

Laggan Matters

NEONI AS LEITH AN T-SLUAIGH, GUN AONTA AN T-SLUAIGH

NOTHING ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE WITHOUT THE AGREEMENT OF THE PEOPLE



Winter snow in the Black Wood, Feagour (2019)
Image: Robyn Woolston

Welcome to Laggan Matters 2

We hope that you will enjoy our latest effort. It is a packed winter edition and thank you to everyone who has contributed - especially to Robyn, for her design expertise, patience and hard work to include it all.

It's encouraging to hear about so much that is continuing to happen in this vibrant community. It gives us hope for the future, when Lockdowns are eased and we may actually come together once more. Thank you to the Ardverikie Estate for the donation of the village Christmas tree and to all the volunteers who have worked hard to light Laggan for Christmas, in the village and in the churchyard.

Looking ahead to 2021, we have great news about Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve. Rory Richardson has kindly agreed that there will be a regular article about this outstanding resource, which we are so lucky to have on our doorstep.

**Happy Christmas to you all,
Amanda and Liz.**



Sheena Slimon with her bottle of Daffy's Gin (above).

Sheena came up with the winning title for our newsletter, Laggan Matters.

Gergask Primary School

We have had a busy first term at Gergask Primary School.

After the October holiday, we were delighted to be in the position to offer the increased nursery provision. This means that 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to six hours of nursery provision each day. We welcomed Eoghann into the nursery with further pupils expected to join Mrs Richardson (Early Years Practitioner) throughout the course of the school session.



Unfortunately many of the social events where we would welcome the interaction with the local community, have been postponed this year, but we hope to be able to organise these again when the guidance permits.

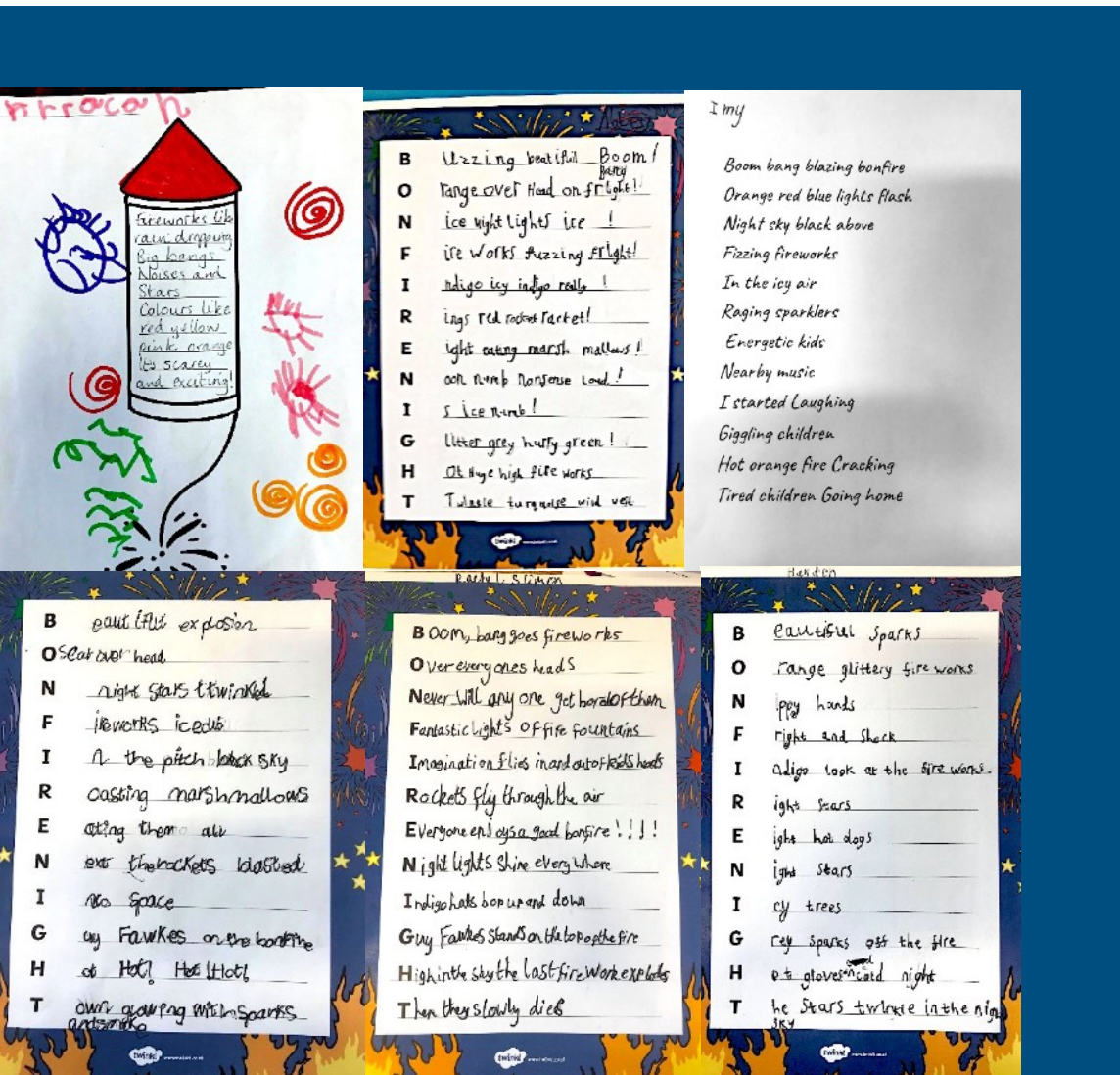
We harvested produce from our garden and thank Ailsa Morgan for

tending to our garden during lockdown. Leeks and potatoes have been used in a tasty soup and plums have been harvested to make plum jam.

