

Ness - Barvas

FREE Community Newsletter

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Western Isles starts its own Covid-19 infection testing service

On Monday 28th April, NHS Western Isles began testing for SARS-CoV-2 virus, the coronavirus causing the COVID-19 infection. The Western Isles Hospital laboratory can now accept samples for testing, after receiving local validation to national standards.

Over the course of the week commencing 28th April, sampling packs were distributed to the Uists and to Barra, ensuring that access to the Stornoway Laboratory testing service is now available across the islands.

It is expected that test turnaround time will be approximately three hours – a vast improvement on the former turnaround time of one or more days, when testing had to be undertaken on the mainland. A maximum of 64 tests a day will be performed by the machine.

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Last call for Midwife Norma

Norma Mackay (Cross Skigersta) celebrates her retirement this year, after 43 years total spent working and training in the nursing world.

Norma's father hailed from Applecross and her mother from Diabaig, near Torridon. They married and moved to Raasay, where Norma was brought up along with her siblings. She attended first of all the primary school in Raasay, and then went on to Portree High School, staying in the girls' hostel there during term time.

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Norma with her dog Chester in the garden of their home at Cross Skigersta

Sweeny wins nationwide agricultural machinery competition



Our local celebrity crofter Donald 'Sweeny' Macsween will benefit from the use of a new telehandler forklift for a year, thanks to a competition run by the charity Prince's Countryside Fund.

In partnership with the global agricultural machinery brand New Holland, the Prince's Countryside Fund was able to offer the use of cutting-edge equipment to young people, new entrants or those able to make a difference to their communities, who otherwise would not have access to such machinery.

The nationwide competition had up to fifty entries, with Sweeny being the only Scottish benefiter. Two farmers in Wales also received prizes – Rob David for the use of a T6 tractor, and Abbi Mason, the use of a Boomer 40 compact tractor.

Sweeny, now a full-time crofter having swapped his job at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, has 500 laying hens, 150 breeding ewes, Gloucester Old Spot pigs and Highland cows. He has acknowledged how the win will assist him with his daily duties. In an email to Jasmine at the Ness-Barvas Newsletter, Sweeny said:

"I'm so excited to be getting this telehandler. It's going to make a huge difference to my work over the next year. With the lockdown meaning no football or tourists, I'm planning on focusing on improving the crofts and the telehandler will help when it comes to spreading sand on them - as well as hen manure."

"I have to return it in a year's time - but they might not want it back after all that!"

Western Isles starts its own Covid-19 infection testing service

(Continued from front page)

The following categories of patients will be offered testing as per current national guidance:

1. Individuals requiring hospital admission:

- Clinical or radiological evidence of pneumonia or
- Acute respiratory distress syndrome or
- Influenza-like illness (fever $\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ and at least one of the following respiratory symptoms, which must be of acute onset: persistent cough (with or without sputum), hoarseness, nasal discharge or congestion, shortness of breath, sore throat, wheezing, sneezing).

2. Any patient in hospital (whether a new admission or existing patient) with new respiratory symptoms, fever or worsening of a pre-existing respiratory condition.

3. Any symptomatic resident or staff member in a care home for whom, following clinical assessment, testing is considered appropriate.

4. Symptomatic key health, social care or Category 1 workers, or symptomatic household members of such workers where a negative test would allow an earlier return to work from self-isolation.

5. People being admitted to care homes from home, hospital or other location.

In addition to this, following discussion with Health

Protection, hospital clinicians are now able to offer testing to patients admitted to a Western Isles hospital for any reason. Furthermore, GPs and community physicians are also able to offer testing to people they see in primary care displaying symptoms of COVID-19 infection. These two measures will help to gain a clearer understanding of the local spread of the virus.

NHS Western Isles Chief Executive, Gordon Jamieson said: "Being able to test for COVID-19 here in the Western Isles marks a very welcome step forward for us.

"Local testing with a shorter timeframe for the results will allow us to manage patient demand better, and to inform patients and their families of results sooner than before."

LOCAL MEDICAL PRACTICES

Delivery of Prescriptions for Langabhat Medical Practice, Borge & Habost Surgery

Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (UOG) are assisting Langabhat Medical Practice, Borge and Habost Surgery by delivering prescriptions to the residents of the Galson Estate. Kind volunteers will be collecting the prescriptions from the clinic at 2pm and delivering them throughout the estate.

The volunteers will place the prescriptions at your door, knock at your door and then move two metres back before the door is opened. The volunteers will be adhering to strict hygiene practices to protect the safety of those receiving the medication.

Habost Surgery: Due to current circumstances, it would be helpful if patients could order their prescriptions by telephone. From 1st April, if you order your prescription, we will be issuing a two months' supply. Prescriptions will be delivered on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

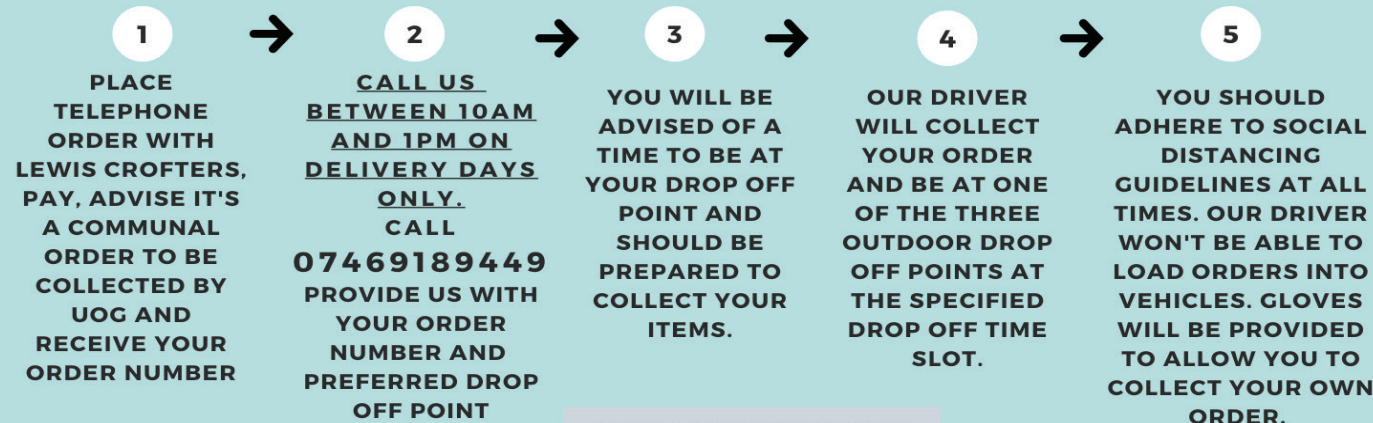
DELIVERY SERVICE FROM LEWIS CROFTERS TO GALSON ESTATE DURING COVID-19



Please note we will only be able to take relatively small /essential orders across in a transit van. We ask for your patience while we trial this service which is in an effort to support the crofting community during this time of crisis. We expect to run the service on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday each week and we will review on an ongoing basis. If you can get items on the estate then please do so. This service is for items that need to be brought from town and is primarily to support those who aren't going to drive to town for just a few items.

DELIVERIES WILL BE: MONDAY WEDNESDAY FRIDAY

YOU MUST LET US KNOW YOU WANT A COLLECTION BY CALLING US BETWEEN 10AM AND 1PM ON ONE OF THESE DAYS. WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO COLLECT ON THE SAME DAY.



DROP OFF POINTS

BARVAS COMMUNITY CENTRE
CLAN MACQUARRIE COMMUNITY CENTRE
SPORSNIS

PLEASE DO NOT OVER ORDER!
 IF AN ORDER IS TOO LARGE FOR THE RUN WE WE WON'T BE ABLE TO TAKE IT TO A DROP OFF POINT.

Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn
 A Company Registered in Scotland No: 273903
 A Registered Scottish Charity: SC036903

seo a-Nis

Shona Nic a' Mhaoilein



Clann

Tha mi ann an seachdain a trì a-nis às aonais an Sgitheanaich agus fhad 's a tha mi a' sgrìobhadh seo, chan eil aige ach aon uan ri fhaighinn agus gheibh e an uairsin air smaoineachadh air tilleadh dhachaigh. Bu chaomh leam a ràdh nach deach mi cho droll nam aonar 's gun do thòisich mi a' bruidhinn rium fhìn ach cha bhiodh sin buileach fìor! Mura biodh airson mo chuairt làitheil agus FaceTimes an-dràsta 's a-rithist le mo theaghlach, bhithinn an-dràsta a' coiseachd mun cuairt an taigh a' cabadaich rium fhìn 's a' dol às mo rian. Gu fortanach, faodaidh mise dìreach a bhith a' toirt a' chreid gur ann ris a' bhèibidh a tha mi a' bruidhinn...

Pàrtaidh

Ciamar a tha ur cuid cloinn a' dèiligeadh ris an staing anns a bheil sinn? Bidh nighean bheag mo phiuthair sia air a' mhìos seo agus leis gur e seo a' chiad latha-breith a bhios aice 's i anns an sgoil, bha i a' dol a dh'fhaighinn pàrtaidh mòr le caraidean. Tha i fhèin mothachail a-nis nach eil sin a' dol a thachairt, agus an-dèidh dhi an toiseach smaoineachadh air sgrìobhadh gu Boris a dh'fhaighneachd am b' urrainn dhuinn an glasadh-sluaigh a thogail fad latha, ghabh i ris agus tha i a-nis a' coimhead air adhart ri pàrtaidh nuair a bhios i seachd. Tha caraid eile dhomh agus bidh an nighean bheag aice trì aig deireadh na mìos agus bha BBQ gu bhith aca le teaghlach agus caraidean ach a-rithist bha aca ri innse dhi nach biodh ann ach mamaidh, dadaidh agus a phiuthair. Chan eil rian às nach eil e buileach duilich do chloinn cho òg sin, nach tuig carson nach fhaigh caraidean agus granaidh agus shen a thighinn a chèilidh. Tha iad rim moladh airson cho foighidneach agus cho tuigsinneach 's a tha iad mun chùis agus tha mi an dòchas nach bi e ro fhada mus faigh iad cothrom a bhith a' riagail am measg chàich a-rithist, mar bu chòir do chloinn a bhith a' dèanamh.

