

the blane

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Strathblane, Blanefield, Mugdock, Carbeth & Auchineden (circulation 1000)

theblane@strathblanefield.org.uk

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The next issue will be in March 2008
Deadline for articles 20th February

Visit the Community Website @
www.strathblanefield.org.uk

DAN MACDONALD

Murray O'Donnell

The village has lost one of its own with the passing of Dan MacDonald. He was born on 12 April 1928.

Although Dan lived all his life in Strathblane, it may surprise many to know that he was actually born in Kelty in Fife. He said that this was because in "The olden days you went back home to have your baby."

Because his father originally worked at the distillery, Dan's first local home was up by the distillery itself, at Easterton. His father took barrels of whisky by horse and cart to the train at Dumgoyne and brought back malt and coal. When Dan's father moved his job to be an estate worker at Duntreath, the family moved to Burnside Row (now Blane Place.)

When his father became a forester on the estate, the family moved to Lunchikin Lodge and the young boy learned to find his way about Duntreath Castle where his mother worked as a cook for Sir Charles Edmonstone.

Dan left school at 14 and went to work a seven year apprenticeship as a plumber, working with McAdam in Station Road Blane, then Gardner's

of Milngavie. He didn't escape his studies though as he had to attend night school at Stow College for two nights a week. He enjoyed both the plumbing and working with his six fellow apprentices.

When he was a little older, Dan was remarkably unconcerned about "not having a motor". That may have been, of course, because he had met his future wife, Martha, who was a bus conductress on the Balfron to Glasgow run! Dan and Martha lived all 51 years of their married life at Mid-Ballewan, and there they had a daughter, Diane. He enjoyed Scottish dance music and was an enthusiastic member of the Forth and Endrick football committee.

Football was an abiding passion in his life. Firstly he played for the Youth Club Team. Some years ago, in an interview with Lynne James and me, he said, "We had a good team then." From 1947 onwards, Dan had an association with Blanefield Thistle as a founder member, as a player, and then, to his great delight, as chairman. He nearly ended his football career very early when he had an accident on his BSA motorbike in which he broke his leg, but, thanks to the skill of the surgeons at Killearn Hospital, his leg healed well enough to



Martha and Dan MacDonald

allow him to continue playing. He said of this club, "I enjoyed every minute of being with it".

A large number of family, friends and representatives of various football clubs, attended his funeral at Clydebank. The sympathy of the community is extended to Martha and Diane.

RAILWAY PUZZLE

Archie McCallum, Canada

Your correspondent in the Blane, Mr. Bob Sharp, asked about the railway and its grades prior to the removal of the track.

reasonable guess would be that the overpass would be some 10ft. clear. This would give an embankment of about the same height.

As I presume all traces of the



This extract from O.S. map Stirlingshire XXV11-1860 might answer his question. This portion of the map shows the plan of the line from the Glasgow Corporation's aquaduct west to Blanefield station. There is a side hill cut west of the aqueduct grade crossing leading to a short length of track at grade followed by an embankment giving an overpass for, I presume, farm use. After this overpass, there is a downgrade to Blanefield station. This requires an embankment of decreasing height as shown on the plan. A

embankment have been removed the difficulty in assessing the original layout and design is understandable. As the plan I have does not show elevations, it is possible the embankment was higher than I note due to low ground near the farm underpass and the need to maintain a grade compatible with the power of the engine and the design haul load. The railway authority would choose to balance the cut and fill, amongst other considerations such as grade, to keep construction and operating costs to a minimum.

EDITORIAL

Alastair Smith is going potty, but you probably knew that already and did not need me to point it out. He has provided the Blane with photographs of chimney pots around the village and they are scattered throughout the newsletter.

Give him his due, he has alerted us to the fact that there is not a standard kind of pot in the village. Maybe you feel that you have managed to live this long without that particular piece of information. However, we feel that, culturally, you will be enriched by observing the variety of chimneys and noting their whereabouts. We have given you a general guide to these on page 14. We thought that the owners might not be amused if we directed you to the exact locations. More in the next issue.

In the interests of political correctness (which is generally contrary to Blane policy but, in this case, we do not want to be sued by your relatives) we ask you to take care not to cross any busy roads while gazing at the skyline.

We welcome comments on anything that appears in the newsletter. Please write to the Editor, Mike Fischbacher, at:

4 Southview Road, Strathblane
G63 9JQ
or e-mail:
theblane@strathblane.org.uk
☎ 01360 770716

DESIGNED IN STRATHBLANE... BUILT IN ETHIOPIA

Strathblane man, Blair Armstrong, is working collaboratively with Prof Alan Ervine of the Dept of Civil Engineering at Glasgow University to design and construct a small water reservoir at a location about a hundred miles south of the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa.

The project, which is the brainchild of an organisation called Service in Mission (SIM) will provide much needed drinking and irrigation water for an Ethiopian community who live in that area. The project will allow the community to develop and be self supporting especially during times of drought.

The scheme will include the installation of a small power generator whose turbine will be driven by the flow of water stored in the reservoir which will provide much needed electrical power to the village.

Blair, whose current involvement is with the European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC) at Orkney where they are testing the latest wave and tidal marine energy devices says "the Ethiopian scheme is somewhat smaller than the Orkney project, however it will be nice not to have to do battle with the wind and waves off Stromness just to produce electricity"

The Ethiopian project is predicted to cost \$ 193,000 US Dollars of which \$51,000 has already been raised. A project manager has been allocated by SIM and the first phase of work has just started.

The Kirk Session at Strathblane Parish has generously agreed to donate the money given at this year's Christmas Watchnight service to the Ethiopian Tufa Appeal (Tufa is the name of the village benefiting from the project)

A81 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Bob Flashman

The traffic management steering group (SG) met on the 29th October and were joined later by Alistair Dawson from Stirling Council. The SG was aware that budgets were limited and however much it might identify Station Road/A81 junction as priority number 1, difficult geometry and resulting high costs made alteration highly unlikely. Therefore a pragmatic approach was taken in that if a scheme could be designed that would slow down the traffic before it reached Station Road, a dangerous element of the process could be significantly reduced.

The SG has therefore proposed that a traffic slowing scheme involving road marking that artificially narrows the carriageway together with 2 or 3 traffic islands be adopted. This would cover the Blanefield entrance to the village until the Kirkhouse Road junction. (For those familiar with Buchclyvie, the scheme would be similar to their road marking and islands).

As funds have been allocated it is reasonable to expect the project to be completed within the next 12 months.



CONGRATULATIONS

JOHN BOYLE has received a prestigious award from the Institute of Road Transport Engineers. He is the engineer of the year in Scotland and we offer him our congratulations.



On a different subject, John wrote several articles for the Blane on the subject of home made wine. Quite a number of people have started making their own wine as a result and John is often asked questions when he is going about the village. He has offered to have his phone number available if any wish to ask his advice. He is always happy to talk about wine. His number is 771027.



CONGRATULATIONS too to Simon Allan who has won the Fastway Courier Franchisee of the Year award. Simon gave up a job in banking to run his own business. He is described by

Fastway as "always helpful, friendly, reliable and committed to providing (his customers) with the very best service". The business is a pick and delivery parcel service mainly for small and medium sized companies.

With the award goes a two week trip for Simon and his wife Stephanie to Australia.

CAN YOU HELP THE BLANE?

We have a problem and we would like to ask if you can help to solve it. The equipment that we use to produce the Blane is grinding to a halt. The computer itself needs to be replaced very soon – the monitor packed up a few weeks ago and a new one had to be found in order to put this issue together. The scanner, now over ten years old, is causing problems as is the laser printer which is even older. The software that we use also needs to be upgraded for any new system.

It is not only the Blane that is produced, but we have a project that we are undertaking in the new year to scan and store village archives and photographs that they may be preserved for and made available to the community. We have already stored quite a bit of material including the photographs that are now available for viewing on the community website.

Added to that, we are concerned about the long term future of the newsletter. The editor is the only one who can produce the Blane at this point and, should he, for any reason, be unable at any time temporarily or

permanently to do this work, there will be no newsletter. Two people have offered to learn how to use the software and to train to put it together. In order to do that, we need to buy extra licences for the software, something that is very expensive.

We could apply for grants but there is a problem in that, as a community, we are applying to funders for money for other projects, such as the play park. An application by the Blane could jeopardise these as funders often limit the number of applications that can be made by a community in any time period, usually a year.

We do not believe that it is right to use the funds that are donated for the production of the quarterly newsletter as they have not been given for capital equipment, nor do we wish to stem the flow of support for that objective. What we need, and fairly urgently, is to find someone or a few people in the community who would be willing to contribute to the purchase of the equipment and software. If you would like to do that, we would be most grateful if you would contact us at the Blane. Our accounts are audited and available for anyone to view.



VIEW FROM THE POLICE OFFICE

PC Paul Barr

The long dark nights of winter are now with us and it is a good time of the year to check that the lights around the outside of your house are in working order. Lights have been shown to be an effective tool in deterring criminals from targeting your house and I recommend the types that either have a dusk to dawn sensor or an infra-red sensor that detects movement. The police will be placing leaflets through the doors of houses that are found to be in darkness in the evenings. These leaflets contain information about the steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. Residents should not be alarmed by these and Blane field is still a low crime area.

This time of the year historically sees an increase in housebreakings in the area. A number of police operations are being planned to target travelling criminals, but there are a number of measures that you can take to make your home less tempting to a burglar. These include:

- DO use good quality external doors

with 5 lever locks and deadbolts.

- DO close windows and consider use of window locks.

- DO use timers to activate lights and radios when you are out to create an illusion that the house is occupied.

- DON'T leave garden tools lying around the garden that might be of use to a thief.

- DON'T leave keys on the inside of a lock and don't leave car keys on hall tables etc. near to letterboxes.

- DO report any suspicious persons or vehicles to the police immediately. Write down descriptions and registration numbers for future reference. Don't commit this to memory alone.

If any reader would like further information regarding this subject I can supply leaflets.

The school is now well into the new term after the long summer break. The weather in the winter can pose dangers in relation to road safety. I would urge drivers to be aware of the

extra hazards present on roads around the primary school and to comply with the parking restrictions.

Please stick to the 20mph speed limit and ensure that you and your children are wearing appropriate seat belts.

Also remember that using a hand-held mobile phone when driving now results in a £60 fine and 3 penalty points if you are caught. I have received reports that parents have been seen using mobile telephones whilst dropping children off at school. This type of act is unacceptable and persons caught doing so will be dealt with.

A number of vehicles have recently been broken into at Station Lofts and also at car parks around Mugdock Country Park. I would urge readers not to leave bags or other valuable items within vehicles and to set car alarms where fitted.

Please contact me at Blane field Police Office on **01360 770224** or via the Central Scotland Police website at: www.centralscotland.police.uk/localpolicing/stirling_dunblane_blane field.php

SPECIAL CONSTABLES NEEDED FOR THIS AREA

Kevin Findlater, Chief Inspector

Central Scotland Police is always on the lookout for Special Constables to boost our numbers. We are especially keen to recruit officers to work in the area covered by Balfron Police Office - Balfron, Killearn, Fintry, Kippen, Buchlyvie, Drymen and Blane field. Special Constables are a vital part of the effort to increase our partnership with the community. Since the 19th century they've been voluntarily assisting regular officers, initially providing support in times of emergency. We have special constables regularly working a minimum of four hours per week and hours can be arranged to suit the individual's lifestyle.

WHERE YOU FIT IN

Join and become part of the team and you will gain on-the-job experience. You will patrol with a regular officer, have the same powers, and be called upon to assist in all aspects of police work. The recruitment process is similar to that of the regular Force and is designed to be thorough but fair - only the best applicants will be successful. The communities we serve demand, and are entitled to, the highest possible standard of service from Central Scotland Police.

In most areas you will be trained at your local police station. This is an ongoing process, with theoretical training sessions held regularly during the winter months. You

will learn about the police service, its organisation, the duties of a police officer, powers of arrest, criminal and licensing laws, court procedures and the giving of evidence.

A special constable has to be committed, flexible and have a realistic



Special Police Officers

and positive attitude to life. You will need to be interested in police work and be at least 18 years of age, of British nationality and physically fit. Educated to a reasonable standard, you will have a mature outlook, the ability to think clearly in difficult situations and have good interpersonal skills. It's important

that you have no conflicts of interest. For example, members of the fire service are regularly called to work unexpectedly. Employees of security organisations, private investigators, managers or employees of licensed premises or betting offices, or serving members of HM forces are also considered unsuitable for the role of special constable.

WHAT YOU GET OUT OF IT

Becoming a special constable brings the greatest reward of all, the opportunity to make a personal and positive contribution towards a safer community. A free uniform and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses come as standard. But the work is voluntary, so your own personal gain is dependent on your outlook. You would gain a chance to do your bit for a safer community. Variety is another benefit but at all times the role is demanding. You could be doing anything from policing a football match to assisting at a road accident. Follow this link for more information and an application form:

http://www.centralscotland.police.uk/careers/special_constables.php

CONTACTING STIRLING COUNCIL

Stirling Council, Viewforth,
Stirling FK8 2ET

Visit Viewforth and local offices
Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

☎ 0845 277 7000

Mon-Fri 8am-8pm Saturday
10am-4pm Emergencies 24 hour
info@stirling.gov.uk
www.stirling.org.uk

ANNUAL BURNS SUPPER

The Blane Valley Burns Club are delighted to announce that their annual Burns Supper will be held on

SATURDAY 26TH JANUARY, 2008



It is hoped, as usual, that the evening will be held in the salubrious surroundings of

STRATHBLANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

and this will be confirmed nearer the time.

As ever the evening will be a feast, (both literally and literary) and we have an exciting list of speakers to entertain and educate.

Please contact any of the under noted or any other member of the committee known to you, for ticket bookings for what is the highlight of the BVBC Calendar and what proves year on year to be a very popular event.

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| PRESIDENT: | TREASURER: | SECRETARY: |
| <i>John Donohoe</i> | <i>Alastair Smith</i> | <i>Michael O'Neill</i> |
| 01360 770741 | 01360 770120 | 01360 770108 |

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Regarding Neil Davies' interesting article about Strathblane in the last issue. Manx was (like Gaelic) Q-Celtic, not P-Celtic, though first the document was put into English phonetics by a Welsh Bishop. See Encyclopedia Britannica. Cf. general interest in Watson, The Celtic Placenames of Scotland, Birlinn 1993 et ante.