The children have celebrated various winter events and festivals: Halloween, Bonfire Night, Remembrance Sunday and will soon start with our Christmas preparations.

Stay safe and look after each other.

Kind regards
Sarah Fraser
Head Teacher



Although it has been a different Halloween and Guy Fawkes night in 2020, we still managed to use our imaginations to make amazing Halloween biscuits and brilliant Bonfire Night poems. It was lovely to have our Poppy Cascade up again, brightening up the school in Remembrance, though we very much missed seeing everyone at our Poppy Lunch! **Lisa Ross**



A Life in The Day of a Cairngorm National Park Ranger: Duncan Macdonald

September. I've moved out of my bedroom. We're sleeping on the landing, so that my wife, an artist, can work on the full height of her canvasses. It's daylight. The sun streaming through the un-curtained window wakes me up. I feed the cat, put the kettle on and get my 10-year-old son up and ready for school. It's panic time as we scramble to the front door, clutching our packed lunches.

I deliver him to Alvie Primary School, then I head for wherever my rota sends me. Today it's a good gig. I'm off to the wild and beautiful end of Badenoch.

We start off at Pattack Falls. I love that little walk up to the falls. It's no wonder they took a pounding from the visitors, this year. We tidy the car park and look for anything to report back.



I love Strathmashie for its ravens; you can't have Dun da Lamh without them. I can hear them and look up to see 5 birds circling with 3 buzzards. What's all the noise about? And then I spot an adult Golden Eagle, low in the sky. I know it's going to be a good day.



We pop into Wolftrax for a word with Cristian and to swap news. We do a litter sweep of the car park, Green trail and Squirrel trail, chatting to visitors, bikers and campers as we go.

Gorsteaen has been hit heavily by fly tipping, camping fires and general littering. We get on the phone to line managers and other land managers to organise the clean-up. Druim an Aird has been grim, too. I guess my reward is being able to be there and to make a difference. We try to educate, to explain how to behave and get across the messages of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Most folk listen. And our team of 8 Rangers has been one of the best I've ever had the privilege to work with. But it has been a strange year...

A Life in The Day of a Cairngorm National Park Ranger: Duncan Macdonald (contd.)

Then it's on to Laggan. Last week, we were in the Community Woodland and we heard a sound like a little wolf-whistle. It was one of the highlights of my season; a Yellow Browed Warbler. That's a big tick for Laggan.

Next, down to Garva Bridge, clearing up anything we spot on the way. Our sandwiches are interrupted by the arrival of an English couple, on the hunt for Golden Eagles. I scan the sky and then I see one, but it's just the start. We see another 9 eagles. At one time, there are 4 together, displaying, talon-grappling, soaring high then skimming the tree-tops. Extraordinary. The best day of eagles for me, apart from trips to Mull and Skye. And worries recede about the impact of the electricity substation and pylons.

It's a glorious drive back. I head to Aviemore for cat medication, then home.

At the end of the day, I'm back in the bed on the landing, waiting for the sun to go down so that I can sleep.

Duncan Macdonald of the Cairngorm National Park Ranger Service was talking to Liz MacFarlan

(Photos by courtesy of Duncan at CNPA)



US scientists calculated that Santa would have to visit 822 homes a second to deliver all the world's presents on Christmas Eve, travelling at 650 miles a second



Green Fingers

Look once, then look again.

Grapes growing on a vine.

In some Mediterranean paradise, you may think?

Think again. This photograph was taken in Laggan and the vine was

grown by Ailsa Morgan. The grapes were superb!

Amazing what you can do, when you have a passion for plants.



LAGGAN COMMUNITY TRADING

Since the last newsletter some things have changed and some remained the same. Firstly we are delighted to welcome Michael Sharp onto the Management Committee. We are still seeking more volunteers to step forward both as members of the Committee and in the roles of minute secretary and treasurer, neither of which is immensely demanding.

Progress has been made on the public toilet, which is now open to the public, and the comfort scheme managed by the Church has been extended for a further three months. The short-term problem of the blocked manhole has been cleared but the long-term solution for the septic tank is still proving elusive with consideration being given to replacing the current soakaway, which is drowned by both surface and internal water, with a similar unblocked soakaway or a digester. The latter could potentially act as a sewer for any new houses that Laggan Community Trading (LCT) builds, or connecting it onto the sewage plant adjacent to Gergask. Once this issue has been resolved LCT will progress the transfer of the Public Toilet from Highland Council.

Progress on the housing development has been slow as the potential public funding sources are no longer available, but there is every confidence that these will become available again. Once that occurs LCT can progress with the feasibility study to identify potential house sites and access routes as well as utilities (electricity, water, sewerage and telephone/broadband) availability. All except one of the Strathmashie houses have now had fire detection and fire alarm checks, which include smoke, heat and CO2 alarms in compliance with LD2. We look forward to the missing house being arranged shortly.

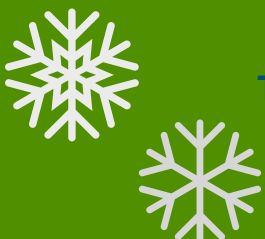
As approved at the AGM held by ZOOM, thank you to the Community Council, on 28 September LCT have returned £10,000.00 in bonds to those shareholders that took up this opportunity and changed its name to Laggan Community Housing Limited to more closely reflect its current activities on 4 November 2020.

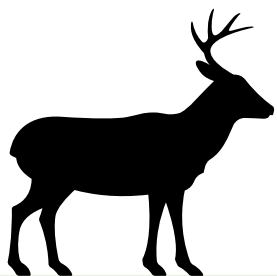
Angus Macpherson.