Cèilidh

Thàinig Mam agus Dad a chèilidh orm (aig astar!) an-dè agus chuir mi dà shèathair a-mach dhaibh aig a' gheata fhad 's a shuidh mise air sèithear eile pìos air falbh bhuaibh. Tha falt m' athair air a dhol uabhasach fada agus tha falt mo mhàthair air a dhol curlach, ach chan eil e gu mòran diofar dhaibh leis nach bi mòran dhaoine gam faicinn ach càch a chèile! Bha sinn air a bhith suidhe 's dòcha 20 mionaid agus nach ann an uairsin a thàinig 'Eilean Fraoich' à seacaid m' athair agus fhuair sinn blasad de 'A Rìbhinn Òig Bheil Cuimhn' Agad?' Nise chòrd seo rium fhìn ach dh'innis Mam dhomh gun robh e ris an dearbh rud sa mhadainn, a' seasamh aig mullach an staidhre leis an leabhar mar mhinistear a' searmonachadh san eaglais. Tha mi ag ionndrainn a bhith a' cèilidh orra agus a bhith a' faicinn mar a tha iad còmhla ach bha seo na thogail. Fhuair mi cèic beag no dhà cuideachd! Bidh iad fhèin ag ionndrainn an cuid cloinn cuideachd, ged a tha an tè as òige 22, agus cuiridh sibh geall gum bi pàrtaidh mòr againn airson gach cò-là-breith a chaidh a chur dheth a chomharrachadh nuair a bhios seo seachad.

Bidh mi feuchainn gun a bhith a' coimhead air na naidheachdan oir cha chreid mi gun atharraich mòran anns na beagan sheachdainean a tha romhainn. Chun uairsin, chan fhaigh sinn air càil a dhèanamh ach a bhith taingeil airson na th' againn agus na cothroman a th' ann a bhith a' tighinn cruinn còmhla... aig astair!

Lionel Sports Day 1947



The photo reproduced here is from a past issue of the Stornoway Gazette and was submitted to the newsletter, inviting readers to identify those who are featured. The caption underneath the photograph states, "SPORTS DAY FUN 1947: This photograph, which was kindly submitted to us by Mrs Catherine Macaulay, of 6 Kirkibost, shows Lionel School children enjoying their annual Sports Day in 1947.

If you are able to identify those present, please get in touch via email at: jasmine@uogtld.com

Spòrsnis Roof Appeal Updates

by Simon Amos

The local community have been donating generously and we are working on other funding possibilities, alongside some careful financial management with the help of our book-keeper Calum Iain Macleod.

Simon and Alex Gunn completed a concentrated stint on the roof with a grinder and paintbrush to tackle a lot of the corrosion and thanks to perfect weather a lot of progress was made.

We have now ordered new guttering with the donations so far raised and that will go up at the earliest opportunity.

The main job is to cut away and seal up the panel ends, then oversheet with panel sections that will be pre-cut by Kingspan. It's a big job when viewed as a whole, but we are taking it one step at a time and are well and truly on the way to resolving the problems.

Work inside is also going well - carpet cleaning proving to be quite time-consuming with so much floor space. The main hall will soon be fitted out with LED lighting, an improvement that will reduce our electricity costs by up to 80% and hopefully provide ideal lighting for sports and games.



Tom's Titbits

On more than one occasion it has been alleged by a certain well known retired Guga hunter that I do not read any other articles in *fios* apart from my own column, but this is not strictly true. I receive an emailed copy of this award-winning publication each week in order to be able to scrutinise what they've done in the edit department with my own offering. My good lady always buys a paper copy to support the cause and I don't pretend to studiously read every word but I do my bit. I squirm with jealousy when I read Shona's skilful use of the Gaelic language in her column and I seethed with annoyance when Mr Dunlop dared to put it in print that he deems it sad that Celtic Football Club should be handed the League title this season without another game being played. I scrutinise the Nature columns and I'm often embarrassed at how much about what's going on around me I don't know. Even the offerings by the Ministers of the Church do not escape my eagle eye.

My attention turned to the On the Edge column last week and two topics in particular. One was haircuts and beards as I had sworn at the beginning of lockdown that I wasn't going to shave or cut my hair until this was all over. I couldn't go out in public anyway so it didn't matter how I looked. Things were going well until one morning I looked in the bathroom mirror and saw someone resembling a cross between Boxcar Willie and Willie Nelson peering back at me. *Co liog a mach thu?* That was it. Out with the tools and off it all came, pony tail and all, and soon I was back to my usual smooth good-looking self.

The other item was spiders. Apart from me, everyone in this house is terrified of them including my two sons who are both over six feet tall, so I get the job of capturing them and arranging disposal thereof. When the family cower in corners and scream at me to squash the poor beasts with my size elevens, I refuse. Instead I fetch my humane disposal unit, which is a *sileagan* and a piece of tissue paper, and I go outside and set the poor creature free quite possibly to multiply and lead more of its offspring and mates back into my house to reside, but that's nature for you. The thinking behind this sympathetic approach is that if I'm ever in the wrong place at the wrong time minding my own business and doing nobody any harm I should be afforded the same kind of mercy.

The lockdown continues to be the top topic everywhere as people are now beginning to get restless and developing a



yearning to get back to work. The worry here is that we might get complacent and spoil the situation we have achieved through a bit of common sense, that of having no fatalities. As I write this, the equivalent of more than the population of the Western Isles have perished in the UK alone. Now there is a thought. There are nice stories coming out of our communities though. The Bethesda

Raffle raised an amazing amount of money which once again makes me proud to be an Islander.

Across the river here in Melbost Borge a local couple reached their Golden Wedding Anniversary. Their family on the mainland or their friends couldn't be with them so they faced the probability of celebrating this wonderful event on their own. On the afternoon of the big day we heard the sound of the bagpipes drifting over on the wind from Melbost, Borge. The friends and neighbours had done their bit and organised a wee 'socially distant' event outside the home of Zena and Donald John. Congratulations to them both and well done to the musicians and their friends. A similarly lovely gesture was made in Barvas last week where Jackie and Chrissie Ann celebrated their own fifty years of marriage. Aye, that's the way to do it right enough.

My vegetable plot, which in previous years contained only potatoes, is expanding by the day as I beaver away sowing beetroot, carrots, sprouts, peas, onions, spring onions, leeks and so on. If they all survive and flourish and I reap what I have sown we'll be OK for veg for some time, but memories of the ganja I attempted to grow a few years ago in the old car fill me with doubt. All being well it looks as if I may have plenty time to look after them as I have decided to retire from my work officially on the 31st of May. After over fifty years in the Motor Trade, the current situation and other circumstances have provoked this decision and I will certainly miss the daily interaction with people that the job involved. The other evening as I walked down to the shore alone and watched the sun slip over the horizon and also set on my working life, I felt reasonably content with life in general. In this wonderful community I have been blessed with a home, a wife and two sons and as far as I know reasonable health, along with fantastic neighbours and friends, so work doesn't really matter anymore. All good things come to an end sometime, I've done my bit and that's me finished with engines. Over and out.

Beannachd leibh an drasda
Tom



FOOD BANK BARVAS AND BRUE COMMUNITY CENTRE Commencing Tuesday 12th May 2020 The Food Bank will be Open Tuesdays: 3:15—4pm Fridays 3:15—4pm

You can contribute and leave food at the centre at the above times. Access can be gained via the side door to the left of the entrance and someone will be available to assist you.

The kinds of items that you can donate are:-

Cereal	Tinned Meat	Sugar
Tinned Soup	Tinned Fish	Pasta or Rice
Tinned beans	Tinned Fruit	Tea bags
Tinned Tomatoes	Tinned rice pudding or custard	Long Life Juice
Tinned vegetables (2 different types)	Biscuits	Long Life Milk
Jar of sauce	Chocolate	Spread (eg jam, honey, peanut butter)



Please ensure

the items are non-perishable, in date and well wrapped.

For those who require items from the food bank - The items will be delivered and dropped off at your home. Please contact any of the following to arrange this:-
Sarah—07927236450
Murdo—07770824552/840 284
Louis—07870362449

Please specify if you are gluten free, have allergies or intolerances so that the appropriate items will be given to you.

This will be a new food bank service provided for those that need it the most in the community and discretion is assured for anyone wishing to use this service.

This project is supported by Urras Oighreachd Bharabhais, Foundation Scotland and Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar



WANTED

Petrol mowers, dead or alive!

Cash waiting!

Also servicing and repairs done.

Tel Jonny on 07900254494

Following Rainbows to chart success

by Jasmine M. Wilkie

A Scottish charity single is making great waves in the official charts.

At the time of writing (5th May), the track "Follow the Rainbows", sung by the all-female band *Hanley and the Baird* is at number 3 in the Scottish Single Charts. It has racked up almost 40,000 hits on the music streaming platform Spotify and was also played by Derek Murray on Radio nan Gàidheal on Monday 4th May.

With all profits going to the charity SAMH, the Scottish Association for Mental Health, the track addresses life in isolation and offers uplifting lyrics amidst the global pandemic. What's even better – the song has a Ness connection.

Kerry Thomson, who joined the band as the drummer in January 2019, is the daughter of Ally Thomson, originally of Cross-Skigersta Road (mac Domhnall am Torraqchain). We were keen to discuss the ongoing success of the single with Kerry first-hand, and so in email communication, we asked how the song came about, what it feels like to have a top 3 single chart and, most importantly, about her links to our wonderful corner of the world.

Wondering how the charity single was created, Kerry told us: "The writers in Hanley and the Baird, Annette Hanley and Kirsty Baird, are also the Directors of Sing in the City, a choir business comprising of 18 choirs. When rehearsals had to stop because of COVID19, Kirsty moved fast to get all their rehearsals online. In addition to that, she tried to come up with as many activities as possible to keep everyone connected and occupied. One of these events were 'Zoom' chats [video call software] and in one of these conversations, they noted down words that were being used by the members describing how they were feeling." Phrases such as 'the gift of time' and 'waving through windows' were noted down, and these ended up being part of the lyrics. The song was then written in 2 hours, recorded, produced and marketed "in 10 days with a budget of £150." The track was released on Friday 24th of April and appears to be going from strength to strength.