Strathblane (not Ystrad Blane as it would be in Welsh) was very much borderland between Brythonic ('Welsh') and Dalriadic (Gaelic-speaking) and Pictish territories. Cf. the stream at Campsie Glen, Allt Easan (stream of waterfalls), yielding present slightly different spelling for the café there. Very clearly Gaelic. Normal Welsh for stream is Nant. See any good map. But Welsh 'allt' means 'cliff or hillside' - not too far apart in environmental sense! The Gaelic may have a Pictish origin here according to MacBain.

Postscript: 'Mill' in Gaelic is muileann. Welsh melin. Both related to Latin molina (cf. Molindinar Burn in Glasgow)

- JCGG

POSTAL SCAM

The Trading Standards Office are making people aware of the following scam:

A card is posted through your door from a company called PDS (Parcel Delivery Service) suggesting that they were unable to deliver a parcel and that you need to contact them on 0906 6611911 (a premium rate number). DO NOT call this number, as this is a mail scam originating from Belize.

If you call the number and you start to hear a recorded message you will already have been billed £15 for the phone call. If you do receive a card with these details, then please contact Royal Mail Fraud on 02072396655 or ICSTIS (the premium rate service regulator) at www.icstis.org.uk

STRATHENDRICK ROTARY CLUB FOCUS ON STRATHENDRICK ROTARY



Mike Menzies

ROTARY is an organisation of business and professional men and women who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards, and help to build good will and peace in the world. Members carry out this work in their community and internationally by giving of their time and expertise. A Rotary Club is open to men and women who are in business, professional or community leaders who want to use their experience for the benefit of others. Paul Harris formed the first Rotary Club in Chicago in February 1905. The name Rotary is derived from the early practice of rotating meetings among members' offices. Today there are 1.2 million Rotary club members of more than 30,000 clubs in more than 200 countries or geographical areas.

The local club of Strathendrick was chartered in 1977 and has just over forty members including four ladies. It draws its membership from the Strathendrick area and has members from Killearn, Gartmore, Fintry and Strathblane. The highest proportion comes from Killearn and Balfron so that new members especially from Drymen and Strathblane would give a much wider geographical spread.

The members are from all different professional backgrounds and because the club can draw on this fund of varied experience, it is able to organise events or respond to specific needs within the local community or on an international level.

The format for the evening is an evening meal followed by a brief business meeting and an entertaining speaker talking about some topical subject with questions afterwards. Subjects can range from Antique Golf Clubs, Tilting Trains, Classic Car Trips, Scottish Railway Preservation Society, and The Waverley Paddle Steamer to mention a few. Great emphasis is placed on fellowship, and by meeting in the evening, the Club is not restricted to the very tight schedules of a lunch time meeting.

Money making activities by the Club have included Bridge Nights, Spring Fairs, The Great Strathendrick Duck Race and the 150 Club. The two main money raising events are the ever

popular Am-Am Golf competition held at the Shian Golf Course, home to the Balfron Golf Society, in August and the Classic Car Run held for the first time in April 2007 and which was sponsored by Arnold Clark. The Am-Am has raised over £50,000 for Rotary supported charities over the last twelve years and the Classic Car Run made a very healthy contribution in its first year. Both these popular events will take place again in 2008.



Line up for the classic car rally

Community projects include car runs and sheltered shopping for senior citizens, police concerts, inter-primary school quizzes, and mock

interviews at Balfron High School.

As you can see the activities of The Rotary Club of Strathendrick are many and varied and their priorities are within the local community. The motto of the organisation is "Service above Self".

The Club meets every Monday evening - 6.30 for 7.00 in the Black Bull in Killearn. If you are interested in finding out more about the Rotary Club of Strathendrick, please contact Robin Taylor on 770207.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Eleanor Friel

We have just celebrated our first year here on the 30th October. The time has passed so quickly. The winter was very cold and snowy while the summer was delightful. They had the driest summer since records began with lots of sunshine and not too much humidity. We did not cultivate our garden in the spring but relied on patio planters for colour and interest. Begonias seem to be the hardiest of all the bedding plants and can survive for long periods of drought. Our garden backs on to woods and, as we have a strange variety of animals visiting, we decided that growing vegetables would be somewhat of a challenge. One day a very unpleasant creature waddled across the back grass and disappeared under the deck. We quickly consulted the internet and discovered it was an opossum – the only North American marsupial. It is a large rat-like animal with a long snout. Neighbours advised us that they were not pleasant to have near the house and we should try and discourage it from making a nest under the deck. As luck would have it, our neighbour's Labrador chased it and we have not seen it since.

Speaking of wild life, have I told you about our 'greeter' on the front porch of our house? We purchased him last Christmas in a large local store. He is a four foot high black bear leaning on a sledge with a plaid scarf and hat. On the sledge is inscribed the word 'Welcome!' Naturally we called

him Hamish McBear. However, his welcome wasn't so warm after we returned from a brief visit to Glasgow in October.



Hamish McBear

On opening our front door, after 48 hours of travelling, we were met with a flood disaster to our house. During our absence of 15 days water had leaked from an en suite bathroom all the way down to the basement ruining everything on the way down. Carpets, kitchen cabinets, walls, books etc. A professional flood restoration company came in and took over. The Manager was a former marine and he ran the process like a military operation. Firstly, he explained that we were in a "black water" situation which was dangerous as bacteria could develop so we had better move out. He described the process as 'Tear out, dry out and put back!', a very accurate and efficient use of language. His gang 'tore out' all the sodden carpets, kitchen cabinets and kitchen ceiling and walls. We stayed in a hotel for a week when the drying process began. The big driers and de-humidifiers then did their work. As a result, the temperature in the house at one time registered 101° F! Since we moved back in we have been camping in one corner of the dining area and cooking on an electric frying pan and a microwave. The excellent eating establishments of Lewiston have come into their own once more.

After tortuous bureaucracy we are now at the 'put back' stage. We are confident that we will be restored in time for Christmas. In the meantime our good neighbours have invited us to join them for Thanksgiving later this week. We will look forward to that and we wish you all the compliments of the season.

SUPERMARKET SHELVES EMPTY

Sylvia Armstrong

There is no food in the shops and basic services have broken down.

It is hard for us to imagine how we would cope with life under these circumstances, but in Zimbabwe no imagination is necessary – it's a reality. About 4 million Zimbabweans will need emergency food aid to escape the threat of starvation. That is why two separate events held in the Kirk Rooms during one week in November both decided, independently, to give all of the money they raised to the Tearfund emergency appeal for Zimbabwe. On Sunday 18th November £171 was given in donations when Strathblane Church Guild hosted

a lunch in the Kirk Rooms, as part of the annual 'Guild Week' special events. Strathblane Parish Church congregation stayed on after the morning service to enjoy home made soup and sandwiches, followed by coffee and cake and Isabel's famous fruit dumpling. The next day there was a coffee evening organised by Lynne James, ably assisted by her team from Strathblane Primary School, who efficiently manned the Tearcraft, home baking and Fair Trade stalls and served coffee and biscuits. On this occasion £100 for the Zimbabwe appeal was raised from donations and the baking stall and, in addition, £300 of Tearcraft and Fair Trade goods were sold. Thanks to the hard work and generosity of all who organised and supported these events, £271 will go to the Zimbabwe appeal - enough money to make a significant difference to the lives of a number of families in Zimbabwe. £20

is enough to provide vitamin enriched cereal for 5 children for 6 months, protecting them from malnourishment, while £50 could provide a family with 3 goats to help them earn their own livelihood and provide nutritious milk for the children. The world has become a global village and Strathblane takes seriously its responsibility to care for its neighbours.

THE GUILD

Tricia Rae

We meet on alternate Monday evenings at 7.30pm. All are welcome.

We started off the session on 1st October with a very lively evening with the Anderson Singers. This was followed on the 15th by Alison Twaddle, the Guild general secretary, who gave a very interesting resume of her travels with the Moderator in India earlier this year. On 29th we had Mrs Anne Kinghorn from YMCA, who explained about the work that they now do. She is involved with asylum seekers and refugees. It was a very interesting evening.

Hope to see you all at our future meetings.

GUILD DATES

Dec 10 Christmas Celebration
Jan 14 Rev A Green and Mrs L. James speaking about their visits to Japan.
Jan 28 Mrs Pauline Dabydeen Adventures in Nursing.
Feb 11 Dr Anne Pollock - What is 'old' anymore?
Feb 25 Mrs Judy Stewart - The King's Theatre
Mar 10 Mr John Coutts - A box of surprises
Mar 31 AGM

ADVANCE NOTICE

AN EVENING WITH BRIAN SOUTER

Brian Souter of Stagecoach Group has kindly agreed to a request from the Church to give an after-dinner talk to an open audience from the village.

Mr Souter is a well-known Christian businessman, much in demand as a public speaker, considered controversial by some, but generally known for his plain speaking, strong convictions and ability to defend them in open debate.

An evening meal has been arranged for Thursday, 6 March 2008 in Strathblane Country House. The cost is £17.50. For information or tickets please contact:

| | |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Nancy Sharp | 770149 |
| Shirley Findlay | 770154 |
| Richard Graham | 770432 |
| Rhona McColl | |
| craigmcoll@btinternet.com | |

DEVELOPMENT TRUST

George Thom, Chairperson

You will no doubt have been wondering what we have been up to over the last couple of months since the public meeting which appointed the Board for the Community Development Trust. We promised to keep the villages informed about progress, so here goes.

We have had a number of meetings as a Board, getting organised and thinking about the priorities. We are aware that we need to do our best to reflect the feelings in the village about the issues that are important and combine that with a business-like approach to income and viability. The Trust is a business with charitable status.

Good news! We recently received approval from the Charities Regulatory Board, which is another bureaucratic step completed.

At our Board meeting in October we had a brain-storming session to generate ideas for income, projects and a business plan for the coming year. We also incorporated those suggestions already made by those who attended the two public meetings. Some of the ideas

raised were:

- Develop a handy-person service for those less able
- The village centre idea
- A gala day
- Property and land ownership
- Income generation and donations
- Networking
- Allocation of roles for directors
- The need for an additional director on the Board who can help us with our communications.

It is safe to say that the process is still in progress: we hope to produce a business plan in the New Year.

Working groups

Most of the Trust's work will be undertaken by the various working groups which are all busy at present:

Greenheart, planning a new play facility and seeking funding;

Blane Valley Carbon Neutral Group, public meeting held in October with a good turnout, 25 people attended. An outline application to the Lottery Fund for a free home energy audit for everyone in the area was unsuccessful. Solar water heating project bulk purchase scheme underway.

Property Development Group, engaging with the planners about the

shortage of housing for older folk, seeking ways and means of replacing the old bus shelter which used to sit on the other side of the road from the Kirkhouse Inn.

We would like to register our thanks to Stirling Council for our start-up grant, which will be put to good use with the inevitable administration costs. Also our thanks to the Community Council for nominating Bob Flashman as its representative on the Trust. We will keep you informed of progress in the next issue of the Blane. Any contributions, ideas or comments welcomed. Send them by email to cdt@strathblanefield.org.uk



POWER WATCH

Mary Brailey

I've just discovered that our power supplier, Scottish Power, now has data (and graphs) about our electricity and gas consumption in our online 'my account' area (under 'bills and consumption history').

It's interesting to look at, and in particular will be interesting to compare in the future as and when 'steps are taken' to save energy in the Thom/Brailey household. If anyone else is with Scottish Power and hasn't seen this already, it's worth a look.

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MOORHOUSE EMERGES FROM THE SHADE

Mary Brailey

The house on Old Mugdock Road, standing prominent above the main road into Milngavie, has been a hive of activity. What on earth has been going on?

Ever since he used to cycle through Strathblane as a boy, Bill Cullens hankered after a house here. Two years ago, finally, he moved into Moor House on Old Mugdock Road, along with Janice and the family. Since then, neighbours and passers-by have looked on – not without some initial suspicion; Bill is in the property business after all – as the house and grounds have undergone a transformation.

Bill thought he knew what he was taking on. The house was damp, a victim of poor moorland drainage and a tall encircling ring of gloomy pines. The old mill dam, which used to serve Davies Mill in Milndavie Road, was rank and smelly. The stream leading the water from the dam under the road to the Punchbowl dam was choked and overgrown. Much of the land between the house and the stream was boggy

moorland.

Ever one to relish a challenge, Bill set to with enthusiasm. The

offending pines – 45 of them – were felled. Some of the trunks were sliced into rough planks to form the walls of the handsome new log store, some were chopped into logs, and the rest were shipped to China, where there is a timber shortage. With the pines away, the newly extended house (a major project in itself) offered fine views across the dam and the surrounding moorland, and a sun-filled garden began to feel like a realistic prospect.

But there were a few surprises along the way. Below the surface of the ground lay solid rock. Undaunted, Bill and his landscapers brought in rock-breaking equipment to excavate and scrape off to a depth of eight feet. The rock that was removed was used to provide a drainage layer in other areas of the garden. Some 600 tons of topsoil went on top of it. Where last

year we would have sunk up to our knees, now we were able to walk across fresh shoots of newly seeded grass.

The next major problem was the dam. The water was polluted with sewage, the effluent from unsuspected problems with septic tanks in Moorhouse and several neighbouring houses. These

problems took quite some sorting out. Throughout the entire project, neighbours and adjoining landowners have been co-operative. Then the dam was partially emptied to allow some restructuring of the banks, removal of vegetation, and clearing of the culvert under the road. The result: a tranquil – and unsmelly – pond which was once again home to a family of swans this summer, and also boasts moorhens and a heron. The cleared stream tumbling over rocks is a pleasure to see from the road, and its banks have been planted with primroses and bulbs which we can all look forward to in the spring. Even now in November, unseasonally, there is a blue poppy in flower.

