

1ST DECEMBER 2021

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



Welcome to Laggan Matters 6

This edition contains:

- * Reports from organisations**
- * Vet Talk**
- * Favourite recipes**
- * School activities**
- * Laggan history ... and so much more!**

As always, we are very grateful to all our contributors and to Phil at Ardverikie for printing hard copies for those unable to download an electronic version.

It is wonderful to see the children enjoying life back at school and our community life returning to 'almost' normal. The nights are drawing in and the colder weather has arrived so we have a couple of delicious drinks to warm us from our two local gin distilleries.

Stag photographs courtesy of Jill Warner

And finally, we were all saddened by the loss of Laggan resident Diana Cameron and former resident Donnie Sharp. Our thoughts and condolences are with their families and friends.

Please remember if you have articles or events that you would like to be included in the next Laggan Matters, please forward them to either Amanda Gallagher amandagallagher17@yahoo.com or Jill Warner jillvn@aol.com





Laggan Community Council - Colin Morgan Chair LCC

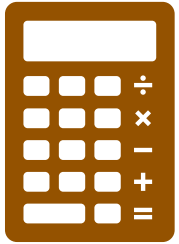
The Community Council intends to meet in person at its next meeting on Monday 6th December 2021 in Laggan Village Hall at 1900. All members of the community are welcome to attend.



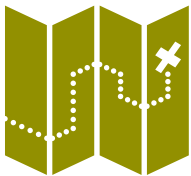
At its last meeting, 2 members of the community volunteered to be co-opted as Community Councillors - Valerie Macpherson and Jill Warner. The other Community Councillors are Colin Morgan, (Chair), Mignonne Khazaka (Vice Chair), Amanda Gallagher (Secretary), Gordon Stirling (Treasurer) and Lauren Hendry. Any questions to be raised at the meeting may be sent in advance to info@laggan.com



Winter lights and the Village Christmas tree (supplied courtesy of Ardverikie Estate) have been installed recently by members of the Village Amenity group with the planters also being re-planted in recent weeks. Our continued thanks to them for their efforts. Should any resident of the Strathmashie and Balgowan communities have, or wish planters to be made available, these would be a welcome addition.



The www.laggan.com community website continues to be where minutes of Community Council meetings can be viewed as well as local news items, events taking place in the Laggan area and information about other Laggan organisations, when provided.



In the New Year, we expect to hear from BEAR when the part resurfacing of the A86 between Laggan and Newtonmore will take place. A full road closure should be anticipated for at least 5 days. BEAR have promised to give the community as much notice as possible of these intended road closures.

'It sifts from leaden sieves'



It reaches to the fence,
It wraps it, rail by rail,
Till it is lost in fleeces;
It flings a crystal veil
On stump and stack and stem, –
The summer's empty room,
Acres of seams where harvests were,
Recordless, but for them...



Jahama

It's that time of year again and one of the busiest seasons for us at JAHAMA. It's certainly my favourite, I love the crisp feel to the air and the beautiful colours of our landscape.

Chloe's working hard as ever on the farm, currently preparing our ewes for lambing in the Spring. They need that extra bit of love and care at this time of year to ensure they are healthy and give birth to happy lambs. Hopefully new life will be bouncing around our fields in the coming months.

With the relaxing of Covid rules, Shona and Ishbel have been busy with guests in Sherramore and Sherrabeg. We've had numerous visits from the MoD this summer, 55 personnel from the 17th Field Regiment stayed near the Markie Burn for a week. They thoroughly enjoyed their visit and even had a deer management demonstration from Bruce. We've been focussing on visitor management across the Estate to keep areas tidy for visitors. Some of you may be aware, we employed seasonal Visitor Managers who worked alongside the Stalkers on various tasks including litter clearing, putting out fires and visitor engagement.

It's been another busy year for our environmental work. Some of you may have spotted our wildlife boxes spread across the Estate, these have been lovingly made by Angus as part of JHEEP (JAHAMA Highland Estates Environmental Programme), our in-house environmental project. This is something we are incredibly excited about and plan to keep you updated as we make progress. We are currently undertaking some peatland restoration; this will restore the original function of the peat and help stop the loss of carbon.

Bruce, Ian and Edward have had a successful stag season and are currently culling some of our hinds (female deer). It's crucial that we cull our deer to maintain a healthy population and avoid overgrazing. Some of the meat from this goes to our Venison shop in Ben Nevis Industrial Estate, we have a range of products including burgers, sausages, steaks, diced steak and haunches. It's now been a full year since our shop opened and we are pleased to say it's been a great success. Please do pop-by and see Emma, our venison shop manager, if you are in the area. We are now taking orders for Christmas if you would like a sustainable alternative to Turkey!