The biggest snowman of all time was created in Bethnel, Maine (USA), in 2008. The snow-woman was a whopping 122 feet tall in height and was called Olympia in honour of the US senator representing the state of Maine, Olympia Snowe

The earliest known photograph of a snowman has been recorded in The National Library of Wales. The photo was taken in 1853

The tradition of putting tangerines in stockings comes from 12th-century French nuns who left socks full of fruit, nuts and tangerines at the houses of the poor





Venison for sale

NatureScot is offering the opportunity to purchase whole red deer carcasses from Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve (NNR). The venison will be carefully selected by NNR staff after handling in line with our Scottish Quality Wild Venison accolade. The terms of sale are as follows:

- The price is £2.50/kg, e.g. £100 for a hind of 40 kg (larger weight).
- The venison is for domestic use only, not for resale.
- The meat will be ready for butchering, having been hung and skinned. We cannot offer a butchering service or delivery.
- At collection from the NNR, average weights will be around 40 kg for hinds and around 70 kg for stags.
- The meat will be a whole carcass and wrapped in open ended bags or similar. Please ensure you have sufficient space in your vehicle and a suitable covering to prevent contamination.
- Ensure that you have sufficient freezer space available before collection. NNR staff can give an indication as to what space will be required.
- Occasional whole roe carcasses (average 10-15 kg larger weight) may also be available. Please check for availability with our NNR staff.
- To order your venison, please contact Rory Richardson on mobile no. 07725 171287 or email Rory.Richardson@Nature.Scot.
- Please make your payment before collection.

Santa Claus has different names around the world - Kriss Kringle in Germany, Le Befana in Italy, Pere Noel in France and Deushka Moroz (Grandfather Frost) in Russia

Finding Loch Spey

Distance: 7 miles

Time: approximately 2.5 hours

OS map reference: OL55

Terrain: Good paths for the first 2 miles then undulating ground with boggy areas and burn crossings. Waterproof footwear is highly recommended.



(1) From Laggan village, I would recommend driving & parking at Melgarve. You could cycle to Melgarve (10 miles each way) and continue on your bike for the first two miles of this walk, but you would then have to leave your bike as the terrain becomes unsuitable thereafter.



(2) On reaching Melgarve Bothy, we descended along the path towards the holiday cottage and then continued along the track and through a gate.



(3) Continue along this path and after 2 miles another bothy can be seen in the distance. At this point the track divides and you take the left fork. The terrain changes shortly hereafter. It is another 1.5 miles to the Loch.



(4) Keeping the bothy on your right, continue walking until two sets of vehicle tracks can be seen.

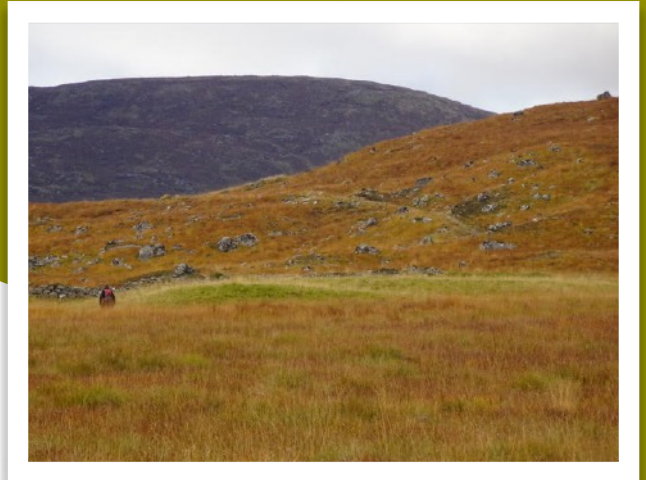
Take the left track and continue with the River Spey on your left. A lot of this section was boggy and you will cross a few narrow streams.

We've also walked this route in July and it was pretty boggy then. However, being the rutting season, this time we were serenaded by roaring stags in the hills above us ... what more could we ask for along with the beautiful scenery?

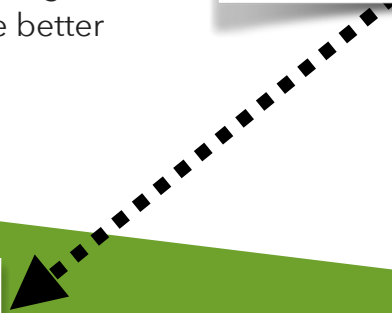
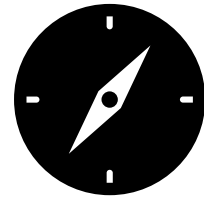




(5) The grass track changes direction and you head right up towards the old sheepfold.

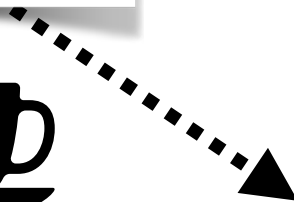


(6) On reaching the sheepfold, a narrow path can be seen to the right, on the hill ahead of you. Continue walking towards the hill and you will reach a wide burn. You may need to walk up stream a little to find a suitable point to cross. If you manage to avoid getting wet feet, you will have done better than we did.



(7) On the other side of the burn, we took the path until we could see the Loch below us on the left and then wound our way down the hill towards it.

Alternatively, you could stay on the lower ground and continue until reaching the Loch, but the terrain is boggy and uneven.



(8) Loch Spey, not particularly big, but in a beautiful setting and a great spot for a coffee.