The woman behind the planning of the garden is Fiona Robertson, a landscape architect based in Blane, who drew up the design and planting plan. A local dry-stane dyker rebuilt the front wall further off the road, and the road itself has been widened to allow cars to pass each other without risk to wing mirrors and paintwork. And Bill has been able to use his wide circle of acquaintances to source exactly the right materials. But he has carried out a lot of the work himself, mucking in with builders and landscape contractors. This is not a man who likes to sit still. Is Janice anxious about what will happen now that the project is almost complete? She needn't worry just yet: those trees have still to go in, and some more rhododendrons. The pond could be stocked with fish. And then there is talk of a summer house down by the stream. Perhaps a vegetable patch. And maybe a greenhouse ...



Bill and his faithful gardening companion Lady take a break from weeding

COMMUNITY ACTION DAY

Douglas Flynn, Ranger

A little bit of rain did not stop Stirling Council's Countryside Rangers from wading along the old railway path on Strathblane's third 'Community Action Day'. It was a very wet Sunday, 16 September and rangers Paula Bell and I – assisted by volunteer ranger Scott Ferguson – were joined at 10 in the morning by a local lass (Laura, I think!), keen to lend a hand. The original intention of our local volunteer was to work for a couple of hours, but predictably she had so much fun that she stayed for longer than intended and produced some fine work.

The constant rain did, understandably, keep other potential volunteers away from our Action Day, but the rain also turned out to be a bit of blessing. We could see as we walked to the worksite that we would need a rethink regarding the day's planned work as, running along the length of the path was a small stream, which would have to be diverted. The team (of 4) busied themselves with two water bars, coupled with drainage letts to allow the water to flow off the

path. This did the trick and the effect was swift and impressive.

From there, we proceeded to the site of our previous Action Day, at the bottom of the steps. Here we worked on the maintenance of the drains in conjunction with a bit of scraping and resurfacing. Soon we had to say goodbye to our local lass, but almost immediately we were joined by Sergei, a Russian volunteer who fortunately lived locally. Sergei seemed not to mind the rain one little bit and got stuck into the drainage work, followed by a bit of tree pruning to finish off the day. Alas, our Action Day had come to an

end and as the sun finally began to break through we packed up our tools, said our good-byes and hoped we would meet again on the next 'Community Action Day'. See you there.



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Village Club

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REEL-LY WELL DONE, BILL

Mary Brailey

For the fifth year running, the name of Strathblane resident Bill Farquhar will be inscribed on the Phoenix Angling Club trophy as the championship winner, a title he has won six times in all. The 4lb 6oz rainbow trout he caught in the Lake of Menteith also won him the president's reel for the heaviest fish. Next year it will be his own turn to put up the prizes, because he will be president of the club, where he has been a member for twenty-two years and is proving to be a tough act to beat. 'Not bad,' he says, surprising himself with the thought, 'for a man of 79!'

His proudest achievement was when he was part of the Scottish International Angling Team that won the gold medal at Loch Leven in 2003 and he got a 'carry forward' to the next international in Ireland in 2004 for having the second heaviest catch for Scotland and fifth heaviest overall.

Looking back over seventy years

of fishing, Bill remembers going out fly fishing in Argyll with his uncle and cousin from the age of eight. In those days the casts (leaders) were made of cat gut, which had to be soaked in water for half an hour before they could be tied. So woe betide the youngster who tangled the line ...

During the war, Bill recalls that there seemed to be endless salmon, because the German U-boats prevented the trawlers fishing the Arctic. No-one had fridges, so it was a case of giving away most of the catch so it could be eaten fresh.

For many years, Bill and his wife Norma, an artist, had a holiday home looking onto the Broch of Birsay on Orkney. Bill spent many happy days fishing the lochs there for wild brown trout while Norma painted Orkney landscapes in the studio they had installed.

Continuing success with the rod depends on keeping fit, nowadays by doing a substantial walk several times a week. But physical fitness has always



figured large in his life. Even his national service took the form of sports officer at RAF Boscombe Down. Bill trained as a teacher and taught PE for many years before becoming Adviser for Outdoor Education for Glasgow. Describing this as a 'marvellous job', Bill tells how he was responsible for the safety codes for all schools in Glasgow and Strathclyde and the training of teachers for all the outdoor activities undertaken by Glasgow schools – walking, sailing, skiing, orienteering, canoeing and so on: activities sadly less available to school kids now.

After council funding cuts severely limited that job, Bill accepted an offer to act as a consultant to a travel company that ran activity holidays. He had the onerous task of visiting forty ski centres throughout Europe, with Norma, and producing reports on them which would help customers to choose the right grade of activity. He still goes skiing, and skidooring, mainly when they visit their son, daughter and grandchildren in Canada.

But it is fishing that remains his passion, 'an inspiration'. I can't see the rod being hung up for some time yet.

HELLO FROM THE GUIDES

Lynn Wishart

At the first weekend in September, 12 of our guides took part in a camp at Catterburn to experience another side of camping. Not for us the modern pop-up tents we usually use at camps – Oh no, at this camp we had the old style ridge tents in a lovely pale greeny blue with no built in ground sheets or double lining to add extra warmth or protection. Did our guides mind? Not in the slightest; they had a great time and really enjoyed themselves. Now, if we can just train the girls to take one bag of gear instead of a suitcase we will have really mastered this camping lark!

A warm welcome to the girls who have joined us from the Brownies. We hope you have a great time and meet new friends and tackle new challenges. As before we are continuing with our Badge Work and Craft Activities. We have had "parties" organised by the girls themselves which have been great fun and at present our senior guides are busy organising our very own Olympic Games to be held in January.

Many thanks to the Friends of the Guides for all their hard work organising the Autumn Sale and raising the much needed funds for our hall costs etc. To the people that turn up year after year and offer their help, a huge thank you for your support.

Well, that's it for now, but if you are a young lady aged between 10 and 14 and would like to try something new, give us a try and you might just surprise yourself and find you enjoy the guides.

FUN AND FRIENDS

Avril Sandilands

Beavers, Cubs and Scouts are going from strength to strength at the moment. Numbers currently stand at Beavers (18), Cubs (28) and Scouts (10).

On a Monday night between 6.30pm and 7.30pm our current 18 'beavers' can be heard playing games, attempting craftwork, having lots of fun and making friends in the Scout Hall. After all our motto is 'Fun and Friends'! If you are aged between 6 and 8 why not come along and join us - new "beavers" are always welcome.

It's a Wednesday night between 7.00pm and 8.30pm when the undeniable sound of 28 cubs playing games and doing badgework can be heard, or if it's silent, they're out and about the village or up at Mugdock (exploring!). This is also the night that the scouts will be busy having fun whilst learning "scouting stuff".

NEWS

After several years Jim Kennedy has decided to hand in his woggle and resign as Scout Leader. He has now handed the reigns over to Paul Brogan. The leaders and boys wish to say thanks to Jim for his time over the years and to wish him well in the future. We would also like to say good luck to Paul.

The Remembrance Parade was again attended by the Beavers, Brownies, Cubs, Scouts and Guides. A big thank you goes to them all for their attendance, marching and brilliant behaviour during the service. Your leaders were proud of you.

RAINBOWS

Wendy Hamilton

The Rainbow Guides returned with enthusiasm, and in full voice, last September. We began work on Rainbow Roundabouts straightaway, with the girls choosing a skipping challenge and a streamer-making task. We have learned new games and songs so far this term - the Bumble Bee song remains the all-time favourite! Our Christmas party will be a Cool, Christmas Camp-in, so Rainbows bring your torches!

We recently enrolled four new recruits - Cosima, Roz, Eilidh and Nuala - and will say goodbye to Katy, Jenny and Iona in December, as they make their way 'over the rainbow' to Brownies. Our annual trip to the village Panto will be in January, to the THURSDAY night performance. It will cost £4 per girl and all money must be paid to me before Christmas.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all at 1st Strathblane Rainbow Guides.

STIRLINGSHIRE FOOTBALL 125 YEARS AGO

Forrest Robertson

To catch just a glimpse of 19th C football in Stirlingshire, I've had a peek at an old Scottish Football Association Annual, picking out the membership pages for the area in 1880-81 and reproducing them below verbatim. Back then, there was no distinction between seniors and juniors or juveniles; you paid your SFA subscription and you could play in the Cup as an equal with the mighty – Queen's Park, Dumbarton, Vale of Leven & the 3rd Lanark.

BRIDGE of ALLAN: Formed 1878 – 40 members. Grounds private, Westerton Park, 10 minutes from station & 5 minutes from car terminus, Dressing room, Westerton Arms Hotel. Colours navy blue jerseys, white knickers & navy blue stockings. Last year played matches 10 – won 3, lost 6, drawn 1. Wm. Henderson jnr., Keirfield Cottage, Bridge of Allan, Hon.Secy.

CAMPSIE ATHLETIC: Formed in 1880. 30 members. Grounds private, Lennox Park, south side, 10 minutes walk from Lennoxton station. Dressing room, Main Street, Lennoxton. Colours red & white jerseys, white knickers, red hose. Thomas Rodger, Crosshill Street, Lennoxton, hon.secy. David Watson, Crosshill Street, Lennoxton, match secy.

CENTRAL: Formed in November 1879. 30 members. Grounds private, Slatefield Park, centre of Campsie about 250 yards from station. Dressing room Commercial Hotel near park. Colours blue & white. Stephen O'Hagan, Main Street, Lennoxton, hon secy. Patrick Boyle, East End, Lennoxton, match secy.

FALKIRK: Founded In 1877. 50 members. Grounds private, Blinkbonny Grounds, 15 minutes drive from station. Dressing room, Crown Hotel. Colours blue & white. Last year played 26 matches – won 13, lost 7, drawn 6; obtained 38 goals, lost 25 goals. George Richardson, Marine Cottage, Falkirk, hon & match secy.

GRASSHOPPERS: Formed 1875. 30 members. Grounds, private, Bonnybridge, 15 minutes walk from Greenhill Station, NBR. Dressing room at grounds. Colours, red jerseys & stockings, white knickers. Last year played 11 matches – won 4, lost 4 & drawn 3; obtained goals 22, lost goals 25. William Reid, care of Singer Manufacturing Coy., Bonnybridge, by Denny, hon & match secy.

10

KING'S PARK: Formed 1877.

28 members. Grounds, King's Park, Stirling, half mile from station. Dressing room, Sun Inn, King Street. Colours, dark blue jersey & knickers with red stripe on knickers & red hose. Last year played 16 matches – won 9, lost 4 & drawn 3; obtained goals 34, lost goals 17. Mathew Paton, 12, Main Street, St.Ninians by Stirling, hon secy. James Christie, 55, Cowan Street, Stirling, match secy.

LENZIE: Formed 1875. 30 members. Grounds private, Lenzie Football Field, five minutes walk from railway station. Dressing room on ground. Colours, white jersey with badge,



Not quite 125 years ago, this was the team in 1907

white knickers & navy blue hose. Last year played 19 matches – won 7, lost 8, drawn 4; obtained 38 goals, lost 42 goals. Patrick Cree, Inglefield House, Lenzie, hon. secy.

MILTON of CAMPSIE: Formed 1874. 30 members. Ground, private, Glazert Bank Park, Milton, 5 minutes walk from station. Dressing room, Mrs. Whitehead's Inn. Colours, blue. Last year played 17 matches – won 9, lost 5, drawn 3; goals obtained 29, goals lost 12. A.G.Baird, Kincaid, Milton of Campsie, hon. & match secy.

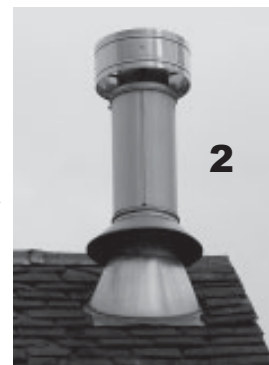
STRATHBLANE: Formed 1876. 35 members. Grounds, private, Cult Park, west end of village, 100 yards from Blanefield Station. Dressing room, pavilion on grounds. Colours, black & white striped jerseys, white knickers. Last season played 13 matches – won 9, lost 4; obtaining 26 goals, losing 20 goals. Thomas Thorpe, Blanefield, Strathblane, hon & match secy.

Glancing through each club's details, they all seem to have private grounds and some, including Strathblane FC, have changing facilities next to the pitch (the reference to Bridge of Allan's ground being "5 minutes from the car terminus" suggests the town had a horse

drawn tram service 125 years ago). The privacy question is moot and should be taken to mean they rented the pitches exclusively. Reference to "knickers" might raise a snigger today but "athletic knickers" was the common phrase for "shorts" which is still a misnomer because they generally reached down to mid shin. Everyone – players and officials – was amateur and most were in their teens or early 20s. Up to the late 1890s, it was common for the President of the SFA to referee the Cup Final. Imagine that today! The season ran from September to April and games were almost exclusively played on a Saturday afternoon, hence the relatively low number of matches recorded. Local rivalry was intense and a Stirlingshire FA was started in 1883 with a county Cup competition which, believe it or not, was dominated for quite a few years by East Stirlingshire!

ALL THESE CLUBS entered that season's Scottish Cup. In those early days, the first few rounds were played on a regional basis; in the 1st Round, Central beat Bridge of Allan 2-0, King's Park beat Strathblane 1-0, Milton of Campsie beat Grasshoppers 2-1, while Lenzie had a walk over, as did Falkirk, when Campsie Athletic scratched. In the 2nd Round, Falkirk

overcame King's Park 2-1 and Central & Milton of Campsie drew 5-5 before Central progressed 3-1 in the replay. Lenzie had a bye into the 3rd Round where they held Central to a goalless draw; Central crushed them 6-0 in the replay to join the big guns in the national draw 4th Round. Here they avoided the major clubs and squeezed a 1-0 win over the students of Edinburgh University. With 11 clubs qualifying for the 5th Round, Central were the lucky recipients of the bye, but the Quarter Final draw couldn't have been more unkind. It decreed a trip to Hampden Park to face the greatest club in the country – Queen's Park! The Spiders had already won the Cup 4 times in its seven year history and the country lads from the Stirlingshire vale weren't going to get in their way of another trophy; Central subsided to a 10-0 beating and Queen's marched on to defeat Dumbarton in the Final – the "Old Firm" domination of our national game was nearly 20 years in the future.



