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The 2021 Christmas message from Jean Smith, Chair of the Lochgair Association

The year 2021 has been a year of ups and downs. We started off the year in complete lockdown but, as Spring was bursting into bud, rules were beginning to relax and by the summer we could start thinking about meetings out of doors.

The village picnic was the first of these and it was obvious that villagers had missed having a social life with neighbours and friends. Summer saw the village busy with most second homes occupied and many visitors enjoying our beautiful scenery.

In Autumn some of our activities should have been restarting but a safety issue with the church hall rendered some of these activities impossible. However we have had some gatherings in the church building which, although not ideal, has served us well.

Editorial

Welcome to the final issue in 2021 of Lochgair Update. This last year has been like no other year, and particularly for some of us it was a very challenging time. Despite this there are some good news stories to tell.

As usual thank you to all the folk who have contributed to this community newsletter.

The next issue will come out MID MARCH, so keep us in mind with your news, photos, stories, poems, letters etc. Please send these to info@lochgair.org

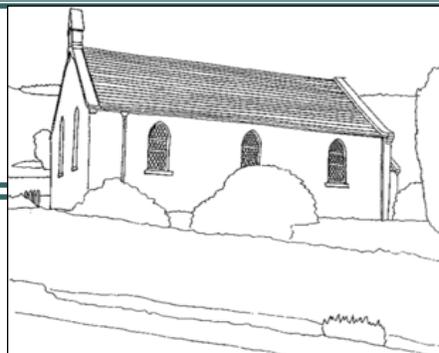


Elsie Freer serving mulled wine and mince pies in the vestry at the Christmas Bazaar

We have sadly lost some good friends from the village over the past year, but we have also welcomed some new residents who are keen to participate in village activities.

Before we look forward to 2022 I hope everyone has a lovely Christmas with lots of good memories.

UPDATE ON CHURCH AND HALL BY MICK CUTHBERT (9th Dec)



Dear All

Just to update all members on the position regarding the acquisition of the church and hall by The Lochgair Association (SCIO).

During early summer an invasive structural report was obtained by ATK Structural Engineers of Glasgow, and it became apparent from the faults found that the hall had to be closed on health and safety grounds.

An estimate of materials has been formulated to repair and update the hall using volunteer labour and has been discussed with Building Control (Argyll and Bute Council).

Negotiations with the Church of Scotland are ongoing and an attempt made to obtain funds from the Church of Scotland to assist with essential repairs - with no success.

On the 9th of November we successfully negotiated the transfer of the church and hall from the Church of Scotland for a nominal fee of £1.00 inclusive of our legal fees. [I would add that this has not been confirmed in writing.]

Once The Association has received the offer from the Church of Scotland then the business plan can be finalised, and the necessary funding applications completed for the proposed repairs of the hall.

Fundraising is continuing in the church building and has raised a substantial amount for the renovation of the hall. (See page 3)

Next year we envisage the start of the hall renovations and look forward to the support of all members in this very important communal project.

I hope this end of year information explains the position we are now in and I wish everybody an excellent Christmas and brilliant New Year. Mick Cuthbert



WELCOME TO
LOCHGAIR

CALLING ON MEMBERS TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR WEBSITE:

WWW.LOCHGAIR.ORG

Are you aware that we have a dedicated website for Lochgair, which is how we promote our village to the wider world and as importantly to funders who we hope will invest in the facilities of our village? Michael Reid is the editor of the website, but he relies on us all to send in material including photos and articles.

For your New Year resolution this year please go onto the website and familiarise yourself with its contents: www.lochgair.org. There is no password required for the main website as this is open to the general public. Only the Forum is restricted to members and requires a password. Please send your comments on what you would like to see included on the website, and also your contributions including photos to info@lochgair.org

WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN LOCHGAIR?

FUNDRAISING EVENTS IN AID OF LOCHGAIR HALL



The Association was invited to take a stall at this year's Inverary Charity Day which was held in Inverary Parish Church on the 30th October. Bev and Elsie were inundated with donations of all kinds from Lochgair residents for this stall – from books, bric a brac, and crafts, to jigsaws and children's toys.

The stall was very popular and raised an amazing £301.05.

The next Fundraiser was held in Lochgair Church Building on the 4th December. Thanks to Mick who had removed the pews on one side of the building (now stored for safe keeping at the back of the hall) there was room for tables along one wall displaying an amazing array of donated items, including specially made Christmas decorations, sweets, jellies, ground coffee etc. Every space in the building was used including the vestry for serving mulled wine and mince pies as folk arrived, and the communion table for the sale of books and CDs.