Jill Warner



Christmas news from Laggan Church

In a "normal" year we approach Christmas in the church with lots of extra services and concerts and occasions when we can get together, sing carols, eat mince pies and mark the birth of Christ with communal celebration. Indoors. This year, you guessed it, it has to be different. So long as we have to space people 2 metres apart, wear masks and refrain from singing (indoors or out) we can't plan any sort of usual Christmas celebration.

But Christmas, God coming to be one with us, is definitely worth celebrating, if anything is.

We don't know, of course what the restrictions we will be living with will be exactly by the time Christmas comes, but we have to begin our planning now, so we are planning for not much changing. And so, instead of inviting the community to come to the church to worship and celebrate, we are going to see what we can do about taking Christmas out of the buildings.

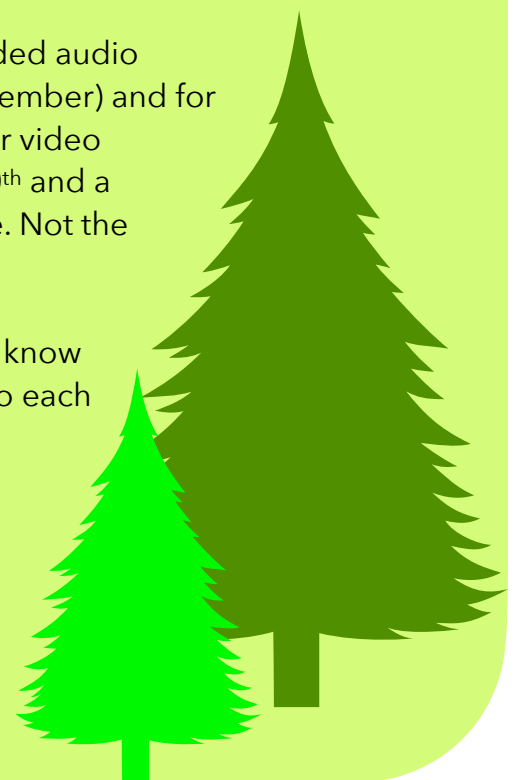
Laggan church building is a place that many people pass every day, usually driving. And so we are hoping to bring the message of the light of Christ shining in the darkness by using lights. The church Christmas tree will be outside this year. And you can expect to see the building lit up with stars of various sorts and doves of peace flying over the walls. While on the railings will be some one-word messages to light your days.

Meanwhile, in Newtonmore, outside St. Brides will be a nativity scene and a decorated cupboard, which is to be a reverse Advent Calendar. The idea is that people put gifts into the cupboard - food or other items, but nothing second hand - to be given to people in the community of Laggan and Newtonmore who might be in need this Christmas, or who may have been having a particularly hard time of late. As well as inviting all and sundry to place goods in the cupboard, you are invited to leave names and addresses of suggested recipients, in sealed envelopes. You do not need to say who is nominating a household, but it would be useful to say who is in the household nominated.

But what about services, you say? We are already doing recorded audio services each week, but for the 4th Sunday in Advent (20th December) and for Christmas Eve we are going to try our hand at putting together video services. Lessons and Carols (so you can sing along) for the 20th and a short Christmas Eve service, also with carols, for Christmas Eve. Not the same, no. But not nothing, either.

We have all come together through a hard time, and we don't know just how or when it will end, so this Christmas let us be good to each other, appreciate each other for all we have been and are still doing and celebrate the birth of Christ in a meaningful way.

Catherine Buchan



The Community Council continues to “meet” virtually – the next meeting will be Monday 18th January at 19.00 and generally thereafter on the 3rd Monday of each month. If you wish to join the ZOOM meeting, please send a message to info@laggan.com The minutes of recent meetings are routinely posted on the Laggan Village Notice Board and on the www.laggan.com website. The repairs to the narrow road bridge over the railway at Dalwhinnie, its re-surfacing and the installation of permanent traffic lights have been completed partially - another closure is likely to happen in late February to complete the work - and BEAR has asked that we convey their thanks to all residents in Laggan for our understanding during the enforced road closure.

We now intend to move on to discuss matters pertaining to the A86 with Bear, Transport Scotland and Police Scotland, so residents with particular issues, please drop us a note. Regrettably dumping of waste continues in some of the unofficial lay-bys and car parks throughout our area. A recent significant one, just west of Pattack Falls has been very helpfully removed by the Highland Council team and we thank them for that. The CNPA park rangers who inspected our area for littering issues in the summer are continuing over the winter period with visits every 2-3 weeks. Please contact any member of the Community Council if you come across littering issues. A list of Useful Numbers and Contacts for Laggan residents has been compiled and is now available to view and download from the Laggan.com website.

The community council was particularly disappointed with the festive lights installed by Highland Council in 2019. At least 3 of the light installations failed and when a bill for £850 was received for their installation, the CC decided to consider alternatives for this year. The Village Amenity group took up the challenge and secured an SSE Micro Grant to create something different – where and how, well, we wont spoil the surprise but thank them in advance for their efforts to enhance our festive enjoyment.

Finally we send our thoughts and sincere condolences to the families of two true gentlemen of the community, who sadly both passed away during November – Donald (Pendy) Macdonald of Balgowan and Adrian Gill of Catlodge.

Colin Morgan, Chair, Laggan Community Council

DID YOU KNOW... Boxing Day gets its name from the money collected in church alms-boxes for the poor.

AND... Christmas pudding was originally a soup made with raisins and wine.

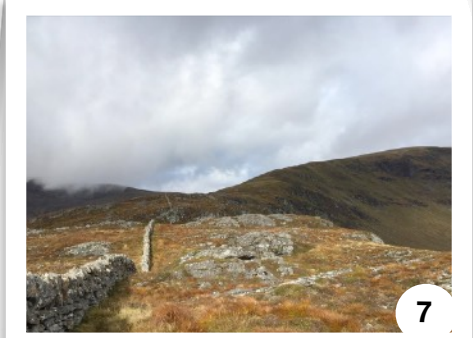


Where is it?

