

THE LOCHGAIR UPDATE

MARCH 2022

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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of Lochgair Update in 2022. As usual thank you to all the folk who have contributed to this newsletter.

This is a community initiative of The Lochgair Association, and without your contributions — photos and articles — it would not have continued to be published four and a half years after its first issue in September 2017.

The next issue will come out MID JUNE, so keep us in mind with your articles, photos, stories, poems, letters etc.

Please send these to info@lochgair.org



**WE'RE GETTING THERE...
BUT LAWYERS TAKE THEIR
TIME!!!!**

Negotiating the transfer of Lochgair hall and church by Jean Smith

I am aware that some of you will be wondering what is happening with our efforts to buy the Hall and Church buildings. Well the simple answer is 'lawyers have happened'. As you know we negotiated back in November, with our local church group to buy the buildings, and at the time it looked as if it would be a fairly simple transaction.

We now have our own solicitor acting on our behalf so hopefully she will get things moving more quickly than we have managed to do.

As all of us who have bought or sold houses know, it is not a 'done deal' until the missives are signed, however I feel we are getting nearer the end of the process.

The committee thank you all for your continued support and patience.

Message from the Chair of Lochgair Association



Writing this on the first day of spring, I am aware that Lochgair is beginning to waken up from the winter. With snowdrops and crocuses in bloom, the daffodils well developed and soon to be sporting their yellow trumpets, and the beginnings of buds on trees and bushes, we all look forward to a time with no restrictions. Travel plans can be made, visits to friends and family planned, doing things on the spur of the moment just because we can.

We have one or two social events planned for the spring and into early summer so I hope as many of you as possible will support our event organisers, Beverly and Elsie, and the rest of the committee.

FOR A LITTLE VILLAGE OF 60 PLUS HOUSEHOLDS WE'VE BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL AT FUNDRAISING

OUR LAST FUNDRAISING EVENT



Lochgair Bring and Buy Sale in the church, 12th Feb 2022

The fundraising efforts of this tiny village have been absolutely outstanding - £2,322 in only 4 months
"Such generosity, in spirit, work and donation has been frankly incredible. It'll all go to hall & church related costs, be that repairs, insurance, running costs, etc."
Bev Cuthbert (joint organiser of local fundraising events)

WANTED – OTHER FUNDRAISING IDEAS

Can you suggest an idea for a fundraising idea for later in the year to either Bev, Elsie or another member of the committee?

AMAZON SMILE

Amazon has donated £14.46 to the Association through Amazon Smile between October and December 2021. Thank you to everyone who has included the Association as their charity of choice when purchasing goods through Amazon.



AUCTION OF PROMISES BY BEV CUTHBERT

As we inch ever nearer to ownership of the village hall and church, we're trying to think of ways to fundraise for the village hall fund - which is quite difficult due to the hall's closure and lack of facilities in the church.

Having floated the idea of an Auction of Promises, there has been some very positive feedback. The auction will be held in Lochgair church and should be a great social evening.

Of course, we'll need plenty of offers, so now is the time to think what you could do.

We already have a couple of interesting offers for sale and have also some requests for specific forms of help.... many garden related!!! You might love nothing more than a pile of ironing, or spring-cleaning; perhaps you're a dab hand with a pair of secateurs or paintbrush - a good cook or nippy with a sewing machine, taxi service, dog walker... the possibilities are endless!

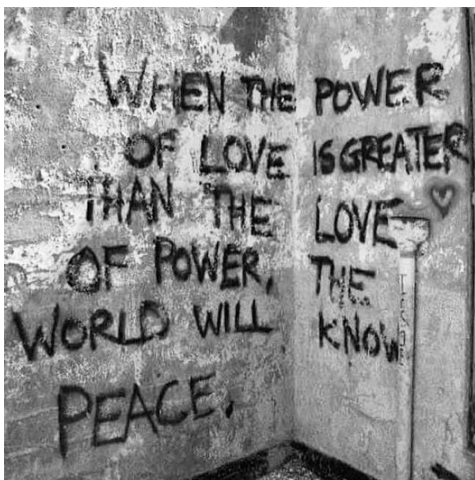
I know that people help each other all the time in Lochgair, but there is also the potential to raise funds by auctioning specific offers! So please get out the thinking caps and let us know what you can offer, and perhaps what you'd be keen to bid for.