TENNIS NEWS

Graeme Ross

It all goes a bit quieter at the club in the winter. We are involved in the indoor league through until March, but we only provide one mixed team every two weeks or so for this one. It is really nice however, to be playing indoors at the time of year when the weather is likely to be at it's most tennis un-friendly outside. We play at the facility at Stirling University, so it is a bit of a trek, but we are used to it because of our location at the most westerly point of the district.

The club activities continue as normal at this time with adult play sessions on Monday and Thursday evenings, and also Saturday afternoons. We play in all conditions and even a dusting of snow can be swept away in order that some sort of game is played. Maybe this is testimony to the hardy Scottish sporting spirit, or maybe the telly is just rubbish! Anyway, it should ensure we emerge in the Spring in fine shape and with bulging forearms from hitting soaking balls that are akin to hitting a small boulder at times.

We have submitted our grant aid forms to various funding bodies now and we are waiting with baited breath for



any positive replies. Our resurfacing project depends on getting some help either from these bodies or from any local wealthy individual who has taken their money out of Northern Rock and is wondering what to do with it now. Investing in sport is probably not too good for the bank balance, but would be great for the soul. A top notch tennis facility here in the village could also form an important part of the Strathblane bid for the 2018 Commonwealth Games!!

Our coaching sessions will start again just after the school Easter holidays. They have been getting increasingly popular, so make sure you think about it early so that either you or your children can secure a place. Phone 771571.

JAZZ NIGHT

We are lucky that Ivan Henderson and his band are playing another gig in the village at the start of the new year. They are playing in the Edmonstone Hall on Saturday 5th January with the doors opening at 7.30pm.

The tickets are priced at £10 and are available from Laura in the Chemists as before. It is always a great night, combining the toe-tapping music of the band with dancing and chatter with friends. Tickets go fast, so get in early.



STRATHENDRICK RUGBY UPDATE

John Boyle

There is currently a great spirit at Strathendrick Rugby Club: enthusiasm has been fired by the recent World Cup, playing conditions are good, skills and performances are improving at all levels as a result of regular training and practice.

After a slow start, complicated by injuries, the 1st and 2nd XV senior teams are now stringing together good results in their respective leagues and in the Scottish Hydro Electric National Cup

The Minis are operating teams at Under 16/17 and S1/2 with training on Wednesdays, and matches, practice or festivals on Sundays. Like the national team, they are young and enthusiastic and are learning fast. The under 16 team have had an exciting first half season which started with some difficulty but is now well under control, and the boys are playing some fantastic rugby and are now top of the 2nd division league with only a few games to play. The Minis



have teams at all ages from P4 to P7 with a full programme of taster sessions, practices, festivals and tournaments - all on Sundays.

Players, social members and supporters are welcome at all levels. For further information on Mini rugby, contact Iain Somerville on 550842; for Midi Rugby contact John Boyle on 771027 and for further information on Seniors' and Youth activities, contact Nick Hawkins on 550576.

KNIGHTS AND KAVILEERS

Jane McCallum

FOR this issue of the Blane, I asked the Brownies to tell us about their favourite Brownie activities. Each of the 4 sixes - the Hedgehogs, Squirrels, Foxes and Rabbits - have come up with their best bits. The spelling is mainly their own!

RABBITS

At Brownies we play games like Oli Oli Octopus, Knights and Kavileers. Other games are Time bomb. We go places like Mugdock and ten pin bowling. We also do arts and crafts. We have a lot of fun at Brownies. We also sing songs. **Izzi, Claire, Morven and Allulab-Beth**

SQUIRRELS

At Brownies we play lots of fun games like Olly Olly Octopus, Pirates, Corners, Taxi tig and Dark and stormy night.

We like all the games, these are running about games but now we will tell you some quite games: Chinese whispers and time bomb. **Connie, Lauren, Heather and Alice.**

HEDGEHOGS

At Brownies we have been to Mugdock park. We saw sines of spring like tadpoles. We have also been to the pantomime we saw James and the giant peach.

One of our other favourite things was the litter pick up. We like this because we could chat to are friends and like picking up with litter pickers.

Our other favourite thing is ten pin bowling but first we went to McDonalds.

Niamh, Jamie, Grace, Jennnifer and Rebecca.

FOXES

Our favourite nights were:

1. Pancake night when we make lots of pancakes and eat them (it is really fun);
2. Pantomime - we watch one at Christmas (last year we saw James and the giant peach);
3. Hearing dogs - a lady called Evie came to speak to us and we learned lots about hearing dogs for the deaf and did plays about being deaf;
4. Healthy eating - we got to try lots of fruit and veg, cooked and raw. Some of the things we tried were mangos, butternut squash and peppers. We tried dragon fruit which looked nicer than it tasted and mini bananas called bananitos. Most of us hated the butternut squash and the celariake (celeriac) but we liked the apples, mango and cumber (cucumber) the best. **Anna, Abigayle, Holly, Erin and Christina.**

If you can help at Brownies in any way, or have a daughter aged 7 - 10 who would like to come along, please contact Claire (771816) or me (771281). We meet in the Scout Hall on Tuesdays from 7-8:15.

TRIP TO THE HEART OF AFRICA

Morag Roy

In June of this year, 8 pupils (5 girls and 3 boys) and 2 teachers from Balforn High School left Glasgow and flew to Malawi to take part in a project called "Working and Learning Together". Malawi is known as "The Heart of Africa" although it is one of the poorest. Three weeks later, when this party was returning to Glasgow, an additional 8 teachers from Balforn High School, left for Malawi to take part in the project.

These trips, organised by teacher Miss Jones (who had previously lived and taught in Malawi), took a number of years to organise. All costs associated with the trip involving the pupils had to be raised by themselves and this was achieved through a number of fund raising activities. Some of the events included sales of home baking at the school, car washing days, discos and a sponsored climb of Ben Nevis. It also included persuading local gentlemen to have their beards shaved in exchange for donations to help fund this worthwhile trip. An ambitious target of £15,000 had been set and at the end of the fund raising campaign the incredible total of £23,000 had been reached. A remarkable achievement

The first group left Glasgow at 4 p.m. on Sunday 10th and flew directly to Nairobi where they boarded another plane for Lilongwe via Lusaka. At Lilongwe they were met by a teacher from the Malawi school and 2 mini bus drivers. It soon became clear why there were 2 drivers as the school was in the village of Embangweni and still some 7 hours away. The remainder of the journey was not quite as comfortable as the flights to Malawi, the last 2 hours being along a dirt track. Added to this, the mini bus was rather old but they finally arrived safely at their destination late on Monday evening. The people of Embangweni were delighted to receive them and they were made very welcome. The villagers belong to the Tumbuka Tribe and their natural language is Chitumbuka. However as all children are taught English from the age of five, communication was not a problem. One Balforn pupil, David, soon managed to speak some Chitumbuka and the other pupils picked up every-day phrases which was much appreciated by the villagers.

The group were staying at a purpose built guest house where they met two Medical Students from Birmingham University who were working at the local hospital. The guest house was only 3 minutes walk from the school and every morning they could hear the children singing on their way to classes.

The school is called the

Top: Jenny Wilson from Blane field (top left) with fellow pupils and teacher. Bottom: school dorm

Robert Laws High School and is a Senior School for children from 11 years old. It is a boarding school and each pupil must not only pass entrance exams, but families must be able to pay for their education. The dormitories were in very poor condition and in some cases pupils had to sleep on the floor due to insufficient numbers of beds. The local Primary School – Embangweni-Louden Full Primary School - takes all children from 5 years old. This is not a fee paying school but progress to the Senior School requires considerable financial support. Inevitably this means that many children, although clever enough to pass the exams, cannot afford to attend the High School. The classes at the Primary School were packed with children of different ages all willing to learn.

The theme of the project was "Working and Learning Together" and the Balforn pupils were keen to become involved with the Malawi children. There are 4 Grade Levels in Robert Laws School and each day the pupils from Balforn joined in the classes and activities. Despite having to sit on wooden benches, work at broken desks – or no desk at all, Robert Laws' pupils are extremely proud of their school and keen to learn. This was obvious from their attitude to learning and they could be seen studying at break-times, lunch times and after school. The method of teaching is quite different from Scottish schools as the teacher stands at the front of the class and writes everything on the board for the pupils to copy into their jotter. There are few text books to refer to – their only school equipment being a pencil and a jotter.

The pupils from Balforn joined in every activity outwith the school whenever possible. This included sports, visiting local people in their homes, helping to cook the staple diet which is N-sima (described as a "type of porridge"), visiting the hospital and the Centre for the treatment of Aids. They also spent time at a school for the deaf which they found




extremely moving.

On the last day of the trip, the Balforn pupils wore traditional Malawi outfits which were tailored especially for them at the village. The staff of Robert Laws also arranged a leaving party and a special meal for the group.

The people of Embangweni were sad to see their new found friends from Scotland leave, but a bond exists which it is hoped will continue for years to come. All pupils have kept in touch with pen friends and plans are already under way to raise sufficient funds to pay the costs of a visit of 6 Malawi children to Scotland for 3 weeks in the near future.

The Balforn teachers found the trip a very rewarding experience, one which they are unlikely to forget. Despite the different teaching methods, passing on knowledge to children is a very satisfying achievement and the teachers were delighted to have been part of this project.




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THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE

Sylvia Armstrong

As people stood in the autumn sunshine at the war memorial on November 11th in silence and with heads bowed, the act of remembrance was an occasion of solemnity and reverence, made particularly poignant now by thoughts of the young man from our community, Gary Wright, who gave his life for his country just over a year ago in Afghanistan.

A representative from the Royal Marines was present to honour his memory, along with the memories of those other young men who gave their lives so long ago in the two world wars.

Members of our uniformed organisations conducted themselves with respect and dignity, both at the war memorial and in the church service which followed. We have good reason to be proud of the younger generation in our village.



*Right: the new plaque in memory of Gary Wright, provided by the Heritage Society, at the War Memorial
Above: the plaque on the seat placed by Gary's family near the Gowk Stane*



POPPYSCOTLAND COLLECTION SUCCESS

Lorna Morris



Helping to count the collection are Adam Rixon, Andrew Christie and Peter Morris.

Under the new title, Poppyscotland, formerly the Earl Haig Fund, Strathblane and District has yet again collected an amazing amount for Poppyscotland. Through contributions ranging from exceptionally large amounts to a huge volume of coppers, all of them much appreciated, a total of £2,550 was raised and sent to New Haig House in Edinburgh. This is once again a big rise on the previous year reflecting a really generous effort for a very worthy cause.

The demands on the funds of Poppyscotland remain very high and I am delighted that we have been able to send such a marvellous contribution this autumn.

Fortunately most of the house to house collectors are able and willing to collect again each year, but inevitably a few new volunteers are needed, and I would be delighted to hear from anyone who could join the list for next year. The more on the list the smaller each district can be, so if you think you can spare an hour next November, please phone me on 770448.



Do you know where Obelix is reading the Blane? Answer on this page



Jim and Pat Guy (left) and with their family (above)

60 YEARS WED

On the 20th of September Pat and Jim Guy had their diamond wedding celebration at Strathblane Country House.

Pat and Jim managed to organise it that all twenty of their family were together for the first time to attend the event. They came frae a' the airts including New Zealand, America, Sweden, and Pat's brother and wife and her nephews came the slightly shorter journey from Cheshire.

Along with these were a further twenty guests made up of old friends from around the country, and newer local friends. Included was one of Pat's bridesmaids, who served with her during the war, and Jim's best man who was along with him during their five years as POWs in Germany from 1940. Accommodation was arranged at the Country House and two chalets at the Aberfoyle Country Club.



BEAR-ING GIFTS

The Post House Gallery in Blanefield is raising money for Breakthrough Breast Cancer this Christmas. For a £1 donation our customers have the chance to win a Limited Edition "Million Hugs" Steiff Teddy Bear by guessing the date of his birthday. The winner of the teddy bear will be announced in time for Christmas. With 10% of sales of freshwater pearl jewellery, designed and made in Scotland by Lauren Barclay, also being donated to Breakthrough Breast Cancer, we hope that we will be able to raise a great sum for this worthy cause.

WHERE IS THE VIEW ON PAGE 1?

Not exactly a quiz question but we wonder how many know where the view is on the front page. It never ceases to amaze us how many residents do not know their own area.

This photograph is taken from the right of way behind Carbeth House and is of Carbeth Loch. This is only one of many fabulous views in that area and a walk along the West Highland Way to Arlehaven (where is Arlehaven? you say - look up the map) to see breathtaking views of Ben Lomond and the Arrochar Alps is a must. If you have never been there you have really missed something wonderful: a wilderness on our doorstep providing an ideal therapy for over indulgence during the festive season.



SDAMH rural Access Service provides one to one support for people experiencing mental ill health in their community.

If you have feelings of isolation or stress this Service may benefit you. To access the Service you must live within the rural areas of Stirling District and be aged 18 to 65 years. For more information contact **01786 451203**. info@stirlingmentalhealth.org.uk www.stirlingmentalhealth.org.uk

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

Obelix and Asterix are beside the standing stone at Ballagan on the Campsie Road.
Chimneys - No. 1 is in Dumbrook Road; Nos. 2 & 4, Old Mugdock Road; No. 3 Kirkhouse Road; No. 5, Yarrow House on Glasgow Road; Nos. 6 & 8, Glasgow Road; No. 7, Southview Road; No. 9, Village Club.

FIREWOOD EXCHANGE

Alan Campbell

If you are doing any home alterations or cutting any trees and have leftover wood suitable for burning then don't forget to contact the firewood exchange. For details look in the "Carbon Neutral" section of the community website.

Milngavie Road, Strathblane G63 9EH

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SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD GAMES IN SHANGHAI

Leanne Peters

On the 25th of September, 54 athletes and coaches from Scotland West flew down to London to meet up with the rest of the Great Britain team flying out to Shanghai to take part in the Special Olympics World Games.

We all had to be up really early to catch the 12 hour flight. When we arrived in Pudong Airport we were taken to collect our accreditation and then on to our host town where we stayed for the first 4 nights. The 211 members of the GB team stayed in the Huang Pu district of Shanghai.