Can you identify these Laggan places and landmarks?

Thanks to Jill Warner and Kathleen McGill for the photos.

Answers are on the last page.





Speysound Radio - The New Normal - 57minute monthly radio programme

Introduction

Following an approach to our local radio station, Speysound Radio, we have been offered a monthly hour slot on the first Sunday of each month which would be repeated at different times the same week. It was decided that the programmes should be aimed at people who were not churchgoers but who could be interested in looking at life issues from a faith perspective. 'We' currently, consists of myself and Gillian Orr!

Thoughts so far

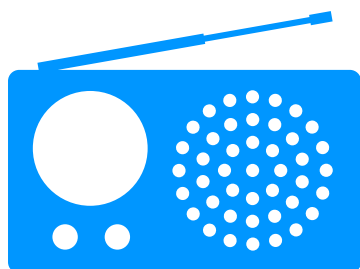
The content of the programme has focused short inputs on the topic being considered. Also, possible comments on the topic from internet or other sources. There would also be a regular contribution from John Dempster who writes a great column for Highland News. We could have poems, short stories and discussion where these related to the theme of the programme. Also, any music which related to the theme of the day and made people think!

Feedback or thoughts on future programmes can be made via Speysound Radio's Facebook page or Email ian.hall@speysound.com

Content & Schedule

Topics/themes so far are:

1. Does truth matter? - Nov 1st
2. An alternative Christmas - Dec 6th
3. Them & us - The refugee situation - January 3rd
4. Does turning the other cheek really work?
5. Where is God when suffering happens?
6. What really happened on the first Easter?
7. Can politics and faith coexist?
8. Do we need church buildings to enjoy a living faith?
9. What about relationships in a virtual world?
10. A thoughtful response to homelessness and food poverty



Conclusion

I think that we have a really exciting opportunity to help people see the relevance of faith in God in everyday life. Given the issues that Covid 19 has thrown up, I think that we need to reach out to people in new ways and try to start from where they are rather than from where we are!

If you have missed any programme, email me and I can link you via Dropbox

Any other ideas would be most welcome!

The programme is broadcast on FM107.1 locally, but you can listen at www.speysound.com "The new normal" and following on from the first Sunday slot it will be repeated on: Tuesday 1500 -1600 repeat, Thursday 1300 - 14.00 repeat & Saturday 0200 - 0300 repeat (specially for any friends in California & British Columbia!)

Poppy Appeal



The total collected this year in aid of Poppyscotland's 'Poppy Appeal' was £240.00, which is marvellous, especially in this difficult year. In particular I should like to thank Dawn, who donated £150 from the sale of her home-made face masks, a truly generous offering.

In case anyone thinks serving and ex-service men and women are fully looked after by the NHS etc, they aren't, and the various Service Charities depend heavily on donations by the public to help them. This year, with lockdown restricting people getting together and proving that Life goes on and can be fun, it is even more difficult for those with nightmare-like past memories to put them aside and try and get 'back to normal', so they need a great deal of help from the people who have an understanding of what they are going through.

There are also still quite a number of those who served through WW 2, and for whom advanced age brings ever more problems, mostly physical. So it is that both groups need increasing assistance at present, and therefore any donation is very much appreciated - a big 'thank you' to you all.

Sally M Spencer

(On behalf of Poppyscotland)

Christmas decorations tend to involve the use of different lights, such as fairy lights on the tree, or lit-up reindeer on the roof. Hanukkah, the Jewish festival, is known as the Festival of Lights due to the miraculous menorah lighting. Families light their own Hanukkah menorah for each of the eight nights. A main theme of the festival is to chase away darkness with light.

Diwali is a five-day Festival of Lights, celebrated by millions of Hindus, Sikhs and Jains across the world. Diwali, which for some also coincides with harvest and new year celebrations, is a festival of new beginnings and the triumph of good over evil, and light over darkness

The Trust held its AGM in late September and we were pleased that Mignonne Khazaka from Strathmashie House and David Narro from Easter Breakachy agreed to join the trust board. We said farewell and many thanks to Ian Hall for all he has done to support the activities of the Trust and 2 other trustees (Robyn Woolston and Kate Christie) also stepped down from the board due to business pressures, but all will continue to offer guidance and support as required. This is much appreciated.

The Trust's activities remain significantly curtailed however not idle. These quieter times are being used to plan for the future as we try to navigate a way forward in these uncertain times. The main source of funding for the Trust remains charitable donations and revenue gifted from café activities. That particular source of funds has been impacted by the pandemic and has required us to explore some varied and different ways to develop our activities in future.

Some very constructive discussions with HIE, CNPA and Forest Land Scotland (FLS) have been held - and will continue over the winter. Much of the attention has been focused on ensuring a better and more positive experience for the community and visitors coming to the area - how to manage visitor traffic at the Wolfrax site as well as everyone's experience throughout the Forest and trail centre. This has entailed a review of more effective use and control of the car park, resolving the recent campervan issue, options to improve the provision of visitor facilities and interpretation materials - both at the centre and in the wider Strathmashie Forest. Some of the discussions will also depend on collaboration and agreements with FLS.

There are also some specific discussions being held with FLS about improving access to the Druim an Aird site - some of the paths there have fallen into disrepair as a result of past felling operations. FLS are also intending to improve signage at the Pattack Falls car park and we await their proposals.