A big thank you to the committee who decorated the church building so beautifully, to everyone who donated and created such wonderful gifts for folk to buy, and to everyone who attended. "Thank you all so much for your donations, your creations, your work and your money- we've made an absolutely amazing £700 for the village hall fund." Bev



WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN LOCHGAIR CONTINUED?

THE 2021 BEACH CLEAN BY FRED BRUCE

On Saturday the 25th of September we had our annual Beach Clean on and around the foreshore of Lochgair. This was the first time we had done a clean in the month of September and it seems that this is not the best time to be doing this.

Underfoot conditions were tricky and with the long grass at high water mark with large mounds of seaweed left the pickers struggling to walk and to find any litter. The fact that very little was found and there being no beach clean last year is indeed a credit to the hard work and effort put in by people taking part in the preceding years.

Around 30 people turned up on the day which is a credit to them, being a wet muggy day. After a word from Christina Saunders of the GRAB Trust the groups went out. An area of 5 miles was cleaned on the foreshore and the roads and pavements of Upper Lochgair.

I would like to thank everyone for the sterling efforts and also to Maggie and Douglas for the use of the garden grounds for the BBQ in the afternoon. If future beach cleans are to be held then could I suggest that Easter Weekend is the best time of year for this day out. Thank you. Fred Bruce.



[Picture of Port Ann with no rubbish that needed to be picked up!]

On the 25th September Lochgair's beach cleaners were featured in an article in the Argyllshire Advertiser submitted by the GRAB Trust. The photo caption was "Smiling on a dreich day, volunteers assemble for the Lochgair beach clean." This 'Staycation Community Litter Pick' earned the Association a grant of £250 from the GRAB Trust.

LOCHGAIR PLANT SALE ON SATURDAY 2ND OCTOBER



For the first time the annual plant sale was held in the garden of two of our members – Bev and Mick Cuthbert of Knock Steading. Their garden, summer house and conservatory, provided the perfect setting for a highly successful plant sale which raised the fantastic amount of £319.74, half of which will go to the Association's village hall fund.

Thanks to all the Garden Group volunteers, to everyone who donated plants, baking etc., to everyone who came along on a cold wet October day and were generous with their donations, and to Bev and Mick for all their hard work in hosting this event.

WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN LOCHGAIK CONTINUED?

ARTS AND CRAFTS CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS WORKSHOP, 18th November

For the third year Maggie hosted a Christmas decorations workshop for members of the Arts and Crafts Group. Members were offered a range of craft materials to make decorations based on examples Maggie had made using cones, shells and nuts, as well as Christmas wreaths. Some of these creations were on sale at the Christmas Bazaar.



Jan Williams shared a delightful skier that she had created last winter during lockdown.



SAVING AN EXAMPLE OF LOCHGAIK'S HISTORICAL HERITAGE

For those interested in the social history of Lochgair you will know that there is an old well adjacent to the castle and within the deer fence, which can be accessed by the gate near the bench.

Allan Cunningham has kindly built a door for this well in order to extend the life of the well. "As you will see it is chunky, as I have used an offcut of an oak kitchen worktop. It won't blow away!"



A JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF VIOLIN MAKING, by Robert Lacey

My own violin, a recent purchase some 6 years ago, suddenly sounded bad. I blamed myself. A true Calvinist born, bred and well trained - who else could be to blame? But, maybe it was the instrument.

I had previous experience of this. From age of 10 to 50, I played an instrument that won second prize in a Scottish amateur violin makers' competition. It had a beautiful tone, but playing in tune was really difficult.

So one New Year's day, after 40 years of demoralising failure, I'd had enough. The luthier (violin repairer) I consulted looked quizzically at the instrument, "No wonder you couldn't play in tune, the finger board is twisted".

So I replaced it with a copy of a Scarampella — a Parisian violin maker with no money and who could only afford cheap wood. The instrument had a fruity and exciting tone and for about two years of enjoying playing it, something went wrong, so, back to the luthier. More quizzical looks followed. "Wait there" and abracadabra after replacing the sound post with a slightly longer one, the instrument was back to its usual self.

But I like to do things for myself. Youtube research followed. I chanced on one from a Portuguese luthier based in Lagos (Portugal) and discovered how ignorant I had been.

After watching this and several other videos I realised that a violin can always be repaired, because of hide glue; and more, that violins have a bass bar, purfling, ribs, bellies, flamed backs, scrolls, roots, nuts, lower nuts, necks, guts, saddles, linings, bouts, tails, corner blocks, arches, tongues, springs, and a soul — being a piece of spruce doweling that has to be stabbed with the spike of a setter and blind fitted through the treble F hole millimetre-perfect onto its ideal position.