THE CALL TO SUPPORT UKRAINE BY MEMBERS OF LOCHGAIR COMMUNITY

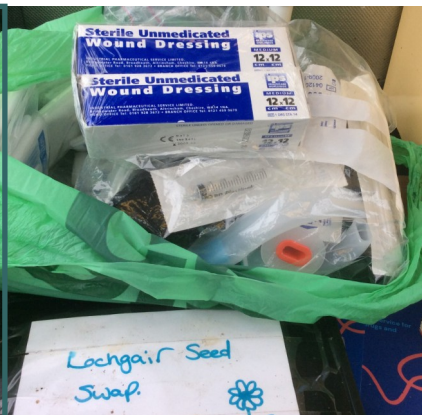
The Ukrainian Ministry of Health estimates that 18 million people have been affected by Russia's invasion, 12 million of whom are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.



The sunflower (*Helianthus*), called "snyashnikis" in Ukrainian, is the national flower of Ukraine. The bright yellow blooms are an integral part of its culture, heritage, and even its economy. These flowers have become a symbol of unity and a message of love for Ukrainians everywhere, and displaying sunflowers has become one of the many ways the world is showing solidarity for the Ukrainian people.



Donation of medical goods by a member of the Lochgair community, which was uplifted from Lochgair Hub for collection by an Ardfern charity volunteer.



POEM REGARDING THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS BY MICK CUTHBERT

They shake and shiver at life and loss
Struggling to exist at such a cost.

Mothers tears, and child's despair
they leave their home with so much fear.

This is their future, their life, their home
they feel so lost, so alone.

Their future is our future, don't turn away
their plight, our plight, we need to say.

Ukraine we support you with all our strength
we support you always at any length.

As the Government will match pound for pound donations from the public given to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), this adds to the value of donations to 15 leading UK emergency charities, such as DXFAM, Save the Children, Red Cross etc. [Tel number for DEC : 0370 60 60 900]

UNICEF is another charity supported by local folk.

Tax payers can also ask for Gift Aid to be added to their donation.

WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN LOCHGAIR?

RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR - BELLS AT THE BELLS! BY BEV CUTHBERT



I'd simply like to say that it was a hugely heartwarming, tear-jerking experience to stand in the torrential rain, surrounded by likeminded villagers, tolling in the New Year.

People came with drinks in hand, or bottle under arm; prosecco was corked (and diluted by the rain!) and drams taken.

Dave Wilkinson did a smashing job of ringing out the old and ringing in the new.

I'm looking forward to doing it all again this Hogmanay!

THE LATEST CRAZE TO HIT LOCHGAIR—WILD SWIMMING IN LOCH FYNE IN MARCH WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?



WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN LOCHGAIR? continued

Lochgair Amblers' exploits in the last three months



5th Jan. Cairnbaan to Bellanoch



25th Feb. The former settlement of Arichonan



14th Feb. Duntrune Castle to Ardifuir, examining its cup-and-ring markings and then a picnic in its galleried dun



1st March at Loch Coille Bahrr. "We had a lovely walk around the loch with fine weather and just the odd drop of rain. Plenty of evidence of beaver!" Jan Williams



WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN LOCHGAIR? continued

THE ARTS AND CRAFTS GROUP PLANS ITS PROGRAMME FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS

Members met in mid February to plan an exciting programme for the group over the next few months. This includes:
The Basics of Macramé; Pottery Workshop; Lampshade Making; Pebble/Rock Painting; Visit to the Burrell Collection in Glasgow.

UPCYCLING—RECYCLING

The group wishes to promote within the village the idea of upcycling everyday objects around the house that can be transformed into something new, and both save the planet and save money. Ideas shared have included—plastic vegetable containers recycled as seed pots; cloth recycled with wax for storage of food; salvaging the embroidered cover of an old stool to create a photo montage for a family member; and a natural substitute for soap powder. We also shared recipes for recycling left over food like the good old fashioned bread & butter pudding.

RECIPE BOOK

We plan to produce a **LOCHGAIR RECIPE BOOK** based on your ideas for recycling food (vegetables/fruit etc) and for upcycling goods, and which will be sold to raise funds for the village.

We want everyone, young and old, in the village to take part. So look out for the invitation from the Arts and Crafts Group in the next month to share your Recycling Recipe Ideas.



This beautiful bag was embroidered by a member of the Arts and Crafts Group, during Covid lockdown. This is an example of the lovely items that members of the group are inspired to create.