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



Ana Young



Gergask School Fun

A fantastic Halloween party on Friday 29th October where all the pupils came dressed up, danced and played Halloween games.



DID YOU KNOW...

THE HALLOWEEN HOLIDAY DATES BACK MORE THAN 2,000 YEARS.

HALLOWEEN IS EVEN OLDER THAN CHRISTIANITY ITSELF. IT ALL STARTED AS A PRE-CHRISTIAN CELTIC FESTIVAL CALLED SAMHAIN, WHICH MEANS "SUMMER'S END"... HELD AROUND THE FIRST OF NOVEMBER, THE FEAST RECOGNISED THE FINAL DAY OF THE AUTUMN HARVEST AND SPIRITS CROSSING OVER, SINCE THEY BELIEVED THE VEIL BETWEEN THE LIVING AND SPIRIT WORLD WERE THINNEST AT THAT TIME.

[HTTPS://WWW.GOODHOUSEKEEPING.COM/HOLIDAYS/HALLOWEEN-IDEAS/A35150/HALLOWEEN-FACTS/](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/holidays/halloween-ideas/a35150/halloween-facts/)

P7 Residential Trip to Alltnacriche - P7 girls spend a great night and couple of days at Alltnacriche, Aviemore.

On the 1st and 2nd November p7 from Gergask and Newtonmore primary schools travleed to Alltnacriche close to Aviemore for the p7 residential trip. Before I left I felt a bit nervous and excited at the same time. At night I was missing my bed and peace and quiet.

I was looking forward to the Archery, Rope Course. I was a bit nervous when I first went on the zip line. I loved singing and playing Wink,Wink Murder around the Kampfire.

The best thing was the Zipline and the Archery and the worst was the Orienteering and Exploration Walk. All and all it was a brilliant experience.

By Imogen Docker

On the first to the second of November the two P.7s from Gergask Primary School went with the Newtonmore P7s to Alltnacriche near Aviemore for a residential stay. Rachel Slimon was nervous and excited when she left for Alltnacriche with another few girls in the car while the rest of the boys and girls went in the minibus.

Rachel was looking forward to the Archery, the Zipline, the Ropes Course and the campfire. The P7s all sang songs and games around the fire, they also played Wink, Wink Murder. Rachel did the Zipline but the worst thing that she did was the Orienteering because it was boring. It was the best experience ever and Imogen and Rachel would love to go back.

By Rachel Slimon

Traditional Music Making

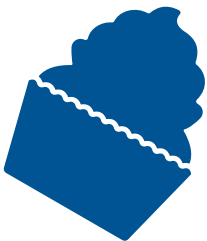
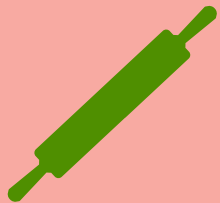
We are absolutely delighted to welcome Sandra Mackay back into school this term for traditional music making. It has been awhile since we have had visiting tutors allowed into school because of Covid-19. The pupils learned Head Shoulders Knees and Toes in Gaelic!





Nursery Baking

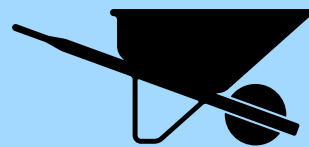
Eoghann and Zoie loved mixing and stirring up a storm in the kitchen this term making fairy cakes!



A huge thank you to Mr and Mrs Fletcher for their very kind donation of funds to Gergask Primary recently. They have supported the school very generously in recent years which is very much appreciated.

Thanks also to Mrs Dallas who donated a sofa for the classroom. Pupils love getting comfortable with a good book.

Lisa Ross



Bumblebee Farm

Thanks to Mr and Mrs Slimon and Mr Docker for their help in strimming and organising topsoil for the raised beds in Bumblebee Farm. It looks much tidier going into winter now and we're looking forward to getting back to it in the Spring. In the meantime, we hope to plant some bulbs to provide us with some colour for next year.



SpeySound
RADIO

107.1FM

The New Normal monthly

programme on SpeySound Radio

The programme which runs at 5pm - 6pm on the first Sunday of each month, has now completed its first year. We have reached up to 300 people on the SpeySound Facebook page.

The programme explores life issues from a Christian Faith perspective and is a mixture of conversations and music. We have tackled a variety of different issues so far including Poverty & Homelessness, Does Truth Matter, Immigration, Climate Change & Faith & Politics and look forward to our second year with a range of different topics.