A miracle of sophisticated acoustic science evolved over centuries, I began my journey towards understanding the 'black art' of violin making which modern science still can't fully explain. Or, I asked myself, is this 'black art' just an instance of the apocryphal fable, the Emperor's New Clothes, AKA peer pressure, when nobody is prepared to admit they can't hear the difference. Except there is definitely a difference.

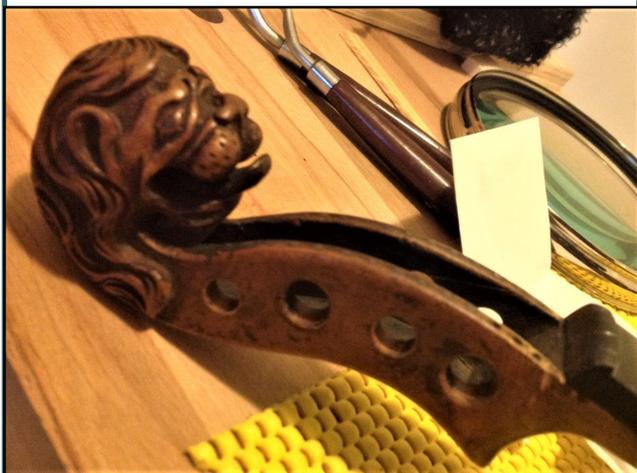
My first strategy was to collect cheap auction violins - thirteen dreadful, toneless instruments, begging to be dismantled and improved, except for one I named Czech Strad, and another the Mystery Blonde, and a poor sad instrument that had lived in excessive heat and humidity in Australia and looked as if the varnish had actually boiled.

Instead I started with some repairs to another amateur instrument that had been left with me, made at a night class it showed the signs of being a first hurried effort made with shared tools, with an overworked teacher and a bell ringing at 10pm to say leave the building now or be locked in. It was full of faults. In places the inner edging had been over 'thicknessed'. Yes 'thicknessed' which means thinned in the violin world, to under 0.5 of a millimetre. It was, sadly not worth repairing.

Then the brave, hardworking and enthusiastic Mick and Bev arrived in the village. Refugees from the mad south, from a country they call Englandshire. One day Bev confessed to Marion about a family heirloom hiding in a cupboard — a violin sadly and badly needing repair.

Literally coming apart at the seams, this instrument had breathed more coal dust and smoke than was healthy even for an inanimate object made of maple and spruce.

A JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF VIOLIN MAKING continued



But it sported a Fierce Lions Head atop the peg box instead of the traditional scroll—intriguing! No label, but faint writing in pencil on the inside of the back, just visible through the bass F hole.



Cleats and inscription

Well it had to be dismantled. How else could it be repaired?

And it certainly needed major work. The back plate was all but falling off. Once opened many little blocks of wood, called cleats, were revealed holding together long splits in both the front and back. Several were black with grime, others a little less grubby, revealing serious repair on at least two occasions. Some were rattling about loose. Two of the corner blocks which hold the instrument together had opened down the grain.

But most importantly, the inscription was now visible. Yet no one could be sure of what was being said - perhaps a year of building was revealed as 1807; perhaps gratitude to a violin maker from the Hopf dynasty? But from the measurement of the violin, its value would be only as a much loved domestic instrument. That it had been used to bash someone over the head was dismissed — Bev just can't see any of her ancestors behaving in this way!

The work was delicate but straightforward — opening, regluing, cleaning, polishing, setting up the bridge, sound post, and strings.