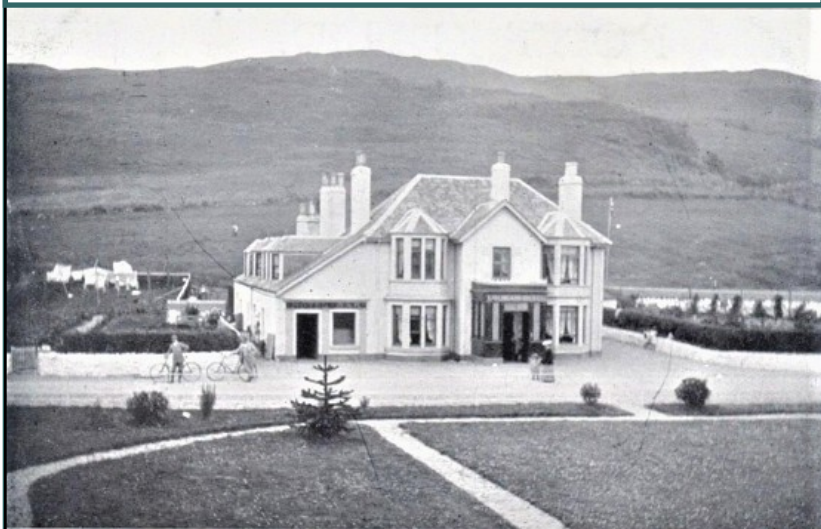


The basics of Calligraphy
 Led by Caroline Platts
18TH MARCH at 2 p.m. in the church
 If you would like to be added to our mailing list please give your name to Marion Lacey

WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN LOCHGAIR? continued

THE LONG MEMORIES PROJECT BY MARION LACEY

Thanks to Duncan Campbell for this copy of an old photo.



Lochgair Hotel, Lochfyne.

Coach from Ardrishaig.
Good Trout Fishing

A more recent photo of the back of the hotel as it is now.....



Lochgair Hotel used to be a destination for visitors from all over, with coaches bringing holidaymakers who disembarked off the Clyde steamers at Ardrishaig .

It's changed days now—with the bar/ restaurant closed to locals; with a focus on providing overnight accommodation to workers and the odd tourist; and the parking area on either side of the main road an outlet for Mercedes cars - occasionally even blocking the lane.



If you're interested in sharing stories about Lochgair Hotel in former times, and in compiling material for an exhibition or publication like a calendar, please contact Marion (rock.solid.res@gmail.com)



WELCOME TO
LOCHGAIR

**THE CALL TO MEMBERS TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.LOCHGAIR.ORG**

This is a little tester for you—In the last issue of Update we asked you to go onto our website to check out what is published on it. How many of us did this? If you didn't do this now is the time to do it. It's one way we can promote Lochgair to the general public and external funders.

**SUPPORT YOUR ASSOCIATION — SEND IN IDEAS FOR HOW THE WEBSITE MIGHT BE IMPROVED TO
info@lochgair.org**

MAKING VIOLIN ONE , by Robert Lacey

So I had repaired a violin. Confirming what many YouTube channels demonstrate, that even badly damaged instruments can be fixed. I had studied the YouTubes of Davide Sora, and all the minute stages of his violin making, and I had a copy of 'the Art of Violin Making'.

Importantly, the conversion of the cloakroom in Westcroft into my workshop was complete. It sported specialist Luthier tools, a work bench, tool wall, and hangers for 13 ex-auction violins — purchased to measure, scavenge parts, and maybe do up, if I chanced upon an instrument with good sound. Neatness and tidiness were going to be essential as the working space was tiny.

Just before the first lockdown I ordered the essentials to build my first instrument. But I was reluctant to waste good materials, the tonewood in particular. This was European maple and spruce, carefully selected and then dried over a ten year period.

So out to the scrap wood pile I went. With an old fence post, an offcut of oak decking, and a board of pine left over from making window sills, I began violin number One.

First I made a form - a lump of wood shaped to fit the inside of a violin. I cut notches into this, to allow small pieces of wood to be attached to make the neck, tail and four corner blocks. I carved these to the correct shapes. The sides, known as ribs, I thinned to 1.3mm, bent them to shape on the bending iron, and attached them to the blocks. The result of this was the 'garland' - as all these bits glued together are known.

I then strengthened top and bottom edges, by attaching thin slivers of willow. This gives more glue area to attach the back and front of the instrument. The form, which by this stage looks completely trapped once the strips of willow are added, incredibly, can be extracted. Scary, scary job!!! But I did it.



[The garland nearly ready to be freed]

The garland's job is purely structural. It doesn't affect the sound of the instrument provided the sides are the right height and thickness, and the blocks are neatly cut, and provided there are no holes in the sides. But then why would you put holes in the sides?