Why did the band feel SAMH was an appropriate charity to donate the proceeds to? "When COVID19 is more under control and physical effects are not as large a concern, we thought, 'the anxieties will still be felt'. Mental health is bound to be affected because of long-term isolation, fears and worries, and we wanted to give something back to a charity to help them deal with a larger amount of people needing their services." To date, Sing in the City and Hanley and the Baird have raised £125,000 for charity.

And, of course, how does it feel to have a top 10 Scottish Singles Chart entry [Number 3 as of 5th May 2020]? "I know the writers of the song are ecstatic, along with the Sing in the City members. It's the stuff that dreams are made of. As the drummer in the band, I don't think it's quite sunk in yet. We are all working incredibly hard to promote the song and get it out there - it's an amazing feeling, though."

However, the venture has shown the unsigned band that it is a struggle for them to gain commercial airplay, even when they have the third most popular song in Scotland. As a result, the band are using social media platforms such as Twitter to contact radio stations and celebrities directly, in the hope that this will assist them in gaining exposure and perhaps further radio play.

Lastly, the most important question - what connections have you to the Ness area? "My whole family is from the island; it's my dad that's from Ness. I have family that live there, my uncle and aunty, cousins and my *seanair*. My holidays were spent there as a kid, playing in the crofts with my cousins and learning how to drive a tractor. Ness is a very stunning part of the world and I still visit every year."

We look forward to welcoming you back, Kerry!

To hear the track, search for the band on Facebook, or on music streaming platforms.

Last call for Midwife Norma

(Continued from front page)

She believes she was drawn to a nursing career "probably because my mother was the district nurse and midwife in Raasay", and so in 1977, Norma began her general nursing training at the old Raigmore Hospital in Inverness (which has subsequently been demolished and replaced by the new Raigmore Hospital). She retains "good memories" of her time spent in Inverness, and after completing her training, she applied "straight away" for midwifery. There was about a seven month wait between the two bouts of training, however, and so in the interim, Norma went to work in the Southside of Glasgow, in an Intensive Care Unit in the Victoria Infirmary, for about six months. At the same time, she did agency work in another hospital nearby, run by nuns.

With the six months completed, she returned to Raigmore once more, this time to complete her one-year midwifery training, which she obtained in either 1981 or 1982. She went to work in a maternity unit in Blackpool, "spreading my wings a bit!", and subsequently to Northampton, working in the Barratt Maternity Hospital, named after the famous shoemaking company of the area. She subsequently moved to Lewis with her young family and spent the next 23 years as a Midwife in the Western Isles Hospital Maternity Unit. Why was it that she chose to come to Stornoway? "I had sisters who had moved here - Jane Macintosh, who is married to Iain 'Tosh' Macintosh, the singer, and Joanie, who is married to art teacher Brian Jones".

What are some anecdotes about her career that she would like to share? "One strange thing was that the Senior Ward Sister at the time, who later became the Midwifery Manager at Raigmore Hospital, was a woman named Margaret Gunn, who was from Lewis. When Danny and I got married and moved to Ness, I was very surprised to find myself neighbour with Margaret Gunn, who I had not seen for over 30 years. So we used to visit her regularly, as she was only two doors down from us. We had plenty stories to share."

"When I first started in my midwifery career, very few men attended the birth of their child. I remember one incident with a Senior Midwife who would have rathered men never attend! When this unfortunate husband started to look very pale during the delivery of his child, she took delight in grabbing an old commode, plonked him onto it, wheeled him to the front door and left him sitting there to get some fresh air. He was invited back when all was over."

But if you hadn't been a nurse or a midwife, what do you think you would like to have done? "Something more in the design line I think - I used to say at one time that I wanted to be an architect. And then I decided that it would be more garden design that I would like to go into. I'm a keen gardener, but it's quite difficult in Ness, battling the wind!" Is gardening something she is looking forward to doing more of in retirement? "Oh yes, gardening, definitely. And walking, I love walking. Danny gave me a dog, Chester, as a retirement present, to keep me company on my walks. I would also like to entertain my family - my sisters, my grown-up children, my grandchild, nieces and nephews. And of course, spending more time with Danny doing the things we enjoy, such as gardening and peats. I really enjoy cutting the peats."

"My sister Jane is also retiring, and the plan had been to get over to maintain our family home in Raasay with more time on our hands. Obviously at the moment, that can't happen. But I am looking forward to spending more time there soon."

Thank you to Norma for sharing her stories with us, and thank you for her service over the years. We wish you a very happy retirement.

(Jasmine W Montgomery)

The exiles

by Donald A Morrison

'By Babel's streams we sat and wept. . '

We are in the seventh week of lockdown. If, like me, you are away from home, then the images of the old country constantly streaming on social media channels, bring pangs of nostalgia. What would Niall and Murdo, trapped in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, not give to see Bun Chasgro, Allt Mhaide and Cuisiadar? The full sun blazing down on Skigersta this week adds to the *cianalas*.

In the Old Testament the Children of Israel are in exile in Babylon, not for seven weeks, but for seventy years. Psalm 137 tells us they sat by the waters of Babylon and all they can do is weep and reflect on how far they are from the sanctuary in Jerusalem. They never thought this would happen. They will need to wait a long seventy years before they are back in the Lord's house.

In 2020 lockdown our own sanctuaries are silent - there is nobody in our churches. The exiled Old Testament church lamented in Babylon - we too lament that we cannot meet up with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. But we have just had seven weeks of it and the lockdown is a small sacrifice for us in the midst of the devastation of Covid-19. We appreciate the 'live-streaming' of church services. (Check out Rev. Ewen's address on Psalm 137 from last Sunday on the Cross Free Church website).

Dòmhnall Tulag, of Knockaird, a *Metagama* emigrant, sitting by the shores of Lake Erie recalled how he felt in exile: 'We were lonely and homesick. Two of us found work with a fishing company but this was seasonal as the lakes freeze in the winter. One Sunday we had nowhere to go but to sit on the bank of Lake Erie looking into space, the seashore at Knockaird passing in review. I thought singing a Gaelic Psalm would be in order. Psalm 137: "Aig struthaibh coimheach Bhàiloin shuidh sinn gu brònach bochd".

In an account of his life for Comunn Eachdraidh Nis, Donald remembers his early days in Ness, his departure for Canada aboard the SS *Metagama* in the spring of 1923, his loneliness in 'An Talamh Fuar', and eventually his settled life in Detroit. He died in Livonia, Detroit in 1997 - seventy-four years in exile.

If you have time, do read Donald's story - part 1 in this issue of the freesheet. He also features in the book *Metagama - A Journey from Lewis to the New World* by Jasmine's father, Jim Wilkie - a good read for these lockdown days.

Be safe, be kind, this storm will pass.



Bun Chasgro, Skigersta moor

Sunny Skigersta this week



The Story of a Ness Exile (Part 1)

The late Donald Macleod, Michigan, U.S.A. (*Dòmhnall Tulag*, formerly from Knockaird, Ness) recalls his departure for Canada aboard the SS *Metagama* in the spring of 1923.



"I grew up during World War I. I was going to school in the early part of the War, but the emphasis was not on education but on the military and looking forward to the time when we would be eighteen and join up. The War ended before we came of age and there was no further need for the military. The Militia was discontinued and the Naval Reserve would not accept recruits for a long time. It was through those channels that most Lewismen went to the mainland for the first time and, after serving their time, they were in a better position to join the labour force. The post-war generation did not have this outlet. British industry had not yet recovered from the effect of the War, and any openings were reserved for the ex-servicemen. For us, emigration was inevitable. Canada was the first to open the door in a way we could afford. We had little choice.

"I was twenty-one years old when I went on board the S.S. *Metagama*, anchored outside Stornoway Bay on the 23rd of April 1923 - a day that always remains fresh in my memory. Were we homesick? A stronger word would be more suitable! It was the kind of homesickness you could feel. A boy told me he was so blind with his tears that he could not see. We sailed north, and around the Butt of Lewis. There was deep silence among the three hundred Lewismen on board as our beloved Island faded in the distance with those whom we loved standing on its shores. For many, it was a last glimpse. Our destination was Toronto; there we parted. Life on the Canadian farm was quiet and simple. In many ways it was much like our own: there was no crime; Sabbath was kept; it was against the law to work on Sunday; shops were closed; many went to Church; no professional sport was allowed on Sunday (Sunday's law has since changed); no discrimination; food was plentiful. I was used to work, but it was work from morn' till dusk and wages were low. It was work, eat and sleep. Soon we drifted away when other work became available. We were lonely and homesick. Two of us found work with a fishing company but this was seasonal as the lakes freeze in the winter. One Sunday we had nowhere to go but to sit on the bank of Lake Erie looking into space, the seashore at Knockaird passing in review. I thought singing a Gaelic Psalm would be in order. Psalm 137: "Aig struthaibh coimheach Bhàiloin shuidh sinn gu brònach bochd" etc. It was not long before the mournful wail of my friend rose above the highest note.

"In time, however, I began to like Canada. I learned a new skill, driving a car. At the fishery, some trucking was involved, taking fish to market. Driving a truck was a step forward from the horse and cart, and I felt very important driving a load of fish to market. My boss loaned me an old car he wasn't using. I drove this car in my spare time, including running errands for him. I was beginning to fit in with the American way of life. I remained two years with this company.

"In the meantime, large numbers of fresh immigrants from Lewis began arriving in Detroit, both men and women, and the desire to meet with them grew very strong. When I had time off, I visited Detroit and met some of my old friends. Work was plentiful, with higher wages than in Canada. I decided to enter the United States and applied for permanent residence. When that was granted, I found employment with General Motors Corporation. There I enrolled in a trade school two evenings a week. Soon I bought my first car. I was very happy, and the desire to return to my homeland grew less and less."