The host town was a fantastic experience. They took us to visit a local school. We went to the park to play Chinese games and fly kites. We went to the Museum and Urban Planning exhibition which was very interesting. We got to visit Hu Gardens and also the market stalls nearby. One day we were taken in groups to have our lunch with local families in their houses. We also went to the Chinese Circus which was amazing. We had a Chinese banquet with the host town delegation – 10 courses of very interesting food – which we had to eat with chopsticks.

On the 2nd October we went to the Shanghai stadium for the opening ceremony which was spectacular. The stadium holds 80,000 people and it was full! Colin Farrell the actor was one of the speakers. Arnold Schwarzeneger, Jackie Chan and Eva Mendes also came on stage.

The next day the equestrian team travelled down to Jinshan which is about 2 hours from Shanghai. All the equestrian teams (27 countries) stayed in 2 hotels in Jinshan, and we travelled 45 minutes each day to the Equestrian Centre. On the Friday we met our horses for the first time. As my mum is the GB head coach she got to see the horses first and then we got to try them out. My horse was a national showjumper and we got on quite well as we both like going fast! The other seven members of the team also got on well with their horses. We had ex racehorses and Mongolian ponies – a real mixture. My first competition was the Prix Caprilli – Dressage with jumps and I was delighted when I heard I had won a silver medal. My dressage competition was meant to be on the Tuesday but because of the typhoon it was cancelled



Leanne Peters in Shanghai with her friend Vicki Keenan from Aberdeen

until Wednesday. I had to ride my dressage test at 7.55am and then my Equitation test was not until 4pm so it was a very long day. I was really proud to find out I had won another two silver medals but a bit disappointed when I found out I missed gold by 1 point.

Being part of the Great Britain team made me very proud and I met a lot of new people from different countries. I am so glad I was chosen. Fingers crossed I get picked for Athens in four years time.



Gemma Barr was in sparkling form at the School Halloween disco

PRE-SCHOOL DANCING

Lynda Eastcroft

At the moment, there is no pre-school dancing class in Blane field. So far this session, there has been very little demand for this class. Hopefully this will improve in the New Year. A new class will be starting on Tuesdays in the Edmonstone Hall at 3.45pm. This class is open to girls (and boys!) from 2 1/2 years upwards. Please contact Lynda on 01360 770390 if you are interested. If there is enough demand, the class will start in mid - January.



Last year's pre-school class at the annual dancing display in the Mitchell Theatre, Glasgow. The music they danced to was called "Chilly Cha Cha". Front row, left to right: Lucy Tabberer, Katie Fabel, Nuala Hoyle, Abby Fabel, Alice Hewson Back row: Kate Nicholson, Iris Gray, Maja Grantham, Eilidh Jones, Lisa Wardle, Jessica Buchanan, Katie Burr, Millie Shaw



DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD SCHEME

Ronnie Hamilton

For about 15 years I have had the privilege of being a professional, outdoor instructor. Much of my work has been for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. This has been a wonderful opportunity to be in the position of making memories for young people, which will last for a lifetime - theirs and mine.

I started by working at the Achnamara Outdoor Centre, Argyll, at weekends after becoming a Joint Service Mountain Leader through being a commissioned officer in the Royal Naval Reserve. It was an outdoor training centre run by Glasgow City Council. Weekends generally consisted of arriving on a Friday night, meeting a group, doing some training and then heading off the next morning for a 2 day venture in the Argyll hills.

The centre gave groups from inner city areas an opportunity to try out canoeing, walking, sailing or mountain biking in the great outdoors or just an opportunity for an essential break from their domestic environment. Some of the folk who visited the centre were from desperate circumstances. Some were just trying to make it through life without falling completely by the wayside. Regardless of their social background there was a resilience and determination to 'make it' to the end of the weekend. It's easy to be cynical about these council lead initiatives but having been at the delivery end and experienced first hand the positive effect of the outdoor environment on visitors to Achnamara, children and adults, it's clear that the centre provided such a valuable life improving experience for so many.

Sadly, the Council decided to close Achnamara. I guess there was too much pressure for financial savings from quarters where there was no appreciation of the benefits of the outdoors. I was then faced with finding an alternative way to continue this involvement in delivering outdoor education. The answer was to set up my own small business in Outdoor Education. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme provides a framework for much of this outdoor experience provision. It gives activities an orientation around challenge and reward. The greater the challenge, the greater the reward. Ultimately, a candidate can achieve a DOE Gold award. This says a lot about a person - in some ways more than any academic qualification can. To achieve a Gold award there is a great deal of planning and commitment required. Participants must, as well as the expedition, undertake a residential experience, develop a skill, provide a service to

others and improve performance in a physical recreation. For all these sections minimum standards of achievement are laid down.

The expedition section of the scheme consists of a self propelled journey which could be walking, cycling, sailing, or equestrian. There are 3 levels of award, Bronze Silver and Gold. As the participants progress through the scheme the distance to travel each day increases, as does the number of days. A Gold walking expedition comprises four days journey with a total of fifty miles of

travel. To make things more challenging the Gold routes must be in an area of designated Wild Country which has robust terrain with little in the way of habitation, roads or other development. These areas include the Cairngorms, Argyll and the Borders.

The groups I mostly deal with now are in their late teens and come from what many would call a privileged background. On passing the start line of their 50 mile venture they take the first step of a significant physical challenge, but fundamentally for the Award Scheme ethos, they step into an environment which needs teamwork to succeed. In return the young adult has the opportunity to flourish and to experience

the relationship between challenge and reward.

The expedition environment provides a place where these young walkers must face the consequences of their own actions- sometimes for the first time in their lives. Where 'eating' a meal means 'cooking' a meal; where understanding the needs of others can be the difference between success and failure; where facing up to their own limitations is an essential part of the day - all good stuff for the average teenager, even the privileged ones. Of course some individuals will deal better with the physical challenge and will have learned their new skills better during the training phase. There is then the perfect opportunity for them to use and develop their qualities of leadership giving them the opportunity to experience the impact of their leadership on the group. Decision making skills, communication skills and ability to motivate others are all important attributes. Having this opportunity for practical leadership experience at this age is invaluable particularly when the individual is ambitious and likely to aspire to a management role in later life.

The Award Scheme offers a means to influence the development of individuals using the natural wild country environment to provide the perfect arena where all individuals are equal and there is an absolute need for self sufficiency and teamwork.

For more information on the award scheme visit www.theaward.org/

PRESIDENT'S REVIEW

Sadie Barclay

Our centenary year began in earnest on the 24th March this year, when all club members were invited to a Civic Reception, hosted by Provost O'Brien at Stirling Municipal Buildings.

I wonder what family members and certain school teachers would have to say about Sadie Barclay rubbing shoulders with such dignitaries and speaking in public.

On the 6th April a social evening was organised in the Village Club where past presidents and members old and new got together to talk over the good old days.

The Gents' section opened on Saturday 14th March followed on the Sunday with the Ladies' opening day.

On both days all the bowling associations were represented and Provost O'Brien and his good lady wife also attended, all in all a hectic schedule but worth every minute.

Although this represented the start of the playing season, the preparations began two years ago with the formation of the Centenary Committee.

Myself and Malcolm MacLean, gents' president, were greatly assisted by Murray O'Donnell, Frank Sosin, Stan

Govan, Janette Linning and later Eileen McCaig.

Unfortunately, illness caused Murray to miss all of the playing season and therefore miss out on a lot of the events he had been involved in organising. Jannette's untimely passing meant that the season went by without the company of someone who had become a very good friend both on and off the green. The void left will take some filling.

As is the norm with centenary seasons, all our friendlies were played at home, which meant lots of work preparing food and keeping the green in good order. Friendlies are the real essence of bowling clubs, where friendships are formed that last for years, and there is no heed paid to who wins or loses.

We were honoured by the K & D Bowling Associations by being selected to host their finals day. Unfortunately, the weather conspired against us and the event had to be cancelled, a great pity after the effort put in by a lot of members, particularly the bar staff and match committee.

The playing season finished with the usual finale of the Ladies v

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PROPOSED WIND FARM COULD AFFECT OUR CHILDREN

Rosemary Morris

Reading the Stirling Observer in August, I learned that there was a proposal to build a Wind Turbine Plant on Ballindalloch Muir, above Balfron in the West Stirlingshire countryside. I accept that wind power has a useful contribution to make towards renewable energy and decided to go to n-power renewables exhibition in the McLintock Hall. Everything looked very rosy. The turbines were displayed as barely visible, prettily peeping over undulating hills, the wildlife could be 'resettled' and the noise was negligible and 'would only affect very few houses'. Unfortunately, none of this is true.

Downstairs, there was another exhibition run by Endrick Valley Action Group (EVAG) and the major problems associated with large windfarms were discussed.

The turbines will be massive structures (406 feet high) visible for miles around. They would require huge concrete foundations, miles of access road, substation and pits scarring the landscape. It is industrialisation of the countryside and this will affect local amenities, Balfron Golf Society, conservation, wildlife and tourism. Tourism is very important both locally and nationally to the Scottish economy. It has been identified by Visit Scotland that people come to Scotland principally

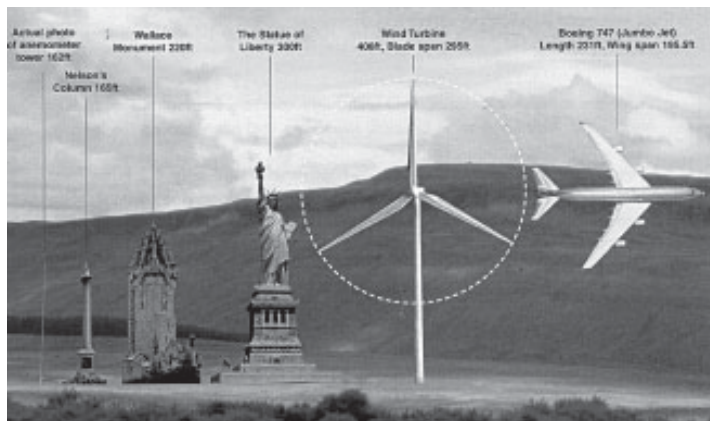
for the scenery, wildlife and heritage. The construction of huge turbines, visible for miles around, would seriously compromise these attractions

and much money could be lost both in the district and nationally.

There is also the problem of noise. There are reports from England, North America, Europe and Australia of people experiencing health problems when large wind turbines have been erected near their homes. It is recommended that large turbines should not be built nearer than 2-3 miles from human habitation.

Ah, yes, people in Strathblane/Blanefield say, we will not see the turbines or hear the noise, but, the children might. Balfron High School campus will be 1.15 miles from the turbines and most children from this area attend the secondary school. As it is a "magnet" school this could also affect house prices in the catchment area.

The phenomenon is known as Amplitude Modulation of Aerodynamic sound. It is not fully understood and is being researched by Defra. The symptoms reported include sleep deprivation, anxiety, depression, stress, vertigo and tinnitus, leading to difficulties in concentration and learning



caused by "whooshing", shadow flicker and strobing effect of the blades. The noise produced is both low frequency and high frequency. It overlaps with the human auditory range and is capable of travelling over long distances. Human cells can be damaged by exposure to excessive amounts of sound. Unfortunately, at the moment, it cannot be predicted which areas or directions might be affected.

Accordingly, I would urge that when it comes to planning, "location, location, location" should be the watchword, and large windfarms should be sensitively sited. Taking all issues into account, this is the wrong location. I would advise everyone to find out as much as they can about this proposal.

Further information can be obtained from the following websites:

www.ninapierpont.com
www.windturbinesnoisehealthhumanrights.com
www.evag.co.uk
www.npower-renewables.com

VANISHING PONDS

Maggie Ferguson

I really like ponds because they are so full of life. They are a unique biodiversity resource, rich in species of plants, invertebrates and amphibians. They are however consistently undervalued. This may be because of their small size, familiarity and perceived abundance. Unfortunately over the last hundred years three quarters of Britain's ponds have been lost.

I haven't searched around Strathblane and Blanefield for small ponds but off the top of my head I can't think of many. Unusually there are quite a few bigger water bodies in the surrounding area such as Punchbowl, Deil's Craig and Mill dams and the lochs of Dumbrock, Ardingning, Carbeth, Craigallian and Netherblane. These are a great resource; last June I was lucky enough to net water scorpions, amazing dragonfly nymphs and water beetles as big as 50 pence pieces at Loch Ardingning Reserve Open Day. During an amphibian torchlight

survey of Dumbrock Loch I came across lots of palmate newts and some lovely native pond plants.

Often it's the smaller ponds that are home to the most amazing creatures, this is sometimes simply because there are no fish in them. Fish are major predators in the pond and enjoy eating just about everything else. The pond on the top of Gallowhill close to Mugdock Country Park Visitor Centre used to be bursting with life with a huge variety of creatures; it was ideal for educational groups studying pond life, until.....sticklebacks arrived! They probably arrived there as eggs stuck to the leg of an unsuspecting mallard duck but they soon took over. Nowadays pond study groups catch the occasional water mite and waterlouse and about 300 sticklebacks every time they dip their net in.

Luckily Mugdock has several other fish free ponds, the two lying between Mugdock Loch and Mugdock Wood are particularly vibrant being



home to loads of damsel and mayfly nymphs which will shed their drab brown underwater coats and emerge as delicate, colourful flying adults next spring and summer.

There's a lovely little pond at the base of the dam on Dumbrock Loch. I also believe there are a few ponds in Duntreath Estate. I know of two in gardens in the village and I'm sure there will be more, but there still aren't nearly enough of them.

Frogs, toads, newts, dragonflies, alderflies, mayflies, (midgies - keep that one quiet) and damselflies can't breed without ponds. Ponds provide food for bats (they eat the midgies) and birds, not just ducks, but even the black grouse

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PEOPLE POWER IN EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE?

EDC's planners recently made a decision that could have had a profound effect on our lives here, in Killearn and Balfron, but we were not consulted. What's new? On 23 October, at a public hearing, common sense prevailed due to people power. **Philip Graves** explains.

It was standing room only as the East Dunbartonshire Council Planning Hearing on October 23rd got under way to decide the fate of the so-called "Kilmardinny Wedge". Cala Homes' application for a mixed use development of 550 houses, offices, sports facilities and a new rail halt had been passed by the Planning Department. Now it was time to see if the elected representatives agreed with their officers. Most in the audience seemed unwilling to back the Planners' stance, and thanks to the high profile campaign waged in the local paper, and the choice of Bearsden rather than Kirkintilloch for the hearing, a partisan crowd of a few hundred were there to voice their disapproval.