The violin maker and top physicist, Carleen Hutchins, did exactly that. She created what she called her 'Swiss Cheese' instrument. She drilled holes one after the other into the ribs. With each hole the sound got worse. Not a surprise, but this experiment and others performed by her Cat Gut society, was fundamental to a better understanding of the acoustical 'magic' of violin design. And to improve matters further she broke the centuries old code of secrecy amongst violin makers.

Up until Hutchins, luthiers had relied on copying every detail of instruments made by Stradivari, Guaneri, and Guadenini, the world famous makers from Cremona. Hutchins' experiments led to the creation of a new technique called 'Plate Tuning'. This involves placing the freshly made back or front of the instrument on top of a loudspeaker. Specific frequencies are then fed through the speaker to disturb a dusting of tea leaves. Irregularity in the anticipated patterns that appear tells the maker where the wood is too thick. So wood is removed and so on.

MAKING VIOLIN ONE continued

How well this process is carried out fundamentally determines the sound quality of the instrument.

As this method was becoming the norm, non-destructive measurement of top instruments was revolutionised using CT scanning. Precise copying was now even more possible. Confusingly, the scans revealed much less consistency in the thickening of the great instruments than had been presumed.

The problem here is the wood. It is always different, and that needs to be responded to by the skill of the Luthier. Not that I was concerned with that with Violin One.

I astonished myself by being able to carve the mysterious helter-skelter spirals of the scroll, hollow out the peg box, shape the neck and the 87 degree angle of the root, all from a lump of fence post.



I managed to 'joint' the wood to make the two blanks for the back and front plates - the back, from the decking, and the front, from the window sill.



[Test fitting the neck while glue dries]

I carved the outside of top and back to create the arching, using templates taken from the instruments hanging on the wall. The hollowing out of the back of the plates - the thickening - was done to the measurements given by Sora and the Art of violin making.



[Finished violin awaiting varnish and set up]

I assembled the instrument and set it up. Without doubt, it looked like a violin. It played like a violin. It sounded like a violin.

But, sadly, it was not a good violin. I wanted to do better. And when I learned about a man called Peter in Sweden, making his 400th instrument, it all became clear how I might do this. [To be continued]

FROM THE BENCH, by Michael Reid

What to Look Out For From The Bench

There is a new format to 'From The Bench' for this issue. Rather than reporting what has been seen, which was beginning to get repetitive, here are some suggestions of what to look for in the coming months, based on what has been noted in the book (at the bench) over the last few years. I hope that this encourages you to get out and see what you can see. Please note anything of interest in the book, it may be the first time it's been seen here!

Year-round

Many seabirds can be seen from the shores of Loch Gair and Loch Fyne at all times of the year. Oystercatchers, curlews, grey herons and shags are all quite common.



White-tailed sea eagles have been seen overhead, along with buzzards, sparrowhawks and hen harriers. Hooded crows and various types of gull are numerous and it's not unusual to hear or even see a raven.



Along the shore you can see lots of different seaweeds, shore plants and shellfish, like limpets, mussels and winkles. Look out for jellyfish on the shore and mermaids purses – the egg-case of members of the shark family amongst the seaweed at the high-tide mark. In the shallows you may see anemones, shore crabs, starfish or small fish.



Harbour seals (formerly known as common seals, but unfortunately no longer so common) are frequently seen. Look out for their rounded heads popping up. You may also see them hauled up on the shore at the tidal islet Sgeir Dhubh or in the bays on the north side of Loch Gair. The other type of seal that you might see is the larger Grey Seal, which has a longer dog-like nose.



FROM THE BENCH, continued

The best time to look for otters is 3 hours either side of low tide, and they are usually seen amongst the floating weed just offshore. Their heads are flatter than seals, they are smaller, and you can usually see their backs and tails on the water surface or when they dive. You can sometimes see their spraint (droppings) on top of rocks – look out for broken up shells and fishbones. Sometimes almost-whole fish such as dogfish or flounders are left behind, after the otter has eaten just the innards.

Further inland there are roe, red and sika deer, red squirrels, pine martens, weasels and other animals. A mysteriously single, large rabbit hops around the gardens in the village! Does anyone know where it came from?



Along the track to the bench there are many different types of trees, including alder, ash, birch, hazel, horse chestnut, larch, oak, rowan, spruce, and willow – amongst others. Many of the trees are covered in lichens, a sign of clean air.

Spring

The first signs of spring are usually snowdrops and daffodils appearing around the village, followed by wild spring flowers such as celandine, primrose, yellow flag iris and bluebells. Look out for frogspawn or tadpoles in the ditches beside the paths, you might even see the frogs themselves if you are quiet, or herons trying to catch them.



