to Plockton High in 1992 I was very aware of shinty's crucial rôle in the community and I greatly appreciated the club's support – and from Lochcarron too - for the sport at school level. My illustrious predecessor Sorley MacLean was a fine player and passionate advocate of the sport and it is highly appropriate that Plockton High has an annual match – now boys' and girls' teams – with Portree High for Cuach Shomhairle (the Sorley quaich) the first match (1997) being played at Pàirc nan Laoch (Portree) refereed by the late Johnnie 'Ach' MacRae, a Plockton High pupil in Sorley's time and a Kinlochshiel legend. Our team in that first match, as I recall, was built around Ross Matheson, Paul MacRae (Kinlochshiel), Darren Coyle and Laura MacKay (Lochcarron).

That competition is one of the great inter-school sporting contests comparable, in my unbiased opinion(!), to the Cambridge-Oxford boat race and is played in a spirit of rich Gaelic camaraderie. My win/loss record as coach I prefer not to discuss but I am pleased to say my successors – Sandra Coghill and Rab MacAskill - continue to field talented teams who appreciate the historic significance of this unique match. I have a vivid memory of our winning the 2004 match in Portree when my son Aonghus scored the golden goal in extra time and Calum MacLean took the coveted player of the team award.

Although belonging to a football island (Islay) and attending a rugby playing secondary school (Keil School, Dumbarton) I was fortunate to play shinty for the Keil team which had matches in the summer term against the Argyll high schools and, having commented in the Park Bar on a Friday night that I was Portnahaven's best ever – I omitted to say only! - half forward, I found myself in the Glasgow University team heading to play Inveraray the next day. Some years later when I taught at Lochgilphead High school I assisted Kenny MacRae in promoting shinty and in 1982 (I think) our team beat Plockton High in the final of the Wade Cup in Fort William - but that has never been held against me.

Growing up in Islay I was always interested to hear from the older men in my village about the fiercely contested midwinter and old new year's day matches played on fields near the west coast shores which had taken place until the late 1920s and that shinty playing tradition is recorded throughout the West Highlands and Islands including tales from own area of matches on the flat plain on Ben Attow, in Achmore, Glenelg and throughout our communities.



The cairn on the Kirkton pitch marking 30 years of the social and sporting link with Castletown Geoghegan

Shinty almost certainly came originally from Ireland as far back as St Columba's day in the sixth century and our area has an enviable reputation for links with Irish schools and GAA clubs over the

years including Plockton Primary (under John Finlayson, himself a member of the Skye Camanachd Cup-winning team in 1990) with Edmund Rice primary school, Belfast, and Plockton High since 1996 has had significant links and shinty/hurling matches with the Cuchullins, a cross-community schools' hurling team, through the tireless initiative of Northern Irish headteacher and personal friend PJ O'Grady; and there is a cairn on Kirkton pitch to mark thirty years – 1979-2009 – of Kinlochshiel's successful sporting and social link with Castletown Geoghegan GAA (county Westmeath). Our club has also had an impressive number of players selected to play for Scotland in the annual shinty/hurling internationals arguably the pinnacle of any player's career.

At the side of the A87 two miles east of Shielbridge there stands the cairn in memory of Donald Campbell erected by Glenshiel shinty club for this young Highlander who died in 1927 and had given great service to his local club and was devoted to the Highland sport which he loved. It is a moving reminder of shinty's distinctive place in our communities over the years and in these unsettling times let us hope and pray for the return of sport in our area including the clash of the ash – we dream of teams being piped on to our pitches once again, taking the knee in international sporting solidarity with the black lives matter movement and cheered on by local supporters: camanachd gu bràth 's slàinte mhath dhuibh air fad.

Email Duncan: ferguaros4@aol.com

Twitter: @djfachmore

RNLI - Lifesaving shopping this Christmas



The Lifeboat Shop in Kyle of Lochalsh, tucked away beside the Lifeboat Station is often missed when people visit the village. The shop is however part of a chain of RNLI shops all over the country that sell a wide range of gifts and souvenirs, raising money to support the valiant men and women who bravely risk their own safety to save the lives of others at sea.

When I placed the summer orders for the Kyle Lifeboat Shop back in February, I didn't imagine that shortly after everything was delivered, I would receive a message from our head office in Poole saying that all RNLI Shops were closing with immediate effect. We were to lock up the shop and not re-enter until advised it was safe to do so. Those boxes which were full of goodies and surprises were to sit in the shop, unopened, for almost six months until late September when I finally received word that we were to be "Covid-proofed" and could trade again if we felt comfortable to do so.

The team we have at the lifeboat shop are all volunteers and as with everyone else throughout the pandemic, they have faced their own issues. Returning to work in the shop as "normal" is not possible for everyone. We have therefore had to look at different ways of operating in the run up to Christmas to ensure colleagues and customers alike are all kept safe and secure. For the rest of this year (Covid restrictions permitting) we will operate as follows which we hope offers you lots of options to continue to support the RNLI in what remains of 2020:

Shop Opening: Friday & Saturday 23rd October - 19th December inclusive 11am to 4pm
Payment: Card, cash and cheques accepted.

Christmas Catalogue: A leaflet detailing the range of Christmas cards, calendars and diaries is available on request in paper form or via email.

Facebook: Lifeboat Shop – Kyle of Lochalsh: There are photo albums on our Facebook page of our full range of Christmas cards, calendars and diaries together with a selection of gift items. Prices are included on the individual photographs.

Click 'n' Collect: You can place an order through our Facebook page, via email, by telephone or with a member of the shop team. We will arrange a suitable time for you to collect from either the shop or a local collection point. Payment: Card, cash or cheque payments at the shop. Cash or cheque only at collection points.

Local Delivery (Lochalsh and South Skye only): As with Click 'n' Collect, but one of our volunteers will arrange to safely deliver your items to you. Payment: Cash or cheque only.

Contact Details: Facebook: Lifeboat Shop – Kyle of Lochalsh

Tel: Rachael on 07870 575994 or

Email: rachael_fb@outlook.com

RNLI SHOP | Lifeboats

The gift of giving

Your shopping makes a lifesaving difference