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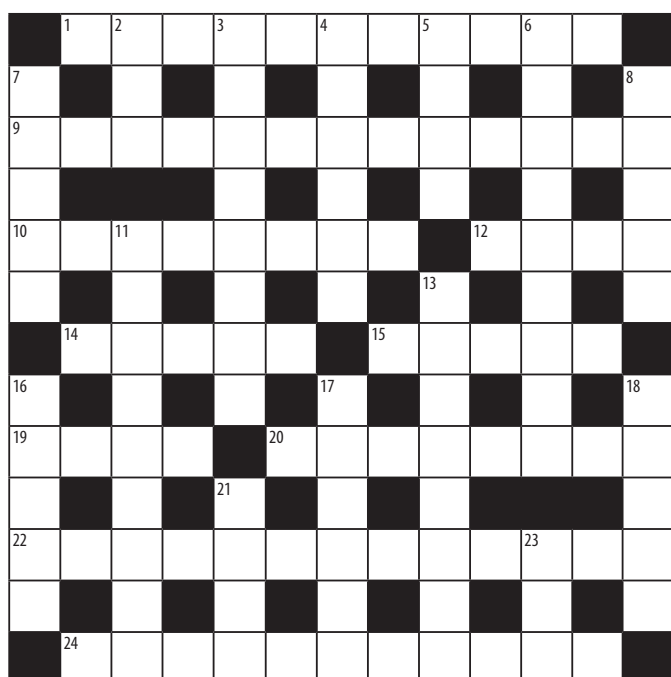
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Volunteers and contributors who supported this issue of the Ness-Barvas Community Newsletter:

Simon Amos, Lisa Maclean, Jasmine Wilkie, Shona Macmillan,
Samantha Hawkins, Tom Maciver, Alastair Dunlop, Neil Mackinnon,
Hugh MacInnes, Donald A Morrison, David Green.

If you are languishing in lockdown at home with time on your hands, do try and solve the puzzle and text or email your solution or attach a photo of the completed grid. It will encourage our compiler to keep pedalling her loom to produce more hand-woven puzzles and you may even get your name in the next issue of the freesheet! email: jasmine@uoglt.com mobile text: 07460 853 728

Ness - Barvas No.3 crossword 8 May 2020



ACROSS

- 1 Relating to business agreement (11)
- 9 Standing stone village (13)
- 10 Fred's feu underwent pain (8, anag)
- 12 Discouraged from using this now (4)
- 14 Annoyed with the village (5)
- 15 A boost, especially with gin! (5)
- 19 Conspire to grow vegetables here (4)
- 20 No light in this district? (8)
- 22 Rule with a rod of iron (7,6)
- 24 Kill - eaten by killer? (11)
- 16 A step by the river in full flood (5, anag)
- 17 Woodland deities (6)
- 18 Exploiting (5)
- 21 Neat volcano (4, anag)
- 23 Consume (3)

DOWN

- 2 Lubricate (3)
- 3 Serve art to travel (8, anag)
- 4 Learnt from deer horn (6, anag)
- 5 Gardening basket (4)
- 6 A Greek goddess, Rita hoped (9, anag)
- 7 Wearer of robe seems overweight (5)
- 8 Not sharp but direct (5)
- 11 Employment term for these times (9)
- 13 We look forward to being out of it (8)

Ness-Barvas 2 Crossword 24 April 2020 solution



Solved by A. Maciver, Livingston

Aig sruthan coimheach Bhàbiloin,
shuidh sinn gu brònach bochd;
An sin air Sion chuimhnich sinn,
is ghuileadh leinn gu goirt.

Salm 137: 1 [Sailm Dhaibhidh 1992]

And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and
you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not
one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD
your God promised concerning you. All have come to
pass for you; not one of them has failed.

Joshua 23:14 [ESV]

TRUMPISMS

Some may recall the satirical television puppet show, Spitting Image, which was broadcast on the ITV television channel between the mid-1980s and mid '90s. Among the many politicians and celebrities who were regularly ridiculed on the show was the then US president Ronald Reagan, with one particular sketch called 'The President's Brain is Missing' suggesting that Reagan was not particularly bright. Well, when it comes to comparing American presidents and the amount of grey matter between their ears, Reagan was a veritable genius compared to the current incumbent of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Before becoming US president, former thespian Reagan had been elected six times as head of the American Screen Actors Guild and later served two terms as Governor of California which, if it had been a country, would have the fifth biggest economy in the world. Therefore, the 'great communicator', as he was known, had accumulated substantial political cachet before subsequently becoming a two-term US President after succeeding Jimmy Carter in 1981.

Meanwhile, Domhnall Iain Trump is living proof that you do not need to be smart to be successful in business. Inheriting a small fortune from his father, as well as substantial loans from the family, Trump has over the years invested in property, hotels and casinos, regularly floating between solvency and bankruptcy, with a true picture of his current finances proving to be as clear as mud despite the best attempts of financial journalists. However, his characteristic self-belief and forceful manner has catapulted him into the big league, with business interest on both sides of the pond, including Scotland.

Recently, President Trump has outflanked the entire US scientific and medical community by coming up with a novel cure for a novel virus, suggesting that the American public inject themselves with bleach to clear the virus from their system. The problem with bleach is that it is just as likely to clear their system of their system! Announcing America's solution to the Covid-19 crisis to a stunned White House press room, the country's senior medical adviser squirmed uncomfortably in her chair as she muttered some words of caution about her president's latest foray into lateral thinking.

Such utterances are not entirely new for this grandson of Tong in Lewis. Apart from epidemiology, Domhnall Iain has proven to be a sage on a wide range of subjects. On global warming, he twitterized, *"It's really cold outside, they are calling it a major freeze, weeks ahead of normal. Man, we could use a big fat dose of global warming!"* Aiming to reassure his fellow Americans that the economic superpower's manufacturing base has little to do with the threat of industrial pollution to the planet, he Tweeted, *"The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."*

Meanwhile, on gun control, he shot his mouth off by blaming the mentally ill for the high levels of lead poisoning afflicting Americans, stating, *"No matter what you do - guns, no guns - it doesn't matter. You have people that are mentally ill. And they're gonna come through the cracks. And they're going to do things that people will not even believe are possible."*

Ever the diplomat, Trump was more than happy to accept that there are some decent Mexicans on both sides of the border, gushing, *"They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."*

Commenting on America's fight against terrorism and the use of appropriate interrogation techniques when interviewing 'bad people', he enthused, *"When you see the other side chopping off heads, waterboarding doesn't sound very severe."*

And there I was, moaning about Boris?

LOCKDOWN

Since the government imposed the current lockdown and published guidelines on how to avoid spreading the virus, I've certainly tried my best to do my bit, behaving as if Kim Jong-Un himself had issued the decree on pain of having my wotsits roasted over a peat fire if I erred from the official government position. Indeed, over the past month I've washed my hands so often that they're beginning to look like flippers!

Despite our very best attempts to adhere to the guidelines, some of those at the very top of the coronavirus strategy pyramid have hardly fully embraced their own advice on how to help 'flatten the curve'. Last month, Scotland's Chief Medical Officer, Catherine Calderwood, was forced to quit her £120,000 per year post after taking herself and her family off on weekend vacations to their second home in Fife, contravening the restrictions on travel that she herself had helped draw up. Now, Professor Neil Ferguson, whose advice to UK prime minister Boris Johnson led to the nationwide lockdown, has also been forced to quit as a government adviser after conceding an "error of judgement" following revelations that he had been visited at his home by his girlfriend. The message, as it often is at such times, appeared to be, "Do as I say, not as I do".

If the folk designing and implementing measures to control the spread of the virus cannot follow their own advice, how can they expect the mass of the population to adhere strictly to the guidelines and unselfishly confine themselves within their own homes?

On the whole, people have behaved impeccably over the past month or so since lockdown was introduced, observing social distancing and employing good hygiene practices, limiting public appearances to essential visits to the shops, for work purposes, looking after livestock or indeed wielding the old *tarasgeir* for those of us who still maintain an open fire or stove. As for myself, I do my bit to minimise the risk of spreading the virus and keep a hankie handy when I'm on the phone, just in case I cough or sneeze and pass the virus down the line – the government didn't even have to instruct me on that one(!)

However, the panic buying in the early days of the pandemic that led to shortages of some goods revealed that we can be incredibly selfish at times when, as they say, 'the chips are down'. I was disheartened to hear of an incident outside one of the Stornoway supermarkets recently when a person in the queue temporarily vacated her place to help a distressed disabled shopper to her car with her purchased goods. On returning to the queue,

the good Samaritan was summarily ushered to the back of the line by a supermarket employee, making her good deed for the day a costly one. The fact that the store employee adopted this rather uncharitable position, and that those in the queue accepted it, did little to support the view that we are always as considerate and benevolent as we would like to think we are.

Despite showing definite signs of ageing as I draw ever-closer to my sunset years, I wasn't around for the last global pandemic that struck this country back in 1918/19. However, between then and now, I have had some of the usual infections and viruses that afflict most of us at one time or another as we wade our way through life. I remember having chickenpox as a child, with my skin spattered with the irritating tell-tale spots that left you incredibly itchy, as if a swarm of midges had descended with miniature feather dusters to torment you. I also contracted the mumps at some point which, as I recall, felt like I had swallowed a turnip, whole - *cnuimhean* and all - and that it had lodged somewhere behind my Adam's apple. The measles, or *a' ghriùthlach* as it is known in these parts, was yet another burden that most children growing up at that time had to bear.

It's a wonder we survived our teenage years with all those afflictions going on. For those that fortunately did, it should hopefully serve as a confidence booster as we head into the latest virus that's doing the rounds.

OIL

As a consequence of the Coronavirus pandemic and an over-supply, the price of oil went through the floor a few weeks ago, hitting an all-time low. One particular US contract for oil was set at an unprecedented \$40 a barrel! On the surface, this might not appear that unusually low as the North Sea has suffered at times due to Brent Crude reaching these kinds of levels. However, in this particular instance, the \$40 price was the amount that producers were willing to pay buyers to take it off their hands!