Yellow flag iris

At this time of year a lot of birds are on the move and may stop off for a rest in Loch Gair. The winter residents like goldeneye and eiders make way for those that come to spend the summer like geese and mergansers. Listen out for the calls of cuckoos, if you are very lucky you may even see them in flight or perching on overhead wires. They look a bit like a small grey or reddish brown bird of prey with long wings and tail.

As spring moves into summer, the number of plants, flowers and birds increases dramatically, there will be information on what to look for next time.

Thanks to Allan Redpath, Anna Watkiss, and Karen Connor for these photos

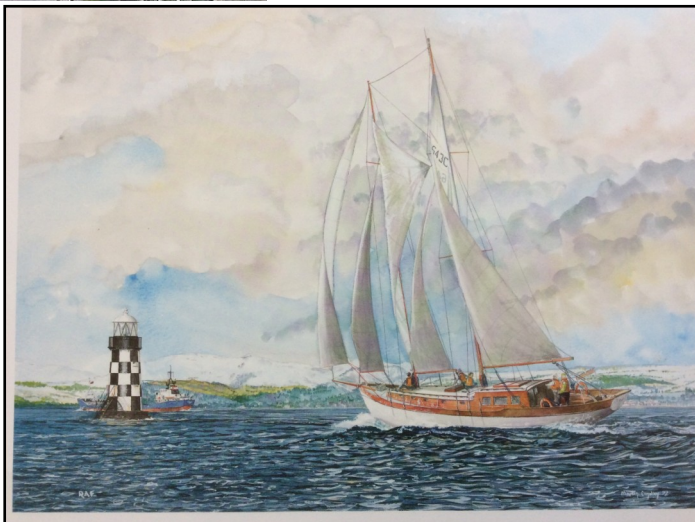
A FOND FAREWELL TO TOM GLEN OF KAMES

who died on 18th October 2021 aged 91



Born in Bridgeton, Glasgow, Tom fell in love with Argyll when evacuated to Skipness during the war aged 9. He loved the country lifestyle. His life-time companion was Violet whom he married in 1955, and after whom he named his first racing boat Violet May. His prowess and love of sailing and his memory of his struggles as a youngster in Glasgow led him to found The Adventure Sailing Trust, the vision for which was to help disadvantaged Glasgow children to better their lives.

Helped by Rikki Agnew of Agnew's off-licenses to purchase an ocean-going schooner called RAF, Tom and Violet, with support from their family, taught 100s of children not only about sailing but also about the importance of teamwork. According to Frank McCallum (who had been a tutor/crew on RAF) - "When Agnew's ran into financial difficulties Tom took out a bank loan to repay Rikki. Tom was generous with both his money and his time."



We in Lochgair who knew him—in the Tai Chi class, at the Lunch Club, and members of the DIY Café — will never forget him. His book 'The Schooner RAF' and his illustrated talk for members of Lochgair Lunch Club were examples of his infectious humour, and his commitment to helping others in any way he could.

Photo of Tom at the Auction of Promises, October 2017

NOTICEBOARD & DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



Foundation Scotland
Scotland's Community Foundation

Deadlines for applications to A'Chruach Wind Farm Community Fund: 13th May & 9th Sept

For more information contact Chris Lee: email clee@foundationscotland.org.uk

Or go on to the website: foundationscotland.org.uk

HIGHWAY CODE REVISIONS

There is updated guidance on safe passing distances and speeds for people driving or riding a motorcycle when overtaking vulnerable road users, including: leaving at least 1.5 metres (5 feet) when overtaking people cycling at speeds of up to 30mph, and giving them more space when overtaking at higher speeds; and allowing at least 2 metres (6.5 feet) of space and keeping to a low speed when passing people walking in the road (for example, where there's no pavement). The advice is to wait behind them and do not overtake if it's unsafe or not possible to meet these clearances.

It would be great if car and lorry drivers on the A83 travelling through Lochgair followed this guidance!

Have you any ideas on how we might make our village safer for pedestrians?

Send your proposals to West Loch Fyne Community Council or to The Lochgair Association.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Scottish Census 2022 Day—20th March 2022

Folk in Scotland have recently received an envelope asking them to complete the 2022 Census form on-line providing them with a unique INTERNET ACCESS CODE which is needed to complete the census. This is the first time this has been tried in Scotland. However it is also possible to request a paper questionnaire — though there appears to be a backlog of folk waiting for this to be sent to them.

As householders we have a legal responsibility to complete this. If you need help the following is the link to guidance on completing the census:

<https://www.census.gov.scot/help/how-to-complete>.

There is also support locally if you email your queries to info@lochgair.org, and ask for Marion.

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