Finally the construction of about 300 metres of a new path/trail in the Blackwood Forest to connect to Feagour and Pattack falls area is intended to be completed by the year-end - weather permitting. This will provide a much more accessible path/trail from the Wolfrax Centre via the Blackwood (Dun Da Lamh route) to Pattack Falls.

Colin Morgan, Chair LFT

During the Christmas of 2010, the Colombian government covered jungle trees with lights. When FARC guerrillas (terrorists) walked by, the trees lit up and banners asking them to lay down their arms became visible. 331 guerrillas re-entered society and the campaign won an award for strategic marketing excellence

JAHAMA Highland Estates' golden eagles thrive in Southern Scotland

A unique project involving the translocation of golden eagles from JAHAMA Highland Estates to the South of Scotland is starting to bear fruit.

A conservation charity, the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project, approached JAHAMA a few years ago about the possibility of drawing on the healthy stock of golden eagles in the West Highlands and relocating some from JAHAMA's land to the south of Scotland where numbers are much lower.



The first translocation of young golden eagles began in 2018 but 2020 was the year when one of the birds, Beaky, began to spread her wings and show the progress of the project. During the first lockdown, tracking data revealed Beaky flew as far south as the Pennine Hills in England, a first for the project to date.

Cat Barlow, South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project Manager, explained the significance:

“One of Scotland’s most iconic wildlife species, golden eagles play a vital role in maintaining healthy local ecosystems in the south of Scotland.”

“Two years after our first translocation, it is wonderful to see our first chicks thrive in the area. We were particularly excited by Beaky’s exploration into Northern England, where there’s been only one pair of breeding golden eagles in recent years.”

But Beaky's groundbreaking year didn't end there. In another first, tag data indicated Beaky exhibited courtship behaviour with a male eagle, Skan, who was translocated from JAHAMA Highland Estates in 2019.

For Julia Stoddart, JAHAMA Highland Estates' Chief Operating Officer, Beaky's progress vindicates the work that went into rearing her and other eagles. Julia said:

“We are privileged to foster a strong population of golden eagles and are keen to play our part in re-establishing this iconic bird in areas where it should not be absent. It is incredibly exciting to hear that an eagle hatched on our estate, Beaky, is one of the first birds translocated by the project to display courtship behaviour.”

JAHAMA Highland Estates was formed in 2017 by Sanjeev Gupta, Chairman of GFG Alliance – a global collection of steel, aluminium and energy companies – following its acquisition along with the Lochaber aluminium smelter and hydropower station in late 2016.

The translocation project is just one example of the innovative work JAHAMA's dedicated and expert team has been doing to reconnect the 114,000 acre estate to the local community over the last couple of years.

Henry Evans, Jahama Highland Estates.

(Photograph by courtesy of the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project)



The tidy up of the Calum Piobair cairn site has now been completed - a bench has been contributed by Joey Macgillivray and her family - Joey is the daughter of Dr Kenneth Mackay. The parking area has been cleared of vegetation by George Campbell with £1000 raised from the piping concert held in Laggan to commemorate Calum Piobaire last year and a grant from SSE community benefit fund.

Malcolm Macpherson 'Calum Piobaire' was born on Raasay, the son of a professional piper Angus Macpherson and was buried in the Laggan Church graveyard on 13th July 1898. His grandson Malcolm Ross Macpherson is buried beside him and you can find their gravestones on the left as you go into the churchyard. Calum succeeded his father as piper to Macpherson of Cluny in about 1866.

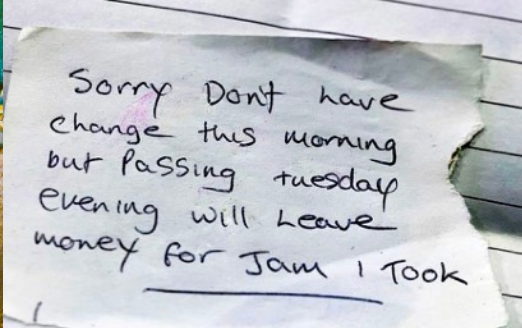
The restoration of the memorial to Mrs Grant of Laggan is awaiting the stonemason who hopes to start works in early Spring 2021.



Valerie Macpherson



The black and white photos are of Dr Kenneth Mackay who was instrumental in the building of the cairn which was built by the late Sandy Russell and 'Tarzan' Ritchie. Roger Sharp was Dr Mackay's pupil and is one of Margaret Sharp's sons. It is thought that this photo of Calum Piobair was taken at the Dalwhinnie Inn at the time of Queen Victoria's visit and the lady is the proprietress.

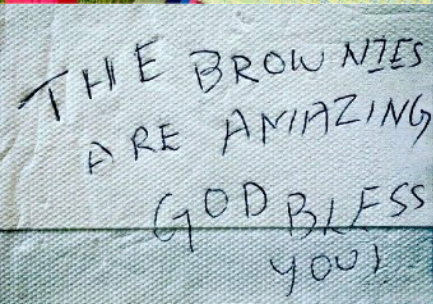


Tell us about your honesty box, the Honesty Spot?

We began about 4-5 yrs ago and it really was a very humble/small affair to begin with! Our first year went well but we had almost £250 worth of stock stolen. I vividly remember its first Christmas Eve, we were recovering from a big theft and I'd just re-stocked everything. To my dismay when I looked out of the window I could see the box was tipped to the ground in a storm. Eggs smashed across freshly labelled jars with Christmas stickers a-plenty somewhat 'yolked'. I was determined not to give up and set about re-baking more festive treats. I wasn't going to stop in terms of the theft either despite the fact that a few of my late mother's dishes have been stolen over the years.

Can you describe it?