Demand for oil has collapsed as whole industries have been forced to shut down due to the pandemic as factories close, aircraft sit idle at airfields around the world and both commercial and private transport is largely at a standstill. The oil that has historically lubricated the world economy is not currently required in anything like the volumes it used to be.

No doubt, the teenage environmentalist Greta Thunberg will be jumping for joy on her canoe, with her anxious parents hoping the bottom won't fall out of it any time soon. Seriously though, Greta and environmental activists will be in celebratory mood as far as the planet is concerned with the Earth's atmosphere enjoying some respite at present, with estimated fossil-fuel-related carbon dioxide emissions normally reaching around 36 billion metric tonnes per year (ourworldindata.org).

However, before car drivers start rubbing their hands with glee in anticipation of cheap petrol over the coming months, the suits will no doubt find a way to overcome the negative oil price. I'm not holding my breath for the day when I arrive at the pumps in Swainbost and be greeted by shopkeeper Willie proclaiming, "When you're done mate, I've left a large bag of money on the counter for you to take with your fuel".

Okay, maybe I've been in lockdown too long!

Congratulations!

CROSS

Sofia Grace Macdonald was born on Saturday 25 April in Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, the first child for Neil, formerly 19 Cross, and Laura from North Tolsta. Our congratulations to them and to the grandparents and the extended families. Sofia Grace, who weighed in at 9lb 1oz, is the second grandchild for Finlay and Christine in Cross, and the first for Donald and Rhoda in North Tolsta.



John A Graham, see Eoropie

EOROPIE

Happy Birthday to John A Graham, 28 Eoropie who turns 6 years old on the 8th May. Lots of love from all the family.



Sofia Grace Macdonald, see Cross

LIONEL

Rev. Iain Alasdair Macleod, of Glasgow and 4 Lionel, was inducted to his first settled charge as a Church of Scotland minister last Friday. All the proceedings were conducted in a video meeting online. Once Rev. Iain Alasdair had satisfactorily answered the prescribed questions he was formally appointed as minister of the Assynt and Stoer parish. Many of the congregation and some friends from Ness were able to watch the service on the internet and to exchange greetings with the new minister and his wife, Màiri.

Rev. Iain Alasdair was brought up in Glasgow. Both his parents were from Ness, his father, Seonaidh 'Tò', from Cross and his mother, Gormal, from Lionel. Before he studied for the ministry at the Highland Theological College, Iain Alasdair was a director of the Faith Mission following a career in financial services in industry, and later as a financial consultant. Màiri, from Harris, works in the Faith Mission bookshop in Glasgow.



Rev. Iain Alasdair Macleod, see Lionel

During the lockdown, the minister will be conducting his pastoral duties and preaching online from his home in Glasgow but as soon as the circumstances allow he will be moving to the manse in Lochinver.

We extend our prayerful good wishes to him and to Màiri as they settle into their coastal parish on the other side of the Minch.

Sporting Viewpoint

by Alastair Dunlop



Good news, Ness are currently top of the Lewis and Harris Football League. How can this be with no football being played you might reasonably be asking? I refer you to the league table below organised by the local association, asking players or ex-players to run 5K and submit their times. At least five players have to do so to get a league position. In order of excellence Micheil R Smith, Neil Morrison, William Macrury, Donald J Smith (Saggy) and myself have done so, and our aggregated time puts us at the top. In the individual table Micheil is second behind Michael Macmillan (United and Island Games athlete). Runners are choosing their own route and asked to be sensible, e.g. starting at the top of the Clisham is deemed to be cheating. I also noted runners were told not to be like Ross Barkley (Chelsea FC) who posted an excellent time recently. It transpired that Mr Barkley ran 1K then rested and repeated. The time has to be continuous. Naturally runners are looking for a route without any hills but this is difficult in Ness. I know Micheil ran from his house in Aird Dell to Galson Lodge. I ran from Eoropie to the grid in Skigersta. I think I will try his route next time. No driving there of course but I can cycle. Westside FC are in 12th place and needing a fifth person to run. The league is being updated constantly, check Facebook and I hope we are still on top when this appears on Friday. It is not too serious - anyone can post a time (well, loosely connected) and you are asked to donate to the charity Run for Heroes (NHS).

Ness Runners, our local club are currently doing something similar to motivate runners and help the Crossroads charity. They asked for names of those willing to run in a virtual three person relay team with each person completing either two, three or four miles. The teams were drawn randomly and each person has until the 16th May to submit their time. I will be with Kevin Macrae (I hope his running is as good as his cycling) and Iain Cheocaidh. Looking at all the teams I will put pressure on Norman Ferguson, Alison Tiger and Amy Rigg by calling them favourites. Sorry to be boring for non-runners, but just to add many locals were also running 3 or 5K last Saturday as part of SRAC virtual events. The roads around Cross Skigersta and Barvas must have been busy, spread apart of course. Eighty two runners completed the 5k and youngsters Charlie Morrison from Barvas and Murray Macdonald from North Dell were 5th and 6th. I note Scott Macrury was next in 19.09 secs. If he submits that time to the football league it will further strengthen our lead at the top. Sisters Emily and Rachel Murray were 2nd and 3rd females.

I will finish with a victory. Definitely not sport but the 75th anniversary of VE Day falls this week. My mother worked for the Scottish National Bible Society in the forties. She told me she watched the big parade in Glasgow city centre from her office while she was working. Five long years of war and no holiday to celebrate, things were a bit tougher then.

Team	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 5	Total
Ness FC	00:17:15	00:18:29	00:19:59	00:20:18	00:20:45	01:36:46
Back FC	00:18:45	00:19:07	00:19:28	00:20:14	00:20:37	01:38:11
Point FC	00:17:46	00:18:58	00:21:24	00:22:56	00:23:45	01:44:49
Aths FC	00:19:53	00:20:19	00:20:54	00:21:40	00:23:18	01:46:04
United	00:16:59	00:18:09	00:22:34	00:25:00	00:25:08	01:47:50
Wilga Ladies	00:20:26	00:24:38	00:25:00	00:25:25	00:25:38	02:01:07
Association	00:22:14	00:22:50	00:24:05	00:25:54	00:26:37	02:01:40
Best of Rest	00:19:51	00:22:34	00:25:22	00:25:32	00:28:45	02:02:04
Carloway FC	00:21:13	00:22:18	00:26:18	00:26:39	00:26:47	02:03:15
Westside	00:19:50	00:20:27	00:21:26	00:21:50		01:23:33
Lochs	00:20:38	00:23:43	00:27:47	00:30:11		01:42:19
Harris	00:19:43					00:19:43

If you have any birthdays, anniversaries, or special occasions for mentioning in the freesheet please email:

jasmine@uogtld.com

CalMac hopes for another quiet holiday weekend

Despite passenger and vehicle numbers being down 95% across CalMac's 28 routes, the ferry operator is hoping for a repeat of Easter this May holiday weekend when people heeded the advice to stay at home.

CalMac is continuing its checks on people travelling for non-essential reasons with port staff now asking to see a driver's licence for proof that they are an island resident, or evidence that they are a key worker, before being allowed to board.

CalMac is reinforcing the government's stay home, protect the NHS, save lives message after seeing a recent increase in people trying to travel for day trips, particularly on the Clyde.

'The good weather may tempt people to get out and about, but I would urge everyone to continue to follow government guidelines and stay home. Getting a day trip to the beach is not essential travel and we will have no hesitation in refusing to board anyone who does not have a legitimate reason to sail with us,' said CalMac's Director of Operations, Robert Morrison.

In just Largs, Wemyss Bay and Ardrossan CalMac turned away 35 people hoping to get on the ferries last weekend.

'It should not have to be down to staff to ensure people are not travelling. There has to be an element of personal responsibility taken and people really need to be asking themselves is my journey really necessary. If it's for leisure and recreation the answer is clearly no,' added Robert.

Spòrsnis roof appeal

<https://localgiving.org/appeal/Sporsnis-roof/>

We invite readers to keep in mind the spòrsnis roof appeal (details in Simon's article in the last issue of the Ness-Barvas Newsletter) and on page 3 to consider making a donation. Any amount will make a difference and all the funds raised will be used for the purchase of materials to fix the roof. Ceud taing

Thanks from *fios*

To: Christina Macleod, Nairn; Christina's daughter, Anne Macinnes; Angus Murray, North Tolsta and Alina Macleod, Point for their kind donations.

PROPOSED ASSIGNATION OF A CROFT

DOLINA NICHOLS is applying to the Crofting Commission for consent to assign the tenancy of the croft at **14 CALLICVOL, BARVAS, ISLE OF LEWIS** to **CATRIONA ELSPEETH MUNRO**, 14 Port of Ness, Isle of Lewis, HS2 0XA.

If you consider you have a relevant interest in this application, you may submit comments in writing to the Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW or email info@crofting.gov.scot within 28 days from the date of publication of the advert.

Please note that any comments you provide are part of an open process and will be made available to interested parties. Your comments would also be released under a Freedom of Information enquiry.

PPE from Hubs For Unpaid/Family Carers and Personal Assistants

After a statement released by the Scottish Government, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar announced on 29th April that three local hubs based on Lewis/Harris, Uist and Barra could extend their provision of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) to include unpaid/family carers and personal assistants. These hubs, known as Social Care Hubs, will now be the primary model for distribution of PPE supplies to the whole social care sector, for carers who are unable to source PPE through their normal routes.

Social Care Hubs are located throughout Scotland. They are geographically designated points of contact that are managed by Scotland's 31 Health & Social Care Partnerships for PPE stock allocation for Scotland's Social Care sector, which is made up of private, public and third sector organisations.

The Hubs' stocks are primarily for people who cannot get hold of PPE themselves. Thus, if a carer is still able to access PPE supplies through their normal route, they are expected to continue to do so. But carers are assured that the Hub will provide supplies if these routes dry up - it is anticipated that as demand for PPE increases, traditional supply routes may be affected. Where the cared for person has received a letter regarding shielding measures, these people will be prioritised.

The Hubs will be open **Mon - Fri, from 9:00 AM-5:00 PM**. Provider representatives and individual carers may be eligible to access stock through their designated Hub. Any order should be placed in advance by calling **01851 600 501 or 07970262732**, asking for the **PPE Hub**.