Both sides were given 30 minutes to present their case. The Cala representative gave a professional but dull defence of the proposal and tried to reassure local people that some of the doomsday projections for traffic gridlock during the rush hour were unfounded. Predictions of delays as long as an hour had been reported in the Bearsden & Milngavie, but Cala's traffic experts anticipated only a 4-5% increase in traffic volumes. Their £3m contribution to various traffic control measures would ease the potential congestion. Quoted examples were a new traffic lights system at Cannisburn Toll and a car park at the proposed Allander Halt. Unfortunately when questioned about the timing of the opening of this new railway station, Cala suggested ScotRail were

unlikely to have the necessary extra rail line in place for another 10 years. Hardly much use when the 550 new houses were likely to be built within 4-5 years! Given how quickly the Milngavie Station car park fills up in the morning, the proposal for a car park of about 150 cars, a similar size to Milngavie, was considered totally inadequate by some commentators.



Many residents were very concerned over the rumour that the Allander sports centre was due to be knocked down 18 months or so before its replacement would be completed.

Whilst the developers and the EDC officers made much of the £10m contribution the developers had promised towards its rebuild, there was a distinct haziness as to whether the replacement centre could be built in advance, and if not, why not? The suspicion remains that the developers simply wish to save money.

Even an unbiased observer had to admit that the local community groups' representatives mounted a much more spirited and emotional attack on the plans. There was acceptance that some sort of development was necessary, but the scale of the latest application was the key problem. EDC's Local Plan had originally set aside the site for about 300 houses, but this number had now risen to 550 with the difference being explained by the removal of the West of Scotland Rugby Club completely from the site. The 40 acres thus released would provide the land for these extra houses.

But where would the rugby club go? To my mind this was one of the major flaws of the scheme. Apparently the preferred option mentioned in the press was a greenfield site just beyond the Rangers training ground, which would represent another major incursion into the greenbelt. If the Cala development was passed, then the pressure would be on EDC to grant the ground-less rugby club their planning permission as soon as possible. In my view this application should have been considered as part and parcel of the Cala application.

Two or more hours on, and with all the arguments out in the open, it was time for the Councillors on the Planning Board formally to consider and then vote on the application. As politicians, they all wanted their say, even if their contributions added nothing new to the argument. When the chairman eventually asked for a show of hands, the result appeared in the balance. There was a hushed silence amongst the patient onlookers and a loud roar as a surprisingly large majority of Councillors voted against the application.

We are for ever questioning how such a major development never seems to get a hearing outside of EDC despite consequences for commuters in outlying areas such as Strathblane. Why wasn't Stirling Council consulted and why were we not asked for our views here in Strathblane? This was also our experience with the proposals for a new water treatment plant in Milngavie a few years ago. In that instance Strathblane Community Council muscled itself into the consultation process and the Planning Hearing, and we can take some credit for the treatment works being materially smaller than the original proposal.

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we are trying to encourage on Dumbrook Moor feed their young on invertebrates from small ponds.

Garden ponds are great. Two years ago I visited 5 ponds in gardens in Milngavie - they were all very different from a tiny, shallow, pale, stoney zen type one to a raised concrete rectangular one and I found palmate newts in all of them. In fact this year East Dunbartonshire's first recent record of a smooth newt was recorded in a garden pond.

So, if you can, it would be worth considering a pond in a sunny spot in your garden. If you're worried about children falling in, there are purpose made grids available. The children will really appreciate the pond when they find out how many amazing creatures live in it and maybe they will grow up to really like ponds too.

There are lots of interesting pond related websites, check out froglife and the pond conservation trust for lots of good information.

PRESIDENT'S REVIEW

Continued from page 17

Gents; if the truth be told this is supposed to be a friendly but the battle of the sexes brings out the competitor in all bowlers.

A dinner dance was held in the Glazert Bank Hotel where all members could relax and enjoy a fitting end to the season.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the companies who supported our club in the way of sponsorship (believe it or not, our bowling club appears on the website of a large motor manufacturer normally associated with two rather well known Glasgow football teams), and all the committee members who worked tirelessly supporting Malcolm and me in what was a huge year for our bowling club.

There are too many people to thank in this article but, at the end of the day, every member contributed in one way or another, which hopefully will stand our club in good stead.

Here's to another 100 years.



Centenary presidents, Sadie Barclay and Malcolm McLean cutting the 100th birthday cake

THE CROW FAMILY

DHL

Crows (corvids) have fascinated man for centuries. They are frequently highly visible around human settlements, widely distributed across the world, long-lived (up to 30+ years), cosmopolitan in their diet and show remarkable intelligence. Current evidence suggests that the ancestral corvid originated in south-east Asia and spread around the world with the sole exception of Australasia and isolated Pacific Islands. In our own region (the Palearctic which extends from the Urals in the east to the shores of Greenland in the west and from the Arctic to the northern borders of the Sahara in the south) we have 18 separate species. Here in Scotland there are seven members of the genus of which five can be seen regularly in the valley. The other two are the Red-billed Chough a beautiful maritime corvid which can be seen only on Islay and Colonsay, and the Hooded Crow which replaces our Carrion Crow in the North and West of Scotland. In the valley you can see the Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw and Magpie daily.

You will also be able to observe the Raven if you keep your wits about you and especially if you keep your ears open to its characteristic deep croaking call as it

Jackdaw



traverses the hill or visits Loch Ardinning to prospect for unwary food sources. Ravens are the largest members of the Corvid family world wide and are some 30-40% larger than the local Carrion Crows and Rooks. They tend to live in remote hills and moorland including the Campsie plateau. They will eat almost anything. Here in Scotland their diet is of animal and plant origin, the former either killed by a blow from their powerful bill or scavenged. Sick animals up to small deer can be taken, and rabbits and hares are a favourite. Ravens are the Einstein's of the bird world. They evolved their mental abilities to aid survival in the High Arctic wildernesses where their life depends upon their ability to scavenge prey from polar bears and wolves – a hazardous business unless you have both plenty of wits and the ability to use them to your advantage. Although usually relatively solitary they mate for life and travel around together throughout the year. However they are not averse to flocking when the opportunity and food supply allows. Keep an eye out for these magnificent birds as they traverse the hillside looking for prey or just to have a bit of fun noising up the local buzzards or falcons as they go about their daily activities.

I have commented before in these columns about the smallest

of the local corvids the Jackdaws. These are the Bover Boys of the family, always going about in groups and generally causing mayhem wherever they go. Jackdaws behave like cheeky, delightful teenagers and are well worth watching just to follow their antics as they go about their daily life.

Some people have difficulty in distinguishing between Rooks and Carrion Crows. These birds are about the same size (46cm long, 100cm wingspan) and overall appearance although the Rook has a much tidier and somewhat glossy appearance with a light mark at the base of its bill. Both are monogamous, the Rook being more gregarious especially in the breeding season. In competition for garden scraps Carrion Crows will often dash in and get the prize whilst Rooks are still sitting on a branch contemplating the pros and cons of the situation. Give these birds some scrutiny when you are out for a walk – their complex behaviour might give you a pleasant surprise!

The more observant reader might have noticed that recently we have seen several crows locally with regular lighter patches on their otherwise dark wings or body. This could just be random plumage variation but is more likely to be due to some extra-curricular liaisons with wandering members of the closely related Hooded Crow tribe. Carrion and Hooded Crows hybridise frequently in the boundary areas where they meet. This is around the line which traverses Dunoon, Tarbert (Loch Lomond), Fort William, Lairg to Thurso. I suspect that we have had a few Hooded visitors to the valley recently; indeed I saw one near the Wishing Well last week. Perhaps they have left a few of their genes in the local Carrion Crow pool before returning westwards home!

Magpies are also members of the corvid family. Much maligned for their undoubted habit of feeding on other garden birds and their offspring, they are actually quite beautiful birds. The greenish sheen to the tail and bluish sheen on the wings vary according to the light but make them in my eyes one of the prettiest of our local birds. They are unmistakable and are widely distributed throughout the world

Magpie



ranging from Siberia and Japan in the east across all Eurasia and into North America. They occur as far south as Saudi Arabia and the northern Malay Peninsula. There is only one other similar species - the Yellow Billed Magpie of California - and even that may just be a normal magpie that overdid the makeup on a trip to Hollywood and then encouraged its relatives to follow suit!

The final member of the corvids to be found locally is the beautiful Jay which is at the northern limit of its range

here in our valley. It is a strongly arboreal species which feeds on insects and leaf litter as well as seeds, nuts and berries. Jays prefer areas with mature oak trees and therefore are seen in Mugdock Park around the Country Club and along the pipeline as it goes from Killearn to Blanefield. These birds are normally quiet outside the breeding season in our area and, unusually for crows, are relatively wary so do not expect to see them easily unless you are both lucky and very aware of your surroundings. The usual view is of a light brownish Jackdaw sized bird with grey - blue markings on its wings and a light rump flying off into a tall tree.

The crows are a greatly under appreciated tribe and well worth observing as they go about their business. As the winter approaches they should be well to the fore in our local skies.



LIGHT RELIEF

Bob Flashman

NOT so long ago I endeavoured to have the current poor quality street lighting improved along Glasgow Road especially in the area just south of The Blane Valley public house. At the time I was informed that it would be several years before we qualified for replacement. Stirling Council advised that a major programme of replacement is required throughout Stirlingshire for safety reasons due to a high percentage of the existing lighting columns, particularly concrete columns, having deteriorated to such an extent that they could be a hazard to pedestrian and vehicular traffic. In other words the criterion for new or improved lighting is not based, primarily, on poor illumination levels but on safety levels relating to columns themselves. There are some 35 concrete columns located in our area and no time scale can be obtained for action due to funding and other priorities. Currently 1600 concrete columns have been identified throughout the region as needing replacing which at present rate will require a 13 to 14 year programme.

How then did the Glasgow Road replacement occur after only a few months from the first request? It would seem that Scottish Power advised they were going to remove the overhead cable lines and wooden poles and SC were left with no alternative but to install new poles and lights. I have also been asked why not replace the lights on the most poorly lit section of Glasgow Road. This had been part of the original replacement plan but concern was expressed that the footpath was not wide enough to accommodate poles without forcing pedestrians into the road. SC is to keep this matter under review.

CARBON NEUTRAL GROUP

George Thom

The Blane Valley Carbon Neutral Group opened up its October meeting to the public, to hear Rachel Nunn of Stop Climate Chaos talk about what we could do about climate change. Several new people joined the group as a result, and now we are planning how to put our enthusiasm into action.

Rachel's talk, attended by about 25 people from the village, looked at the facts about climate change, how we are contributing to it, and what effects it will have. But it wasn't all doom and gloom. She spoke about what we could do to stop the problem escalating into disaster. The situation isn't hopeless, but we have to reduce our 'carbon footprint'. A helpful way of looking at it was to



Rachel Nunn at the Carbon Neutral meeting in the school

think about three kinds of changes, all of which make a difference. 'Easy' changes are quick and cheap – things like changing to energy-saving lightbulbs. Then there are 'sacrificial' changes, which will vary from person to person: things like making more journeys without the car, or buying more locally grown food. And lastly there are 'infrastructural' changes, which need a lot of effort, working together with other people, support from the government, and maybe campaigning for policy changes.

At the previous meeting we were joined by Neil Phillips from SCHRI (the Scottish Community and Household Renewables Initiative), which is part of the Energy Savings Trust. He gave us a lot of information about different ways to make our homes more energy efficient.

So we had plenty to think about when it came to our November meeting, and we had a spirited discussion. By the end of it we had decided to follow up several ideas: setting up a scheme to instal solar panels for heating water in several houses in the village; exploring how we could work with the school on eco issues; seeing what we could do

THRIVING AUTUMN SEASON FOR THE GARDENING CLUB

Mary Brailey

The gardening club's 2007/08 season set off to a fine start at our well-attended September meeting. David Menzies, keeper of the orchid house at Glasgow's Botanic Gardens, treated us to a photographic tour of his native New Zealand. He encountered some wet and windy weather during his trip there in July last year, which helped us to understand why so many plants originating in New Zealand – and probably David himself – feel at home in the West of Scotland.

The subject for the October meeting was a bit closer to home but



just as damp – Ayrshire. Talking about 'A Year in the Vegetable Garden at Geilston', Johanna Gough shared tips and the names of vegetable varieties that had done well there. Last year beetroot had been particularly popular with the visitors who buy their produce. There was a lively debate at the end on the relative merits of digging or just manuring and letting the worms do the work. Digging won!

Club meetings are always lively gatherings as well as being informative. So if you're not already a member and are interested in gardening (even the armchair variety) do come along if you'd like to join, or if you're interested in a specific talk. The full programme for the New Year can be found on the village website: www.strathblanefield.org.uk.

about reducing unneeded packaging and other waste; and developing easy ways for people in the village to get their homes insulated.

We also thought we should encourage everyone to make one New Year's resolution to help reduce their carbon footprint. So come on, how about it?

The next Blane Valley Carbon Neutral Group meeting will be at 7.30 on Thursday 24 January. For details contact George Thom at gethom@tiscali.co.uk, 07711 537397. New members, and ideas, welcome, even if you can't

come to meetings.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Gardening Club meetings are in the Kirkrooms at 7.30 p.m.

25 January, Sandra Halliday: 'Perennials through the Seasons'

29 February, Matthew Heashan: 'Himalayan Plants in West Coast Gardens'

28 March, John West: 'Making a Garden from Scratch'

STOP PRESS

The gardening club has organised a bus trip on Saturday 23 February to see the snowdrops at Cambo in Fife. This is open to non-members. Cost £8 for the bus and £4 entry. Contact Marjorie Shephard (770855) if you'd like to go.

CASTLE RECIPE

Julie Edmonstone

WINTER SALAD

Every time I'm asked to contribute a dish to a celebration, I usually opt for this Winter Salad. It's extremely good (even men like it), it's a little bit different, it looks very appetising and it's easy to do!