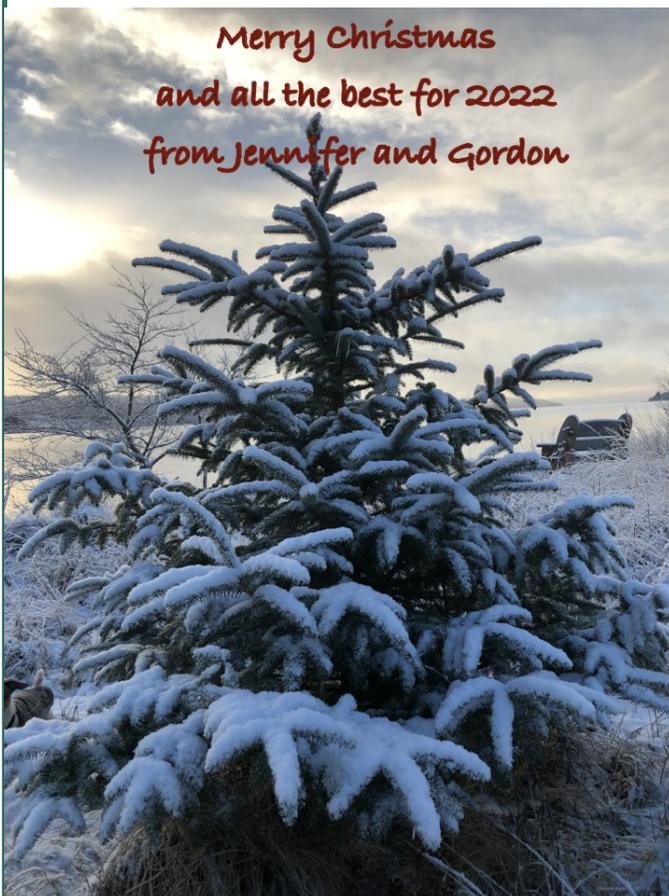


Then I felt prepared. I could make a violin. So like Scarampella, unwilling to spend money on spruce and maple from the musical forest, I went to my wood pile. (To be continued)



Robert says "Provided you send him 'like' or 'subscribe' he will continue his story in the next issue of Lochgair Update!"

FESTIVE GREETINGS



We would like to thank all friends and neighbours for the help and support given to us over the last year, and we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a good New Year.
Ilan and Jean Smith



Merry Christmas and happy New Year to everyone.
Duncan and Wilma, Lochside

MERRY MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE
love Beverly and Mick



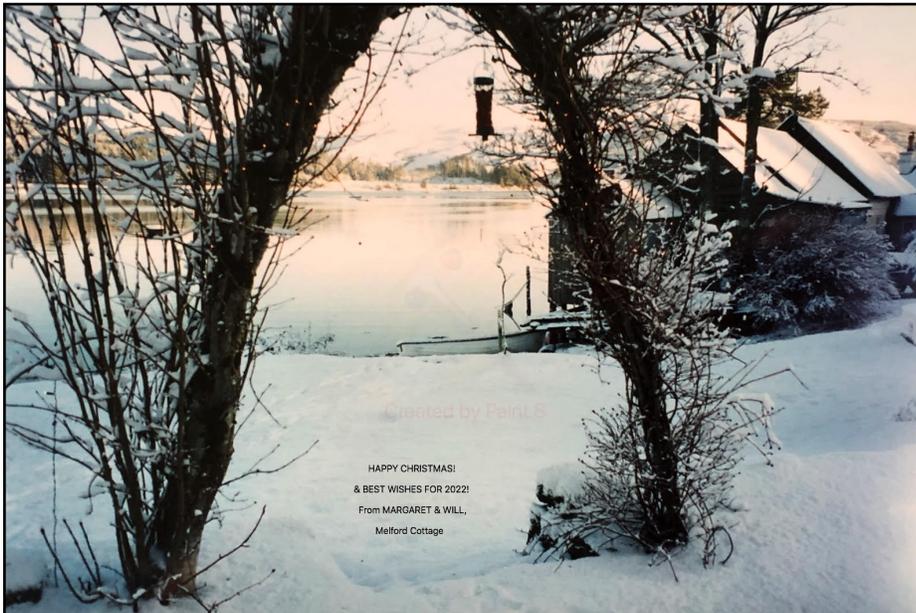
Kay and Michael wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.



Marion & Robert hope that Santa will be kind to you all this Christmas, and that you enjoy time with family and friends.



FESTIVE GREETINGS



Happy Christmas! & Best Wishes for 2022! From Margaret & Will Melford Cottage

Douglas and Maggie wish our friends in Lochgair a very happy Christmas and a good New Year.

As this memorable year draws to a close, a reminder of the concluding evening of the joyful weekend of the village's midsummer picnic.