In terms of the aesthetic, we've had 3 iterations of the box to-date and the latest is the grandest by far. As two self-employed freelancers we decided to work on something 'fantastical' for the roadside when the long-term implications of Covid began to take shape. When the full nationwide lockdown occurred in March we took the old box off the road as it was time for a refurb and we wanted to be sure we could operate safely in terms of the pandemic. The one thing we knew was that we needed to focus upon practical projects and the box offered a perfect opportunity! We've utilised Tony's constructions skill (he's an Exhibition Contractor) and my creativity as an Artist in the manifestation of something magical and 'other-worldly'.



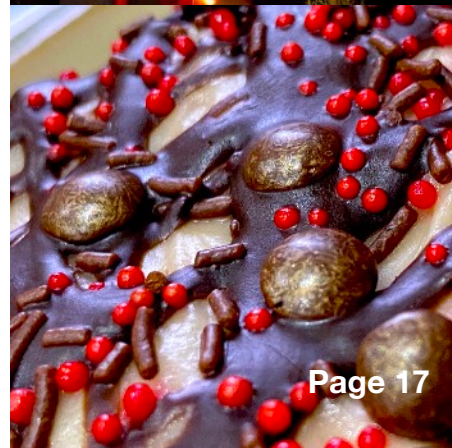
Tell us about the name?

I decided to call it The Honesty Spot because we're so lucky to share conversations with folk from all over the world who stop by. We are on the East Highland Way and we've collected some incredible tales from walkers who are completing short walks and global trails. Sometimes they leave me notes and sometimes we end up following each on Insta etc. We've also saved a few lives in bad weather with food, a phone-call home (to Belgium), warm stew in a tupperware and LOTS of lifts back to civilisation (aka Newtonmore, Aviemore and beyond).



You can find us near the Pattack Falls on the A86

You can follow us on Instagram @TheHonestySpot



Going Places 2 - Laggan's Team GB Nordic Skier

If we're beside our front window at the right time, we are often lucky enough to catch just a glimpse of a figure glide past us at considerable speed - faster than my husband's flat-out cycling, as he has come to accept, somewhat reluctantly! And we know that it is James Slimon, training on his rollerskis, in preparation for his next adventure on snow.



James is a member of Team GB, and last year he raced in the Youth Olympic Games in Lausanne. He performed extremely well against the best young racers in the world, finishing in the top 60 in all three of his events; 10K, sprint and ski cross. His coach, Roger Homyer, said, *"We can expect to see him join the GBR senior team and eventually race on the World Cup circuit."*



Born and raised in Laggan, James attended Gergask Primary School and Kingussie High School, then SRUC Aberdeen Campus at Craibstone. He told me that he first put on a pair of rollerskis at the age of 12, at an after school club, and the rest is history ...



Spotted by Roger early on, James went to rollerski camps at Glenmore and Huntly, before finally transitioning to skiing on snow, which he told me was tricky for a while. For 5 months of the year, James lives in Lillehammer in Norway, from where he travels to competitions. But 2020 is different because of Covid 19. Plans are all up in the air and training in Germany, time in Lillehammer, FIS in Sweden and the World Juniors in Poland are all in the calendar, but as yet unconfirmed.

James still has to keep fit and train hard, in preparation. He rollerskis, he runs 10 to 15K, he goes to the gym twice a week. * He has to eat - quite a lot! And he works hard, really hard, on his family's farm at Breakachy.

He told me that his greatest influences are Youngie and Muzzy, aka the Andys Young and Musgrave, both successful British cross-country skiers... (contd on the next page)





His ambition is 'to get to the Olympics and hopefully World Cup.'

Talking to James was a real privilege; I don't often get to interview a young Olympic athlete and he was remarkably modest about his achievements. I admire him 100% for his dedication and sheer hard work.

He has received tremendous support from his family, snowsportsotland and Scottish Institute of Sport. He is a real "Local Hero" and I'm sure that all of Laggan will keep a keen eye on his future.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| * steak/salmon/vegan? | steak |
| muesli/porridge? | porridge |
| milk/Red Bull? | milk |
| energy bar/chocolate cake? | chocolate cake |
| salad/veg? | salad |
| Mars bar/Harvest bar? | Mars bar |

Liz MacFarlan



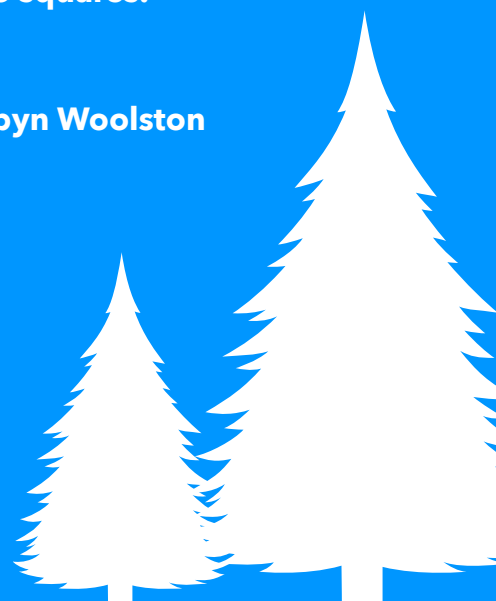
Recipe Suggestion (1)

Sticky Spiced Festive Flapjacks

- 200g butter**
- 250ml honey**
- 150g chopped dates**
- 400g porridge oats**
- 100g desiccated coconut**
- A jar of your favourite mincemeat**