Mix any or all of the following in a bowl in any quantity you like and dress with a mixture of half mayonnaise (or Caesar salad dressing) and half vinaigrette dressing.

Finely sliced sweetheart cabbage

Grated carrot

Thin slices of celery (use a potato peeler to strip off any tough fibres)

Finely diced red/white onion

Watercress/rocket salad leaves

Little sprigs of raw cauliflower

Finely diced red-skinned apple

Finely diced red pepper

Courgette - sliced thinly and then halved

Sprinkling of sultanas or nuts

P.S. If you can find a gadget called an 'Alligator' in any catalogue, it makes a perfect and instant job of dicing.



WALK ALONG THE ANTONINE WALL FINAL PART

Forrest Robertson

The wall builders had to make a sharp Z turn in their work to accommodate Mumrills Fort here and I followed its track down what had been the road to Beancross but is now a tree edged country lane cul de sac.

Progress is progress but it is a pity that our modern road systems have smashed great swathes through our ancient and historic places. The M9 and its roundabout junction with the realigned A803 North West of Polmont has certainly caused the labours of the Romans more than a little grief but "worse things happen at sea" they say and the lost section is relatively minor compared with, say, agricultural and industrial vandalism over the centuries, and I soon picked up my route again along the escarpment North of the motorway heading for Polmont Church. The frontier line passes through the churchyard between the old 18th C. parish church and its successor designed in a simplified Lombardic Romanesque style by John Tait in the mid 1840s.

Down Smiddy Brae and a sharp right turn took me over the Millhall Burn and across a car park into Millhall Wood where the well defined ditch is now crowned by a circular water tank, and just beyond it, on coming out of the wood after a few hundred yards, there's my first view of the Firth of Forth - *Bodetria Aest* to the sandled ones. I surreptitiously passed round the fairways of the Polmonthill golf course and, at the back of the adjacent ski club house, the ditch runs parallel with an artificial ski slope sitting right on top of what would have been the rampart. Across the Avon and I'm into Lothian and closing fast on the Firth. From now on I'm travelling on stout walking boots and a map, aka a wing and a prayer. There are now only the vaguest fragments of ditch to be seen over the last few kilometres. There could well have been a fort here at Inveravon virtually on the river's banks but even excavations and its likelihood on the grounds of spacing between known forts has thrown up no definite proof and I strode on across the stubbled field up onto the C class road to the remnants of the 15th C tower and climbing, climbing past the farm and over the railway cutting to Nether Kinneil and its curious roofs and a spectacular industry free view of the Firth with Bo'ness straight ahead.

A few hundred metres further on, at the T junction, the line carries straight on through a field and into the grounds of Kinneil Park straight past the roofless 12th C church which hasn't seen a congregation for over three hundred years and into the precincts of Kinneil House and, just to the west of the house is the excavated remains of a mile fortlet rediscovered as recently as 1978. The rampart's outlines are

marked by concrete slabs and modern wooden posts have been installed in the original post holes to outline the north & south entrance gates and also some of the small internal buildings, while some of the finds can be seen in the Kenneil House Museum nearby. Kenneil House itself is a majestic result of two distinct building periods happily married a hundred years apart. The central portion was begun by James Hamilton, 2nd Earl of Arran in 1542. He then started on the northern "palace" 11 years later but it lay in a ruinous state for many years and it was not until 1677 that Anne, Duchess of Hamilton, began rebuilding, connecting the various disparate parts, but the whole building was virtually gutted in the 20th C and we can only admire it from the green. To the right is a cluster of small stone 18th C buildings in one of which James Watt devised and improved his steam engine in 1765.

I turned my back and headed once more eastward. On my right, behind a low stone wall, the line of the ditch can just be made out as a very slight dip in the grassed play area with an even hazier ridge running parallel about 50m beyond it, but I was past the gates of the House within a few seconds and over the roundabout and onto Deans Road, the present A993. It can only be an assumption that Deans Road and its successor, Grahamsdyke Road, are, in fact, the military way but the name "Grahamsdyke" echoes the same one I walked along back at Lauriston towards Mumrills fort east of Falkirk, and its root meaning cannot be a coincidence.

In front of the road on the North side of the frontier line, the ground drops steeply to the Firth and the panorama here takes in the Cleish Hills with the Lomonds of Fife and the Ochils to the west with Ben Ledi, one of Scotland's highest Munros, and eastwards to the two bridges slung over the Firth, the nearer, the cantilevers of the rail passage which according to legend and maxim is never done with painters, and the further, the elegant curve of the road carrying suspension. Now it's important not to lose the line and I, map in hand, diverged from the main road into Grahamsdyke Lane past the red sandstone edifice of the Grange School, still proudly inscribed on its Edwardian frontage "Bo'ness and Carriden Board" which sits more or less right on the track, and I am virtually home because there,

set into the wall in Harbour Road about 40m south of Tower Gardens, is a stone slab which states unequivocally, "IMP CAES TITO AELIO/ HADRI ANTONINO/ AVG PIO P PLEG II/ AVG PER M P IIIIDCLII/ FEC" - "For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, Father of his Country, the Second Augustan Legion completed (the Wall) over a distance of 4,652 paces."

But, of all the aspects of Antonine's Wall, its origin, its purpose, its construction, its route, its length of service, the exact start point is still uncertain. Bede in the 8th C categorically



states that it started 2 miles West of Abercorn at a place called Peanfahel. Two hundred years later, "Cenail" is credited with the start line. Cenail, Pengual and Peneltun are sited as alternatives over time and, tellingly, in English, Gaelic and Celtic all mean "end of the wall" but Timothy Pont, the first man to make a systematic survey of the wall towards the end of the 16th C ignores Bede and places the starting line "betwixt Abircorn and Queensferry". Sibbald chose Abercorn itself in 1710 while Maitland in 1757 sets it much further west, only half a mile from Kenneil House, and General Roy brought the military engineer's precision to the subject in 1755 and noted "... a slight vestige of ditch..." on the south side of The Grange, an old, now long demolished, mansion a quarter of a mile west of Bridgeness Tower which still stands and has indeed recently been converted to flats. Sir George McDonald, the prominent Wall archaeologist in the early part of the last century was quite convinced that it set out from a rocky knoll at Bridgeness, "...a little headland, projecting into the Firth, with bays sweeping back behind it on the east and on the west." But! in 1945, aerial photographs pinpointed a fort in the grounds of Carriden House and almost one and a half km East of Bridgeness and that, coupled with the stone of the original "distance slab" in Tower Road (the one I saw is a replica, the original is in The Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh) not being the

MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM UPDATE



Martin McCallum

Since the last issue of The Blane it has proved to be a busy autumn for Lomond Mountain Rescue Team. The team has been involved in six callouts involving a total of thirty-one hill walkers during a ten week period from September to mid November.

It all began with a party of twenty-two walkers who got into difficulties on Ben Venue on 5 September. One of the party had suffered a stroke and another had sustained head injuries whilst descending the mountain. In darkness and in difficult conditions, the Team provided emergency first aid to the injured walkers and assisted the Royal Navy Rescue Helicopter from HMS Gannet to evacuate the most seriously injured walker who was flown directly to The Southern General in Glasgow. Lomond MRT, with the assistance of Killin MRT, then escorted the remaining walkers from the hill.

Later that month, on 15 September, the team was asked to assist in the search for two Canadian walkers who had not returned from their walk

on the West Highland Way near Rowardennan. They were located soon after the team was mobilised.

On October 13th came what must be the team's quickest rescue of recent times. A lady walker had fallen injuring her leg while returning from the Whangie and the Team was called to assist The Scottish Ambulance Service. Team members were on scene within 20 mins. of the call out and the lady was safely evacuated to the

Queen's View car park. The entire rescue was completed within 45 mins.

Four days later, on 17 October, a call came to assist with a walker who had fallen on Dumgoyne. Again the team responded and the walker was recovered to the waiting ambulance.

A week later, on 24 October, the team was requested to carry out a search for an elderly couple who appeared to be in difficulty on Ben Lomond. The Team was placed on standby and then attended at Rowardennan to commence a search. The missing walkers turned up safely.

Finally on Armistice Day the team was called to search for three missing walkers on Ben Lomond. The one male and two females had contacted Central Scotland Police to say they had become lost when darkness set in. Given the information available to the team a search was carried out on the Eastern slopes of the Ben and the missing party was located. Although cold, they were safe and well.

All in all a very busy period.

For more information visit our web site at www.lomondmrt.org.uk

TIME TO STOP DEVELOPMENT

Bob Flashman

The Planning Department consulted Roads and Transport Development on 4 applications (3 new houses in Moor Road and 1 at Old Mugdock Road). The Service initially recommended against granting consent to the 3 developments in Moor Road and at a subsequent Planning Panel reported that the main issue arising from the 4 applications was the potential effect upon road safety. It was identified that these applications will result in traffic generation onto Old Mugdock Road. At a further Planning Panel meeting it was agreed to continue the applications to allow the Council's Roads and Transport section to conclude its assessment of Old Mugdock Road.

A well attended public held at the Primary School on 25th September meeting was arranged by Strathblane Community Council in order to obtain local opinion. Stirling Council was represented by Mick Stewart Head of Planning and Chris Bell Team Leader, Transport Planning. The issue was further discussed at the October meeting of the SCC following which a letter was sent to Stirling Council summarising public opinion. A copy of the letter can be seen in the library.

Broadly speaking Roads have identified improvements required to Old Mugdock Road but in terms of priority within council budget it is unlikely that work would be carried out within the next 15 years. In order to overcome this objection the developers have offered to make a financial contribution towards the cost of improvements estimated at a total of £85,000.

However, widespread concern was expressed that the plan proposed by Transport Planning was hastily prepared, was designed to a price that would be acceptable to the developers'

contribution but would not meet the majority of local users needs. This in the main was that while upgrade was required to road surface, sharp and undefined edges, passing places and lack of proper footpath, the attractive rural aspect of the road should be left unaltered. It was accepted that this could mean Stirling Council maintaining its policy of no further developments that adversely affected Old Mugdock Road.

Included in the community council



A car has to drive on to the verge to pass horses on the Old Mugdock Road

response was a request that time be given to Traffic Planning to allow a production of a detailed scheme not inhibited by financial constraint and which reflect the view of the majority.

Survey cameras have been seen at a number of locations on OMR and it has been confirmed that this is in relation to the above.

ANTONINE WALL

Continued from page 22

same as other stones from the wall's base in the vicinity, tends archaeologists now to believe that the kick off point is now on the banks of the Forth at Carriden; so there towards it I set off.

From McDonald's "little headland", I kept to the main road through the village which turns directly South and carried on up hill to the mock Saxon church of P.M. Chalmers and turned left into the driveway of Carriden House past the long brickwalled kitchen garden. The mansion itself is a marvellously rambling conglomeration of styles dating from 1602 to 1863 and is still in use as a family home. The current owners very kindly granted permission for me to poke about round their garden to the east side of the house where recent excavations have proved the fort to sit partially in their lawn and partially in the adjacent field. It seems to have been about 1.6ha and have had a civilian settlement beside it. Nothing now shows on the ground but I was just happy to be there sitting in the shade of the trees several days trekking 37½ imperial miles, 40¼ Roman miles or 60km from Old Kilpatrick.

TALES FROM THE TRANSPORT MUSEUM – THE BUBBLE CAR

Robert S. Davy

The 1960 BMW Isetta bubble car in the Glasgow Museum of Transport was in many ways ahead of its time. With petrol now over £1.00 a litre, we may all wish we had one in the near future.

The Isetta was one of the most successful microcars produced in the post WWII years – a time when cheap short distance transportation was most needed. Because of its egg shape and bubble-like windows, it became known as a bubble car – a name later given to other similar vehicles. Other countries had other nicknames:- in Germany it was 'das rollende Ei' (the rolling egg) or the 'Sargwagen' (literally- "coffin on wheels"; the name apparently came from the small or non-existent distance between the passengers and oncoming traffic!). In France it was the 'yogurt pot', in Brazil the 'bola de futebol de feneme' (soccer ball of a truck) and in Chile it is still called the 'huevito' (little egg).

The car's origins were with the Italian firm of Iso SpA who, in the early 1950s, were building refrigerators, motor scooters and small three-wheeled trucks. It is said that the stylists had arrived at the design of the Isetta by taking two scooters, placing them close together, adding a refrigerator and shaping the result 'like a teardrop in the wind'!

The entire front end of the car hinged outwards to allow entry and in the event of a crash, the driver and passenger were expected to exit through the canvas sunroof. The steering wheel and instrument panel swung out with the single door, as this made access to the single bench seat simpler. The seat provided reasonable comfort for two occupants and perhaps a small child. Behind the seat was a large parcel shelf with a spare wheel located below. A heater was optional and ventilation was provided by opening the fabric sunroof. It is questionable whether today's obese population could actually fit in a bubble car!

BMW began talking with Iso in mid-1954 and bought not just a license but the complete Isetta body tooling as well. In 1957, Isetta of Great Britain began producing Isetta 300 models at their factory in the former Brighton railway works under license from BMW. The factory had no access road, with components being delivered by rail and finished cars being shipped out the same way.

The Isetta took over 30 seconds to reach 30mph from rest and top speed was only about 45mph. The fuel tank only held 13 litres (3.5 gallons) but would get somewhere between 50 to 80 miles per gallon



depending on how it was driven. As petrol had recently reached the outrageous figure of 7/- (35p) per gallon, not many long distance journeys were made. It was perfect for the UK's urban and rural roads as the first motorway, the M1, did not open until 1959 and more conventional cars such as the Morris Minor could barely top 60mph. Right-hand drive meant that the driver and the engine were on the same side, so a 60lb (27kg) counterweight was added to the left side to compensate.

The car was not popular in the UK until a three-wheeled version was introduced, costing £339 19s 6d, and although these were more prone to rolling over, there was a further financial advantage. If the reverse gear was not installed, they could evade automobile

legislation and taxation by being classed as three-wheeled motorcycles and could be driven with a motorcycle license and road tax of £5.00. The lack of a reverse gear was not a problem in parking as the rear end could be lifted off the ground which was also useful for changing wheels!