Carers are expected to collect their PPE themselves, or have made alternative arrangements agreed with by the Hub. Where a family member is unable to pick up the PPE from the Hub, then the Hub will normally make arrangements for the PPE to be delivered to the carer's address. Hubs also can assist in providing urgent PPE within normal working hours. If the emergency arrives out-with normal working hours, then Health Services will be involved given it will be a clinically suspected or confirmed COVID - 19 case and if there is a need for PPE, Health Services will provide PPE until the Hub re-opens.

No formal verification should be required to prove someone is a carer. However, the Hub will want to assure themselves of the legitimacy of requests, and that PPE is being supplied to those carers on the basis of need.

In the statement released by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, a non-attributed spokesperson said: "Our main approach will be one based on trusting the individual carer. They will know their caring situation best. However, Hubs may need to make some decisions about need and prioritisation.

"A small number of questions will be asked in order to understand whether unpaid carers contacting us are eligible for PPE. We want to avoid carers travelling to their local Hub only to discover they are ineligible.

"These questions will also ensure a degree of consistency in decision-making around this between different Hubs. The questions take into account the COVID-19 advice for unpaid carers providing personal care. This advice is now available on the Scottish Government website [and] Hubs will make decisions on eligibility for PPE in line with this advice.

"It will be important for us, as your local Hub representatives to be working collaboratively with local carers' groups, who will be receiving queries from carers on access to PPE and may be able to support this process."

Spòrs Nàdair

THOSE OF YOU FOLLOWING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GALSON ESTATE TRUST ON SOCIAL MEDIA MAY HAVE NOTICED SOME 'NATURE WORKSHEETS' BEING UPLOADED TO OUR VARIOUS PLATFORMS.

These worksheets, entitled 'Spòrs Nàdair' (Nature Fun), were designed as a collaboration between the Galson Estate Trust and Clara Risi, the Western Isles Community Ranger for the John Muir Trust. Clara splits her time in the role between the Galson Estate Trust, North Harris Trust and West Harris Trust, and, usually, she works with volunteer groups, leads guided walks and completes habitat monitoring surveys, amongst other duties. With restrictions on many of these activities, however, Clara is busy working on several other projects, including creating these nature worksheets for children.

'Spòrs Nàdair' worksheets are aimed at getting young ones active, whether this be indoors or outdoors. Recent examples have shown us how to create many useful, informative and exciting things: constructing bird baths, identifying creepy crawlies on our doorsteps and writing creatively about our seas and shores. Gaelic content features on every worksheet to aid with comprehension, or to learn new vocabulary, meaning the sheets can be used for a variety of learning purposes.

In an email, Clara explained why these worksheets are an important resource during the current restrictions: "[The worksheets] are a great resource to get active and crafty; engaging with the natural world, even when confined to smaller spaces. A recent activity worksheet showed you how to make a bird feeder out of things you can find at home – as the birds arrive back from their long migrations to breed- these feeders can provide them with a much-needed snack! All these activities are great for helping our wildlife and giving the wee ones an important link to nature, as well as a break from school-work during these isolating times."

The 'Spòrs Nàdair' worksheets are available to download from the Loch Stiapabhat website (<https://www.lochstiapabhat.com/activities>), and can be printed off for use. If you create something from the worksheets, why not tag the Galson Estate Trust on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram (@UOG)? Or, email your creations to: jasmine@uogtld.com






SPÒRS NADAIR

NATURE FUN

4

M' AINM / MY NAME: _____

GNÌOMH AN-DIUGH / TODAY'S ACTIVITY:
Make your own windcatcher
Cruthaich inneal a ghlacas a' ghaoth

Signs of Spring are popping up! **Abair gu bheil an t-Earrach oirnn a-nis.**

Make a wind catcher with items you collect from nature.

To make your own windcatcher follow the steps below. **Lean na ceumannan fodha!**

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e-Cèilidh

On Saturday 9th May, host Iain "Costello" Maciver will be joined by local musicians for the second broadcast of e-Cèilidh – a production by the Comhairle's Education department.

Livestreamed fortnightly on **Saturdays at 7.30pm**, e-Cèilidh will be available to watch live online through the new dedicated e-Cèilidh website:

<http://www.eileansiareceilidh.com/>

Every fortnight the cèilidh will feature one host performing live items as well as introducing pre-recorded video contributions from other musicians and members of the local community.

Contributions are invited from members of the local community of any age, to give the events a true community involvement feel. These contributions should be a maximum of 5 minutes in length and can be in any musical genre.

Each e-Cèilidh will include items from a mix of musical genres with scope to have genre specific nights as the bank of musical contributions grows.

In addition to the e-Cèilidh, the Comhairle is hosting **live Facebook Cèilidhs every Friday and Saturday evening from 9pm**, with various local artists.

The programme for the next weeks is as follows:
Friday 8th May at 9pm – Iain "Spanish" Mackay

Saturday 9th May at 7:30pm – e-Cèilidh with host Iain "Costello" Maciver

Saturday 9th May at 9pm – Iain "Tosh" Macintosh

Village WhatsApp Groups

A WhatsApp group has been set up for each village on the estate to allow residents to stay in touch, offer support, seek support and generally stay connected.

If you have not yet been contacted about joining a WhatsApp group, but would like to be added to the group for your village, please message 07469189449 and specify your name and village. The group is for many people, so please be mindful of not posting lots of details. Just ask for help and someone in the group will get in touch for the specifics of your request. It is not a service to replace emergency services or other support services. As a community we want you to know that someone will be around to help with some of the smaller things.

75th anniversary of victory in Europe by Donald A Morrison

TODAY, 8 May, is the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe when Nazi Germany capitulated to the Allies in the Second World War. There were plans for many VE75 national commemorations but Covid-19 has curtailed all communal events and parades. The Queen will address the nation on the BBC at 9pm tonight, the exact time her father, King George VI, gave a radio address on May 8 1945. Earlier, at 11am there will be a two-minute national silence to remember the war dead and the declaration of victory in Europe

However, not everyone will be thinking of those who served, judging by the remarks on social media channels in recent days. But we commend all who served to be honoured with remembrance, including those from our own communities who are listed in the *Roll of Honour 1939-45 Ness-Bernera*. Today, it is thought, that just two out of the hundreds from the Ness villages who served are alive – Calum Aonghais Fhionnlaigh in New York and Màiri Sheonaidh Bhig in Lionel.

Over the years *fios* has remembered the generations who served in the two World Wars. One of the poignant events of WWII we covered was the loss of 22 serving WRENS in a U-boat attack on an Atlantic convoy in 1941, and once again we remember them today in this page, along with all from our own villages who served King and country during the conflict.

The harrowing loss of ss *Aguila* on the 'nightmare convoy'

On 19 August 1941, five hundred miles out in the western Atlantic, SS *Aguila*, the Commodore ship of Convoy OG71, was struck by two torpedoes and sank within 90 seconds. The *Aguila* was hit 'in the fourth watch of the night' shortly after 3am, and out of a complement of 161 there were just 16 survivors. Six of the survivors were later killed when the tug *Empire Oak* was attacked by the same U-boat wolfpack on 22 August.

Two lads from the islands were among those who perished on the *Aguila*; Roderick Macrae, 25 Leurbost, age 18 and John Mackinnon from Bruernish, Barra, who was 24. But it was the loss of twenty-two young women - one naval nursing sister (QARNNS) along with twenty-one officers and ratings from the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) - that added another tragic dimension to the Battle of the Atlantic.

The twenty-one Wrens lost on the *Aguila* were cypher officers and wireless telegraph ratings who had volunteered for overseas service. Three of them were from Scotland - Mary Grant, age 26 (Inverness), Margaret Barnes, 18 (Edinburgh) and Catherine Slaven, 19 (Glasgow).

The convoy of 36 vessels, including Royal Navy escorts, assembled in the North Channel on 13 August and set a course north of Ireland and far to the west, out of range of enemy aircraft, before heading south. The destination was Lisbon and Gibraltar. The *Aguila* - pre-war, a cargo and passenger steamer on the popular cruise and trade route to Madiera and the Canaries - had been designated to provide quarters for Vice Admiral Patrick Parker, the senior commander of Convoy OG71, and his staff.

THE CRUEL SEA

One of the convoy escort ships was the Flower class corvette, HMS *Campion*. Her company included two Lewis RNR seamen, John Maclean (Iain Mòr Raibhach, 141 Cross Skigersta) and John Maciver (Kneep, Uig). Also on one of the convoy escorts, HMS *Campanula*, was Nicholas Monsarrat, author of the novel, 'The Cruel Sea'. His experiences as a Lieutenant RNR on OG71 and his five years on Atlantic convoys formed the basis of his story.

After *Aguila* was lost, convoy OG71 continued to be stalked by up to nine U-boats. Just before midnight on 22 August the Irish registered coal boat, *Clonlara*, was hit and in the early hours of Saturday 23 August MV *Stork*, with a volatile cargo of cans of petrol, was sunk. Shortly afterwards, one of the escorts, corvette HMS *Zinnia*, was torpedoed.

Campion was called to search for survivors. A 16ft rowing boat was lowered with 19 year-old Leading Seaman RN Geoff Drummond as coxswain. He requested the two RNR Lewismen, Maclean and Maciver to join him in the search for survivors from the oil-covered sea. The rescue of the *Zinnia* survivors is described in the book 'Nightmare Convoy' by Paul Lund & Harry Ludlam: 'It was difficult to get a grip on slippery oil-soaked survivors and haul them into the boat. Three men, gasping for breath with oil clogging their nostrils and eyes, were pulled to safety and taken to *Campion*'. The little dingy went on to save another nine 'half-dead men from the filthy, oil covered sea. . '

By the time the convoy reached the relative safety of the port of Lisbon four hundred lives had been lost along with eight merchant ships and two naval escorts.

FIFTY-FOUR YEARS LATER

In 1995, a photograph was sent to the *Stornoway Gazette* looking for information about the two Lewis sailors.