- Preheat your oven to 180°C/ 160°C Fan/Gas 4.**
- Line a 30 x 20cm tin with baking parchment.**
- Melt the butter, honey, dates & mincemeat in a saucepan on a low heat. Crush the dates with a wooden spoon so they break up into the butter and honey. Stir in the oats and coconut and mix thoroughly.**
- Pack the mixture into the prepared tin and bake for approx 25 minutes until golden brown.**
- Remove the tin from the oven and immediately score the surface into about 15 squares. Leave the flapjack to cool completely in the tin then cut it into squares.**

Robyn Woolston





Recipe Suggestions (2)

Christmas Deluxe Hot Chocolate

- Take 2 scoops of chocolate (drinking Chocolate is fine) and place in a tall glass.
- Add 1 shot of Gingerbread flavouring.
- Stir these together to form a paste.
- Slowly heat (but do not over boil) a glass of milk.
- Slowly add this to the chocolate paste and stir in well.
- Keep adding and stirring.
- Leave a small gap at the top of the glass.
- Fill the gap with squirty cream and then add small pieces of pink and white marshmallow.
- Sprinkle chocolate, nutmeg or even cinnamon on top to give this drink a seasonal flavour.

Thai Sweet Potato Soup

- 1 3/4kg of sweet potato
- 1 onion
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 1 teaspoon of Bouillion vegetable stock paste
- Salt & pepper
- 454g can coconut milk
- Chilli flakes, if you like it spicy

- Place all ingredients except the coconut milk into a large pan and add boiling water.
- Bring to the boil and then leave to simmer for 45 minutes.
- Once the sweet potato is softened blend the contents of the pan.
- Return to the heat and add the can of coconut milk and stir in thoroughly.
- This is nice served with bread.

Laggan Coffee Bothy



Let's spread some Christmas Cheer!

During lockdown I was delighted to find little painted stones on some of my favourite walks and cycles. Many of them gave messages of hope and thanks to the NHS. I was thinking that as a community we could borrow this idea and spread a bit of Christmas cheer by doing something similar. Let's decorate our own stones with Christmas wishes and leave them around Laggan for others to find! There are lots of ideas online on how to paint and varnish stones and it would be a lovely activity for all ages when the weather is a bit grim outside. Let's be creative and have a bit of fun!

Amanda Gallagher

BEN ALDER COTTAGE (McCooks Bothy)

Around 12 miles from Dalwhinnie, two thirds down the north bank of Loch Ericht, stands the most southerly 'outpost' in the Parish of Laggan - Ben Alder Cottage.

Originally built by the Estate, a fairly recent addition is still used by them. The cottage, however, now more commonly known as McCook's Bothy, is frequented by climbers, walkers and mountain bikers, accessing the mountains and using the tracks to Rannoch and Corrou.

Joseph McCook, deer forester (stalker) lived and worked here 1880-1919 with wife and family, till retirement to Newtonmore where he died 1933. His younger daughter Elizabeth became mother to Donnie Wilson, previous owner of Blaragie Farm, Laggan who died 2011.

It was Elizabeth who, in the winter of 1910, walked to Rannoch to alert Dr Donald MacDonald, Creag Bhile, the Laggan doctor, on the illness of her father Joseph. Dr MacDonald, after 11 hours of battling thro' severe winter weather at considerable risk to himself, attended and treated the pneumonia; Joseph survived. Dr MacDonald subsequently received the Carnegie Heroes' Fund Medal. The original Laggan Hall was built in 1929 to his memory.

It is suggested that in the area of Ben Alder Cottage was Cluny's Cage (not to be confused with Cluny's Cave on the Creag Dhu rock face above Lochan Uvie). Periodically used by Cluny, chief of the Clan Macpherson, on the run for 9 years after Culloden, here he sheltered and entertained Prince Charlie in 1746 just before Charlie escaped to France // **Graham Grant.**



c 1905 Joseph McCook, wife, Elizabeth



Elizabeth, Joseph, Jeannie McCook



Sept 2020 Slimons en route to Rannoch

LAGGAN XMAS WORDSEARCH

U	L	A	G	G	A	N	T	A	S	L	O	C	H
O	N	W	N	E	A	N	O	H	B	M	N	N	T
C	I	W	O	B	I	A	O	O	E	S	I	A	A
U	V	R	R	D	E	S	N	I	H	C	R	R	E
M	B	O	N	N	I	E	S	W	L	T	R	R	R
H	P	R	O	V	O	S	T	E	A	A	B	E	C
D	B	F	N	I	A	W	B	N	N	R	R	E	B
I	D	E	I	L	S	H	W	I	K	R	E	P	R
L	L	T	D	R	A	M	A	A	R	O	E	O	A
I	O	E	I	T	T	A	T	G	T	M	K	L	W
E	L	N	R	E	N	H	C	R	G	T	S	I	S
C	L	O	O	T	I	E	N	P	I	I	E	S	R
L	T	B	C	F	R	E	N	N	U	C	S	R	D
B	A	D	E	N	O	C	H	O	B	U	R	N	M

- NESSIE
- SCUNNER
- FIRTH
- DRAM
- CLOOTIE
- WATTER
- SMIRR
- BADENOCH
- BREEKS
- WAIN
- TARTAN
- CEILIDH
- BONNIE
- LASSIE
- POLIS
- BURN
- LAGGAN
- BRAW
- HAGGIS
- PROVOST
- TOON
- MORRA
- TATTIE
- LOCH

PS: You can print this page out separately and play!



Answers to Laggan Landmarks:

1 Gorsteaun 2 Cluny Castle

3 Centre of Scotland 4 Crathie 5 Cluny's Whiskers

6 Crathie 7 The Moy Wall 8 Ardverikie Lodge

9 Clach Chathail Stone 10 Balgowan Wood 11 Black

Wood

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