In 1962, the same year that trams left the streets of Glasgow, Isetta of Great Britain stopped production of the little cars but continued to produce Isetta engines until 1964. Altogether they produced about 30,000 cars although only 1750 three-wheelers were built. It served its purpose and was the most successful bubble car of them all, but with the arrival of the revolutionary mini in 1959, its days were numbered. Nevertheless, with 136,000 sold worldwide, it had done enough to set BMW on the road to its present success. These days one in good condition could cost around £4,000.

On the lighter side, a visitor to the Museum from Yorkshire told me he had owned a red bubble car and on visiting a circus, had parked outside the 'big top'. In these days, elephants performed in the circus ring using a heavy duty, brightly coloured circular stand. As the elephants left the tent, one of them noticed the bubble car which bore a remarkable resemblance to its stand and decided to perform an encore. It made a bee-line for the car and sat on it, thereby reducing it to no more than a 'saucer car'. No record remains of what the visitor entered on his insurance claim!

HERITAGE MISSING PERSON

Murray O'Donnell

Does any one remember someone called Maureen who lived in Lunchikin Cottage? She sent a postcard to a Mr J Molloy in Portsmouth who has since died and the executor of his estate has a few personal possessions that he would like to pass on. If you have any information about either Maureen or Mr Molloy, please contact me on 770748.

HERITAGE MEETINGS are monthly on a Wednesday and we welcome any one to come along to the Village Club for 7.30. Local press and posters show the topic and the date of the meetings. On 23 of January we will welcome neighbours, Killearn History Group, who will speak about their village.

DVDs of village life in 1957 and Heritage Tea towels are on sale in the library at £5 and £3.50 respectively.

They would make a very nice Christmas present. The DVDs give a fascinating glimpse of everyday life and you might even recognise a few faces, looking a bit younger of course.

THINGS AIN'T WOT THEY USED TO BE

Alison Dryden

The first school board in Strathblane was elected in March 1873.

It would appear that, prior to that time, schoolmasters were not held in high regard and received a very poor salary. To supplement their meagre wages, Guthrie Smith records that, in common with other parishes in Scotland, the schoolmaster would arrange cockfights. Every boy who could, brought a cock to school, and on payment of 2 pennies to the master, the cocks were pitted together. The cocks that would not fight - "fuggies" - were tied to a post and killed one after another in a brutal game of cock throwing at a halfpenny a go.

The master got the halfpennies and the dead birds, and, as an encouragement and reward to the scholars, would give them cold punch or other spirituous liquor.

Scholars were also encouraged to bring gifts on certain fast days and during the cold season they had to bring a peat each day to keep the school fire burning.





MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING

Anne Spencer

On Friday 28th September we held our first Macmillan Coffee morning at Strathblane Primary.

The day was enjoyed by visitors and the children alike.

The whole school was involved in preparations beforehand. Our Primary 7s designed tickets and posters to advertise the event and helped serve and wash up on the day. Primary 6 turned their hand, very successfully, to making flower arrangements for the tables and still had enough energy left to blow up balloons! Primaries 3, 4 and 5 all helped

by producing some mouth watering baking. Many parents helped by baking for us, in fact people were so generous we were able to have a baking stall which of course went down a treat and helped raise more money. Our parents also came in and helped us during the morning.

As a reward for all their hard work the children enjoyed juice and a cake in the afternoon. We managed to raise the grand total of £484.80. Thank you so much to everybody who came along to support this event. It was wonderful to see so many people chatting and enjoying coffee and cake in the hall.

We are looking forward to next year's coffee morning!

HALLOWEEN IN SPS - AAAAAGH!!!

Val McCorquodale

After many years of Halloween hilarity in our household this was the first I really struggled to get into the spirit of the occasion. Truth be told, I found myself wanting to lock doors, close curtains and wish the whole thing over! This of course meant a major guilt trip for Mother!

The house was not decorated for the occasion. No bright orange pumpkins, scary masks or creepy cobwebs hung from walls, corners or windows. An uninspiring lonely pumpkin carved out 10 minutes before going out guising sat flickering in the fireplace. No time to conjure up a clever "home-made" costume for either of my young sons, my youngest reduced to wearing whatever was in the dressing-up box and to my shame, completely buying into the whole commercial thing, I ordered a white satin cat suit with standy-up collar and frighteningly low cleavage for my Elvis-obsessed eight year old.

However, after picking up my two very excited boys from the childminder and putting tea on the table, I showered and resigned myself to a late shift at the school Halloween disco. As I looked out of the window across the dimly lit playground, I could see the figures of a few young children excitedly making their way towards the main doors. I could hear happy voices and sense their excitement and it was then that I felt myself give into the whole Halloween thing all over again.

Kids do that to you – they take you into their "happy zone" and despite yourself you have a good time!

The school disco was a success. Lots of our pupils and parent helpers turned out on the night. School funds were boosted but most importantly all

who were there had great fun. Personally I really enjoyed being part of that happy occasion and was glad I hadn't simply "endured" it.

Yet again, I was reminded of just how much joy young children bring into our lives and of how infectious their excitement and enthusiasm for everything really is. Sometimes a very busy life and adolescent children can make us lose sight of that.



Left to right: Hazel Kelly, Eilidh Peddie, shy pumpkin, Ruth Ferguson, Rhianna Howell, Lauren Dempsey, Abigail Pugh and Lucy Clarke at the Hallowe'en disco

MAD HAIR & PYJAMAS

Val MacCorquodale

On Friday 16th November, pupils at Strathblane Primary enjoyed a "Mad Hair & Pyjamas" day full of fun and games to raise funds for Children in Need. Teachers and pupils arrived at school sporting gelled and dyed hairdos, their favourite pyjamas, and some even had dressing gowns and slippers. Each pupil, from the morning nursery class to P7, donated £1 in order to take part in a fun fitness session with Kirsty, from Active Stirling, and myself. Favourite games included "newspaper swop" (lovely and noisy!), "tiger's tail", "chinese dragons", and of course the irresistible "space hoppers" and "earth ball". Much fun was had by all!

PARENT COUNCIL

Cathie Moir

Some of you will already know that the Primary School has a new Parent Council. This was created as part of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act, 2006, and is designed to replace both the School Board and the Parent Teacher Association with a single body for each school.

The parent members of the Council are Andy Thompson (Chair), Gun Orgun (Treasurer), Fergus Mitchell (Communications Officer), Cathie Moir, Charlie Haggerty, Debbie Bolton and Berndt Schwann. The teacher members are Jennifer Cunningham, Anne Spencer and Morven Bulloch.

The Parent Council will carry on the work of the Board, such as progressing the multi-use games area and other issues, but will also encompass the vital fundraising work of the former PTA.

Any member of the Council can be contacted via our dedicated email address at:

strathparentcouncil@googlemail.com, and the next ordinary meeting will be on 21 January, 2008 in the school.

OUT OF SCHOOL CARE

CHRISTMAS is coming, and with the increased use of SOSC this term we are considering opening at Christmas time. Potential users of this facility should let SOSC know as soon as they can.



We welcome new Playworkers: Laura, Joss, Declan and Rhona who have been adding a great mix of enthusiasm and experience to our staffing this term.

Congratulations go to two of our staff, Gillian and Frances who are completing their SVQ level 3 in Playwork about now.

Finally, if you're shopping for Christmas presents online, why not see if you can buy through the easyfundraising scheme; it costs you no more but a donation is made to SOSC with every purchase. Details are under 'fundraising' on our website, SOSC.org.uk

But the fun didn't stop there. Throughout the day younger pupils were invited to take part in a variety of competitions, word searches, crosswords etc. designed by the talented P7s who also visited each class making sure that everyone knew why we were holding this very special day.

The day's activities raised a fantastic £190! Well done to everyone at Strathblane Primary for taking part and thank you for your kind donations.

CORNER LIBRARY



Lynne James

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

In this article we just want to thank you all for your great support of the things we do in Strathblane Library.

In the last issue of the Blane we gave advance notice of our Big Issue Day and asked you to come along and celebrate your local library. Well, you came up trumps! On the day, 340 people crossed our threshold and many of you were kind enough to bring us fantastic home baking as well. What stars you all

were! The day was a joy from start to finish and showed just how vibrant a community library can be. We had classes of school kids in, we had villagers chatting over coffee, and we even had OUR BOSS from Stirling in (so thanks for making us look good for him as well!!!).

Our joint events with Balfron and Drymen during our Book Festival were a great success. Those of you who didn't make it to Simon Brett's one man show missed an absolute tour de force! For the pre school children we had a "Molly Muddle" show which took us all back to our childhood days as we sang along to various nursery rhymes.

Just a couple of weeks ago we had the great pleasure of co-hosting, with the primary school, a visit by Mhairi Hedderwick, author and illustrator of the "Katie Morag" books. She was an absolute delight to be with and the children were enthralled by her stories. As I said at the time, sometimes my job is so much fun it CANT be like REAL work!

Our Book Club, held on the third

Tuesday of the month, is also an evening I look forward to immensely. So far this year the discussions have been really lively and tremendously well informed. In December we will torture all members with the Christmas quiz, but we will help the evening go well with mulled wine and Christmas treats so no-one should complain too much!

We continue to weed out our old stock of books and DVDs quite ruthlessly and it is always worth popping in to see if you can pick up any bargains. We sell off fiction from 20 pence, non fiction from 40 pence and children's paperbacks are all 10 pence. DVDs are individually priced, but are real bargains at less than £4.

Back, though, to the original purpose of this article. Let me just say on behalf of Jean, Isobel and myself that our enjoyment of our jobs, which I sincerely hope we manage to convey to all of you, is a direct result of your continued and valued support of us and our service. Our job really is "ALL about you" so, thank you for making it what it is.

DOG OWNERS WARNED TO CLEAN UP THEIR MESS

Britain is a nation of dog lovers with over seven million people owning one and they provide a great remedy for getting out and enjoying the fresh air. But some owners in Callander are failing to take their responsibility of dog ownership seriously.

Callander Primary School's Eco group and the pupils' council contacted the Stirling Council's Streetscape office with grave concerns about the dog mess, on and near the paths around the school. Streetscape officers visited the path close to the school to investigate further and encountered a landscape covered with dog faeces.

To highlight the problem Streetscape organised a survey placing a flag at each instance of dog fouling documenting this irresponsible behaviour with photographs. Streetscape officer Jim Fisher said: "I was disgusted at the state of the area caused by dog owners who are either too lazy or irresponsible to clean up after their own pets and placing others at risk. Dog faeces can contain toxacara canis which is a major health hazard especially on a path so close to a route used by primary and secondary schoolchildren.

"Stirling Council is in the process of erecting two dog bins which it will regularly service, Streetscape Officers and the Animal Control

Officers will also be patrolling the area and issue £40 fines to owners who do not clean up after their dogs."

Previous studies in Scotland concerning waste and litter have consistently placed dog fouling near the top of the publics most despised culprits.

Dog mess can contain a number of things, which can make people ill - best known of which is infection with toxacara canis, which is a roundworm.



Flags mark the poos in Callander

If the eggs of this worm are swallowed this can result in a range of symptoms from aches and pains to bronchial conditions. In rare cases, eyesight can be damaged.

Dog owners can reduce risk to others by worming their dog regularly, and adopting a good hygiene practice of always clearing up after their dog. They are also reminded to use dog waste bins and if there are no bins around, take the dog mess home and dispose of it. If that is not possible, then as a last resort wrap the dog mess in a plastic bag and dispose of it in a litter bin.

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We wish to reflect the views and opinions
of the whole community without
including anything that would offend
anyone. We would emphasise that the
views expressed in the Blane are not
necessarily those of the editor and he
retains the right to have the final say on
any articles included.

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Annette Brown at her spinning wheel at Mugdock Country Park

Old Mill Gift & Accessory Shop

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Wendy has been busy this year finding all sorts of great gift ideas for all ages. Having young teenage kids herself, this is an area that she is especially aware can be difficult, so expect to find plenty of fun items for this age group along with the fab baby and children's presents, and imaginative and thoughtful presents for all the other loved ones in your life.

Alternatively, if you just want to spoil yourself, the ranges of bags, jewellery, fashion accessories and body products have all gone down a storm this year, so we are confident

you will find something that you like. We are also running a 'Wish List' this Xmas to make it easier for wives (& husbands) to make sure that they get the things that they really want.

Call in at the shop and we'll tell you how it works. Remember that parking is right at the door and we are open 7 days.



MUGDOCK MAKKERS

Gary Nimmo, Stirling Council

As part of the current service development plan, the Mugdock Country Park's Joint Management Committee is now proud to announce the opening of the park's new art and craft centre on December 1, 2007.

It is being franchised to the Mugdock Makers who are a highly talented group of people with various and wide-ranging skills in arts and crafts. There will be over thirty of them under one roof, and a delightful diversity on offer, coupled with Mugdock Park's awesome splendour and setting which makes the park a great attraction to visitors and businesses alike. The gallery will be open every day starting at 12 noon and closing at 5pm.

There will be work from some of Scotland's finest artists and crafts people on display at the gallery. In addition to being open every day of the week for general sales, there is an added attraction for country park visitors on Saturdays and Sundays when different members of the Makers will be showing how they create their art. The activities will be from 2pm until 4.30pm on these days. Visitors will also have the opportunity to meet the artists, ask them about their work and even have a go themselves.

On show will be a selection of superb paintings from the likes of Gillian Kingslake, Peter Pollock and Ian Shanlin. Also there will be fabulous jewellery made by Mhairi Sim and Jean Murphy; beautiful hand painted porcelain by Alison Borthwick, fused glasswork by Julie Chapman and Eilidh Mackenzie, ceramics by Eleanor Caie and Stuart Grant, plus mosaics, basketry and much more.



Bowl by Julie Chapman



Winter sky at sunrise above Blane, taken by Richard Callender



CORRECTIONS TO ITEMS IN LAST ISSUE

Several people have pointed out to us that the green woodpecker on the back page of the last issue was, in fact, a greater spotted woodpecker. Our resident bird man, DHL, also pointed out that the sparrow hawk is unlikely to attack a crow. The editor apologises for that error as the photographer had originally stated that it was a blackbird that was the unfortunate victim.



The Material for this Edition of The Blane was supplied with the compliments and best wishes of

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