Mary Mackenzie, daughter of John Maclean, and Annie Smith, daughter of John Maciver, recognized their respective fathers and responded to the sender of the photo - Geoff

Drummond the young coxswain of the *Campion* rescue boat. Correspondence was exchanged and Mary and Annie and their families found out for the first time about the heroic actions of their fathers in the dark days of the war.

In 1946 John Maciver married Catherine Thomson of 3 Habost (Katag Sheumais). John Maclean married Mary Morrison, 69 Cross Skigersta (Màiri Sheonaidh Dhàidhidh).

John Maclean died in April 1986 at age 74 and John Maciver, who died in December 1989, was 76. It is fitting that the two shipmates were laid to rest near each other in Habost Cemetery.

MEMORIAL

The lost Wrens are listed in the WRNS Book of Remembrance in the church of St.Mary-le-Strand London with the inscription from St Matthew 14:25:

'And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.'

The island boys lost on the *Aguila*, Roderick Macrae and John Mackinnon, are remembered on memorials in Lochs and Barra and on national monuments, along with all those from 'nightmare Convoy' OG71 who perished.

The 21 Wrens lost on SS *Aguila*

Bacon, Phyllis, aged 21
Barnes, Margaret Watmore, 18
Benjamin, Cecily Monica Bruce, 20
Blake-Forster, Cecelia Mary
Bonsor, Dorothy
Chappe-Hall, Margaret Eulalia, 26
Cooper, Madeleine Alice, 31
Grant, Mary, 26
Joy, Alix Bruce, 24
Macpherson, Florence, 35
McLaren, Victoria Constance,
Miller, Kathleen, 34
Milne Home, Isabel Mary, 23
Norman, Mildred Georgina, 21
Ogle, Christine Emma, 34
Reith, Josephine Caldwell, 28
Shepherd, Elsie Elizabeth
Slaven, Catherine Johnston, 19
Smith, Beatrice Mabel, 30
Waters, Ellen Jessie
Wells, Rosalie, 33

Queen Alexandra Royal Naval Nursing-Sister lost on *Aguila*

Kate Ellen Gribble, 34

In the *Roll of Honour 1939-1945 Ness-Bernera*, 21 young women from Ness to Barvas are listed as having served as Wrens during WWII

Marion M Macleod, Tigh-an-Uillt, Port
Mary Ann Macdonald, 3 Lionel
Christina Gillies, 26 Lionel
Joan Rickman, 15 Eorodale
Christina Maclean, 26 High St, Skigersta
Dolina Murray, 4 Cross Skigersta
Mary Morrison, 47 Cross Skigersta
Margaret Morrison, 47 Cross Skigersta
Agnes Finlayson, 67 Cross Skigersta
Annie Finlayson, 67 Cross Skigersta
Christina Macleod, 116 Cross Skigersta
Effie Macdonald, 126 Cross Skigersta
Joan Macdonald, 126 Cross Skigersta
Christina Morrison, 130 Cross Skigersta
Margaret Macdonald, 16 Swainbost
Katie Ann Murray, 20 Swainbost
Dolina Weir, 39 Swainbost
Murdina Morrison, 5 Cross
Rachel Macritchie, 33 Cross
Annie Gillies, 28 South Galson
Murdina Matheson, 39 Borge

The lockdown freesheet football memories (3)

TWENTY YEARS AGO the start of a new millennium was commemorated in Ness with many events. *Ceilidh san Iar Thuath* in July was a grand affair with a large marquee at Fivepenny and activities throughout the district.

In the Lewis and Harris league, Ness were defending the title they had secured with an 89th minute goal against Point in August 1999.

But our focus in this memory page is on a match between the all-conquering Ness side of 1984 and the team of 2000, played on a foggy night in July 2000 as part of the millennium celebrations.

This July, the Covid-19 silence and the corncrake will take over Fivepenny machair. No Gala Day anyway. And football? - sadly, very unlikely.

Millennium Challenge Match

Ness 1984 4-5 Ness 2000

Report from *fios* 28 July 2000

by Laura Macritchie?

ON Wednesday evening a large crowd gathered at Fivepenny to watch the current League champions battle it out with the League and Highland Amateur Cup champions of 1984. Conditions were not ideal, as, due to thick fog, you could barely see across the width of the field.

The Ness side's starting line-up was without regular strikers Angus Morrison and Ivor Finlayson as well as their captain George MacAskill.

In what was a highly entertaining match it was evident from the start that the younger Ness side were determined to fire the ball past their manager, Billy Flower.

The current Ness side scored the opening goal when a shot from DJ 'Saggy' Smith was deflected past Flower.

Their lead was soon extended to three goals to nil with goals from Donald 'Bleach' MacLeod and Murdo 'Mojo' MacLean.

However, the '84 side did manage to pull a couple of goals back before half time. The first came from Alastair Dunlop, after which he received resounding cheers from all around him. Murdo 'Corrie' MacRitchie added to the veterans' score sheet before half time, firing a fine effort into the back of the net.

The half time score stood at 3 - 2 to the 'youngsters'.

The Stornoway Pipe Band appeared at half time to play a few marches to entertain the spectators.

A raffle was also drawn where the first prize, a football autographed by the 1984 side, was won by Angus 'Bean' Morrison from South Dell. The second and third prizes, Sportsworld gift vouchers and 'Danu anns an Tent' tickets, were not claimed during the interval.

Both sides added two goals to the score line in the second half. The '84 sides goals coming from Neil MacRury and a penalty by Donald John Smith. Franco Petrucci scored for the current Ness side as did 'Bleach' MacLeod, adding a second goal to his tally.

Both team captains were presented with commemorative trophies after the match. The presentations were made by Miss Ness FC, Karen Campbell.

The evening's entertainment continued inside where the Pipe Band played a few more airs.

Stirling-based band East of Eden supplied the rest of the evening's music, allowing the footballers and spectators to dance the night away.



NESS FC 1984 Back Row: John 'Dods' Macfarlane (Referee), James Thomson, John 'Pongo' Munro, John 'Cloddie' Macleod, Billy Flower, Alasdair Iain Thomson, Calum Finlay Morrison, Alastair Dunlop, Donald 'Ba' Macdonald
Front Row: Murdo 'Kojie' Smith, Murdo 'Corrie' Macritchie, Iain 'Tod' Mackenzie, Donald John Smith, Neil MacRury, Derek Morrison, Donald 'Domhnall Sheumais' Finlayson



NESS FC 2000 Back Row: Neil Lumsden, Gordon Buchanan, Steven Macritchie, Alasdair Stewart, Iain Mackenzie, Donald John 'Saggy' Smith, Kevin Macdonald, Murdo John Graham
Front Row: Martin Macleod, Murdo 'Mojo' Maclean, Franco Petrucci, Angus 'Tanky' Macdonald, Donald 'Bleach' Macleod, Donald MacRury, Donald 'Cleddie' Macleod.



During the Challenge Match, Kay Gunn, an organiser of *Ceilidh san Iar Thuath* presented Marina Macleod of Cross with two tickets for the Big Tent entertainment. Marina was the winner of a 'Spot the Difference' competition in *fios*

Isles MP reminds crofters to submit Single Application Form (SAF)

Isles MP Angus B MacNeil is reminding crofters to submit their Single Application form (SAF) as the closing date for submission, **Friday 15th May**, is fast approaching.

The Single Application Form is the form you need to fill in if you want to claim payments under the following schemes:

- Basic Payment Scheme (including Greening and Young Farmer payments)
- Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme (Mainland and Islands)
- Scottish Upland Sheep Support Scheme
- Less Favoured Area Support Scheme
- Agri-Environment Climate Scheme – annual recurrent options
- Forestry Grant Scheme – annual maintenance and management grants
- Beef Efficiency Scheme
- Rural Development Contracts – Rural Priorities annual recurrent options

Commenting Angus MacNeil MP said: "This year especially we must try and get as much money into the islands as we can, crofters need to be claiming for their land. I know how busy this time of year is for many crofters with lambing etc. and this year has its own additional pressures given the ongoing situation with Covid-19.

"The date for submitting the SAF application is less than 2 weeks away, Friday 15th May, and I want to remind crofters if they haven't already done so to submit their application.

"The easiest way to complete the Single Application Form is online. To do this, you must be registered with Rural Payments and Services. Guidance on how to do this can be found here:

<https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/your-business/help-with-getting-online/>

"Area Offices are currently operating an answer machine service. If you require assistance, you are asked to leave your name, contact number and brief details of your query and you will be contacted as soon as possible."

Contact details for the office in Stornoway are as follows:

Tel: **0300 2448501**

Email: SGRPID.stornoway@gov.scot

THANKS

The sisters and families of the late Etta Norrington wish to thank most sincerely all those who remembered them in different ways on the death of a dear sister and aunt. All very much appreciated.

Moran taing agus a h-uile beannachd.

Laxdale, Borge and Galson.

BEAGAN TAIC FUND



THERE IS NO SHAME IN REACHING OUT TO YOUR COMMUNITY FOR A LITTLE HELP IN YOUR TIME OF NEED.

We understand that sometimes a little help is required to help you through a difficult financial period. Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn is working in partnership with a local church to launch the "Beagan Taic" Fund. The fund will be available to any resident of the Galson Estate facing severe financial hardship.

There is no application form. If you are struggling financially please call 01851 850393 to discuss your situation in confidence. Just ask to speak to someone about the new support fund.

We understand that it is not easy to make this enquiry and we will do all we can to assist individuals and families in their time of need. Some personal details will be required along with information on current sources of income.

A decision will be made quickly and if assistance is appropriate it will be offered as shop vouchers, cash or a bank transfer. Advice on other possible sources of help will be offered to everyone who calls.