**Thinking of the cycle of life too, Morag and I are particularly remembering those in the village who this year also experienced hardship and loss, knowing that next year will feel very different for some, bring new challenges and at times not feel much easier. We've learnt that separation and loss doesn't diminish treasured attachment, and know that belonging - to place and people - can thrive in Lochgair. Every week may bring days that begin with misty sunshine over the loch or end with a glorious sunset, and in the meantime we wish everybody a peaceful Christmas and best wishes for the New Year!
Rob and Morag**

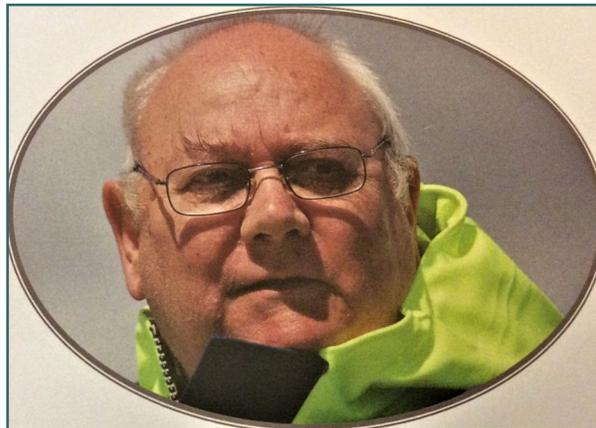


A FOND FAREWELL TO BARRIE MEREDITH, who died on 8th October

Remembered fondly by Jim and Christine.

Barry was a good neighbour and friend for many years. Jim had many good fishing trips with Barry off the west coast of Jura. On one occasion when Barry was assisting Jim to upgrade his chart plotter all was not going according to plan. Poor Barry never slept all night, as he always liked to solve a problem. It was discovered by Barry that the 'instructions' had not been updated for the new chart plotter.

We had a great day out when Barry took us on a trip to the island of Sanda from Tarbert. Although not fond of the water, Christine felt perfectly safe with Barry as skipper.



A FOND FAREWELL TO MARY RISBY, who died on 23rd October

Mary Risby moved to Port Ann when her husband Philip retired. She was an active member of Lochgair SWRI and a renowned baker. When Lochgair Church held Gaelic services Mary would bake the tea for after the service. Although illness limited her activity for many years she regularly attended Lochgair Lunch Club and took part in Christmas lunches. She will be sorely missed by her husband Philip, children and grand children, and by her Port Ann neighbours.



Readers of Lochgair Update may remember that the 2021 September Issue of Update included a photo of the Lochgair SWRI winners of the Poltalloch Trophy in 1990.

Mary Risby (on the left) was one of the four winners of this trophy, along with Betty Maule (on the right), Elspeth Wells and Margaret Studholme.

NOTICEBOARD & DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**YOUR FEEDBACK ON THE ACTIONS BEING TAKEN
BY THE COMMITTEE ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION**

Following the Association's AGM at which votes were taken on the next steps in terms of negotiation with the Church of Scotland, an on-line survey of members was carried out. This further confirmed support for actions being taken by the Committee on behalf of The Association.

THE TRUSTEES OF THE LOCHGAIR ASSOCIATION ARE:

Jean Smith, Chair (Tel. 886328), Beverly Cuthbert, Michael Cuthbert, Elsie Freer, Jackie Merrilees (Secretary), Maggie Murray, and Alison Wilkinson.

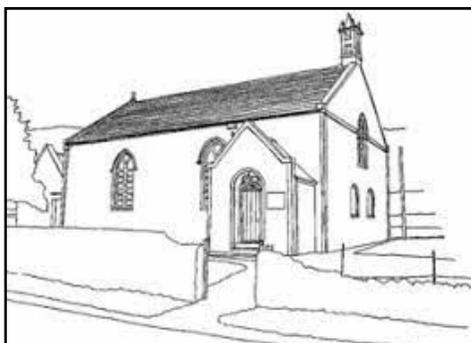
They are keen to get feedback on their work on behalf of the Association, and to hear your ideas for events that could be organised in 2022. Email: info@lochgair.org

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND SERVICES OVER THE FESTIVE SEASON:

All Ages Christmas Eve service: 4 p.m. Cumloddan Church, Furnace

Christmas Day service: 10.30 a.m. Inverary Church

Boxing Day service: 10 a.m. Cumloddan Church.



CANCELLED – 18TH DECEMBER
SOCIAL GET TOGETHER

The pre-Christmas evening planned for 18th Dec. has been cancelled, out of respect for folk who may be increasingly concerned about the transmission risks of the latest Covid variant Omicron. The raffle that should have taken place then will be rolled forward to the New Year.

**SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING:
BRING A FRIEND NIGHT**
on 10th January, 7.30 p.m.
in Ardrishaig Public Hall



You may recognise some of our members - Margaret & Will Rudd and Jean Smith in this photo, enjoying a very informal and fun Monday night of Scottish Country dancing in Ardrishaig Hall.

If you would like to join them there is an introductory 'Bring a Friend' night planned for the 10th January at 7.30 p.m.

If you would like a lift to the dance or further information phone: Marion Lacey on 886232.