Tel: 01851 850393
WWW.GALSONTRUST.COM



A company registered in Scotland: 273903
A registered Scottish Charity SC036903

HELP & SUPPORT

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE - BENEFIT REVIEWS AND REASSESSMENTS SUSPENDED

Reviews and reassessments for disability benefits are being suspended for the next three months. [Updated 25 March 2020]

NHS SCOTLAND CORONAVIRUS ADVICE

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>

HMRC SCOTLAND CORONAVIRUS ADVICE

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-individuals-and-businesses-in-scotland>

DWP SCOTLAND

Coronavirus support for employees, benefit claimants and businesses

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-support-for-employees-benefit-claimants-and-businesses>

CITIZENS' ADVICE SCOTLAND

Coronavirus – What it means for you

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you-s/>

ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH INSURERS

ABI Coronavirus Information Hub

<https://www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/topics-and-issues/coronavirus-hub/>

PARENT CLUB

Information for parents on what to do if you have to stay at home with kids and some useful advice on coronavirus and how it might affect you and your family

<https://www.parentclub.scot/topics/health/coronavirus?age=0>

PHONE ADVICE

Coronavirus: if you feel the symptoms

NHS 111

NO Coronavirus symptoms advice

NHS Scotland

0800 028 2816

ELDERLY

Age Scotland

0800 470 8090

FAMILIES

Parentline Scotland

0800 028 2233

FINANCIAL AND DEBT ADVICE

Money Advice Scotland

0141 572 0237

BUSINESS

Business Helpline

0300 303 0660

MND Scotland

0141 332 3903

SAMARITANS

116123

TAKEAWAY MEALS

Cross Inn TEL: 810152

Takeaways available Wed & Thurs 4-7pm, Fri & Sat 4-8pm, collect or deliver, both hot and cold food. Drinks are available with food orders and will also be available for takeaways only, 7-10pm.

Cross Inn is now closed Sun, Mon, Tues. However, for those 'at risk' or in vulnerable categories, an exception can be made and cold food can be made available on these days. Can phone in all orders on TEL: 810152 and payment can be made on the phone. Further details available on Facebook.

The Decca TEL: 810571

Fresh artisan bread made to order. Please phone to place an order by 10am that day. We can offer loaves, rolls and bagels. Loaves (about 600g) are £2.50, rolls - 50p each, bagels - 60p each.

Bread orders can be collected from The Decca (usually ready about lunchtime) or non-contact delivered (50p extra). You can pay over the phone by card.

We can also provide prepared food for same day or for the freezer - can be collected or delivered.

Porkies

In future the Porkies takeaway kiosk will be at **Spòrsnis** on Thursdays between 4.30-6.30pm.

The move away from the Ness Hall is due to the lack of a signal required for the card payment machine.

Borve House Hotel TEL: 850 223

Borve House Hotel is open Thursday, Friday, Saturday for takeaways from 4-7pm. Orders and card payments can be taken by phone. The hotel will then supply all customers with a pick-up time so as to control any waiting time on collection.

The Breakwater TEL: 811 001

The Breakwater is open for takeaways:

Wednesday 3-6pm

Thursday, Friday, Saturday 12pm (midday) – 9pm

Place your order and make payment over the phone. If customers wish to limit their social contact, restaurant staff will bring orders out to the car. Deliveries also available within Ness for those unable to visit The Breakwater.

Wobbly Dog TEL: 810838

Cheese scones, cake, coffee and brownies will be available for take away from 12.00 - 2.00pm Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Come to the front door of the Wobbly Dog and your cakes will be brought out to you.

Message on FB or call us on 01851 810838 to order. Or we can deliver your order in the Ness area for just £1 extra.

NESS FC SOCIAL CLUB

MONTHLY DRAW

Our next draw will be Saturday 30th May at 7:30pm LIVE on our facebook page. If anyone would like to join our superdraw please feel free to contact the club for details. £5 monthly entry

APRIL RESULTS

1st prize - £100 – Alasdair Beaton, Bearsden
2nd prize - £50 – Angela MacLean, Cross Skigersta Rd/Glasgow
3rd prize - £25 – Dolaidh Beag Campbell, Cross Skigersta Rd

Congratulations to our winners.

WEEKLY DRAW

We are intending to set up a weekly draw also.

£2 weekly entry (via direct debit)

Again, contact the club for details and we'll get it going as soon as we have enough people!

CASH PAYMENTS

If you would like to pay by cash for our draws, we can now take payments via Cross Stores.

Please leave an envelope with your:

Name –

Contact number –

What the money is intended for, eg. £20 for four months.

Contact us on :

nesssocialclub@yahoo.com
or private message via our facebook page.

COVID-19: Guidance for Household Waste disposal

If you have symptoms that may be caused by COVID-19 or you live with someone that has symptoms, you can securely store personal waste (such as used tissues) and disposable cleaning cloths within disposable rubbish bags.

These should then be:

- placed into another bag
- tied securely
- kept separate from other waste in your room
- put aside for at least 72 hours before being putting in your usual external household waste bin

By following this advice, you will help to control the spread of the virus to friends, the wider community and the most vulnerable. Other household wastes (including recycled waste) can be disposed of as normal.

Media release by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

3 April 2020



TALKING NATURALLY by Samantha Hawkins

Since early March we have been fortunate to be able to enjoy what has seemed like day after day of unrelenting sunshine. The wind blowing in from a north or easterly direction may have been cold on occasion, but did little to distract from clear blue skies. It's at this time of year my thoughts turn to lawn mowing. The decision – mow, or not to mow just yet – is one that I never seem to time just right, and after that very brief spell of drizzly rain last week, what was one day as flat as the top of a billiard table overnight took on the appearance of something you'd need a machete to hack through.



I do leave patches of the garden permanently unmown, basically to allow the Dandelions and other wild flowers to do their 'thing'. To some, I know, these so-called weeds are a scourge – difficult to get rid of – but why bother? Dandelions were once a fashionable delicacy cultivated by the Victorians for use in salads and sandwiches. The leaves contain vitamins A and C, and iron plus other trace elements. It's a plant that has an ancient heritage with fossil seeds having been found in southern Russia which dated back to the Pliocene period some 30 million years ago; no wonder it's tenacious. It is truly too a global plant, not only as food source, but woven into the tapestry of many a country's traditional history. Tell me you never blew the seeds from its fluffy head while counting down the 'clock'?

One of the reasons I like them and try to maintain dandelions in certain areas of the garden are because they are one of the earliest sources of nectar for bees and other pollinators. Dandelions are also a valuable food source for certain moth and butterfly larvae and the seeds are devoured by birds such as Skylarks and Buntings. So why not leave a strip of grass grow wild and help nature by doing nothing?

Spotting Deer just now is not too difficult as they seem to have made incursions into many of the villages, and in abundant numbers too – Lionel, Port of Ness, Knockaird, Habost and Cross Skigersta have all had their fair share over the past couple of weeks. They appear to mainly be young stags who have shed or are just about to shed their antlers. They are not in the best condition right now due in part to the shedding and in part as they are moulting and growing a new coat. The Deer also seem to be bolder than in previous years. My attempts last week to 'move two on' when

they had spent most of the morning on the croft munching away at new grass which I had hoped to reserve for my sheep were in vain, and I was greeted with hard stares and hoof stamping. It was myself and my two dogs that 'moved on'.

Now, there is another mammal that lives very near us and is not often seen – the Otter. I have been trying for two years now to capture one on film using my trail camera, and finally, yes, you've guessed – I did it! It's barely three seconds of footage but it made my day and such was the jubilation the current Mr Talking Naturally enquired as to whether I had won the lottery. Keen to share the source of my evident delight I placed the laptop in front of him which garnered the response, 'very good'. I guess that it can be relatively easy for someone to confuse a grassy knoll in the middle of the night with an Otter, and when he returned to his newspaper, I pressed the play button.

I'm not one for keeping a 'bucket list' but there were a couple of things I had hoped to do this year including visit St Kilda, visit the Shiantis and attend a bird ringing course with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Of course all of these expectations have been dashed thanks to Coronavirus, but I will hopefully have opportunities in the future. I've been a member of the BTO for a number of years and the now Thetford-based organisation which was founded in 1933 undertakes a wide range of projects with probably the most well-known being the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*. Like many organisations (and individuals) the BTO have had to review the way they operate, so no 'normal' courses for now. So, when an email landed in my inbox a couple of weeks ago offering a virtual three-week course (two hours on a Saturday morning) through the medium of 'Zoom' I jumped at the chance. For the princely sum of £10 I have been able to learn more about bird identification 'with an emphasis on songs and calls of upland species', how to improve as a birdwatcher and BTO research, schemes and surveys. It's been well-presented with good material and enthusiastic, knowledgeable and fun tutors, plus I feel like I've learnt something – which is always a bonus!

The arrival of and passage through and over of birds in Ness continues. I heard my first Corncrake on 26th April in Port of Ness. Others have been heard in Cross, Cross Skigersta and Eoropie. A few weeks ago you could hardly move for Redwing, gathering in big flocks for their overnight passage to Iceland. No sooner had they left then the place was overrun with Wheatear and Wagtail; many will breed here, others would have just been passing through to refuel. I



PHOTOS

Top left

Dandelions, an early food source for bees

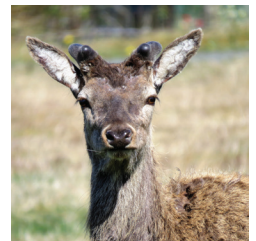
Above:

Lapland Bunting, Butt of Lewis

Otter, Port of Ness

Right

Red Deer, Cross Skigersta



think it must have been the strong northerly winds that forced a small flock of 30 Pink-footed Geese (25 April) and two Barnacle Geese (27 April) to take a break at Stoth. There was a very fine looking Whimbrel just before you reach the Lighthouse (29 April) but unfortunately before we got over the shock of seeing each other so unexpectedly, the Whimbrel flew, so no photo. Another camera-shy visitor to the pool at Stoth was a Shelduck (30 April) which just about managed to let me photo its departing rear end. My Skigersta correspondent noted a Red-breasted Merganser in the harbour on 26 April, and at Port of Ness Harbour there were a pair of Common Tern on 29th April. Despite their name the Common Tern is not as common as the Arctic Tern, the former having an estimated 12,000 pairs breeding in the UK while the latter 53,000. Best spot of the fortnight for me though were a pair of Lapland Bunting, one of whom obligingly stayed put on a fence post while I took a couple of photos. Like many of the other birds I have mentioned in this issue, these too would have been heading to breeding grounds further north.

So, all round, it's been an interesting and varied fortnight with plenty more to come I hope.