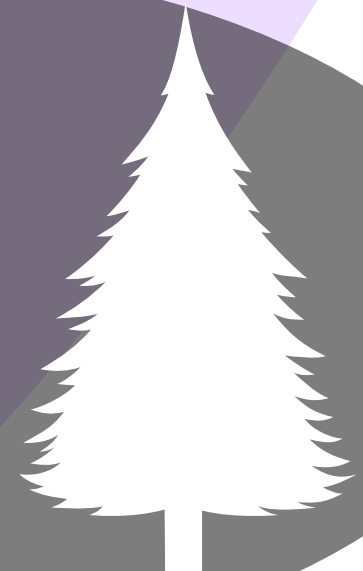
To listen to the programme, you can tune in to FM107.1 or on the internet at www.speysound.com or if you use Alexa or Google Home, you can ask either of them to play SpeySound Radio with the built in Tune-In Radio App they both have.

The next New Normal is a special Christmas Programme on December 5th.

I hope you enjoy the programmes and any comments either chat with me in person or send an email to ian.hall@speysound.com

Ian Hall

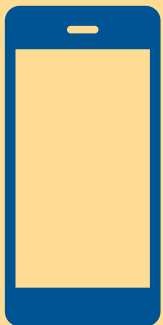
DID YOU KNOW... The first commercially produced Christmas decorations appeared in Germany in the 1860s, inspired by paper chains made by children. In countries where a representation of the Nativity scene is very popular, people are encouraged to compete and create the most original or realistic ones. Within some families the pieces used to make the representation are considered a valuable family heirloom / Wiki



Where 2 today?

Did you know that Where 2 today? **based in Aviemore offer a community transport service between Aviemore, Kincaig, Kingussie, Newtonmore and Laggan?**

It runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9.30 and 4.30 and must be booked at least 24 hours in advance by phoning 01479 810004 or email info@ct4u.co.uk during office hours Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Bookings are taken on a first come first served basis, to ensure you reach the destination of your choice, at a time that suits.



At the moment a one way ticket will cost £9.71 a return £19.40 but it is free if you have a bus pass. This price is being reviewed and is subject to change. For more information see

<http://www.ct4u.co.uk/services/registered-routes.aspx>

Amanda Gallagher

Coul Charitable Clay Pigeon Shoot

Having spent most of my summers as a child, growing up on Seil Island, Easdale, I was acutely aware of how important community spirit and togetherness was attending ceilidhs each Saturday night where local and tourists would meet up, enjoy good music and tea and home baking. I was always amazed by the generosity shown by the locals.



When my wife and I moved to Laggan in 2018, the same feeling of community spirit was rekindled as we were welcomed into the village with open arms.

We have always felt it really important to put something back into the local community if at all possible, so when the opportunity of organising a charity clay pigeon shoot came up, we quickly got going with it.

After the frustrating past 18 moths that we have all experienced we felt it even more important that whatever funds we could raise, it should **ALL** be put back into the local community.

We set to work and organised the event attended by roughly 80-100 people made up of all walks of life, but all with the same interests at heart, to raise money!

Thanks to our hard working staff, local businesses and friends, auction prizes were both numerous and generous and we raised a substantial amount of money by the end of the evening. I think a few drams made everyone a bit more generous than usual!

Monies raised were distributed to local charities including Laggan Church, Laggan Community Hall, Gergask School, Newtonmore playpark fund, SGA and Caberfeidh Horizons to name a few.

It is our intention to have this event every year with a view to continue to support local businesses and charities going forward.

Thank you.

**Kevin and Sonya Fletcher
Coul Estate**



Wolftrax Centre - The Laggan Forest Trust - December 2021

- * Phase 1 of the Centre's outdoor extension project is on the last furlong providing excellent scope for The Trust to promote all that there is to do in the Laggan Area, the local forest estate and on the MTB trails. We look forward to welcoming members of the community and visitors alike to the centre to see the recent developments.**
- * On Forestry matters, we still await Forest Land Scotland (FLS) to provide us with their next 10 year Forest Development Plan (2021-2031) to understand the impact of their potential timber operations in the Strathmashie Forest on our own activities and how The Trust should plan its future. We will include discussions about improvements to the overall trail infrastructure in the area (both mountain bike and walking) for more effective visitor and recreational management.**
- * We have, however, received early notification from FLS however that felling may start again in April 2022 in and around the popular Squirrel Trail. This may well result in that important attraction and walking trail being closed for some considerable time and a real loss of amenity to the community.**

Colin Morgan





Laggan Church

Last Christmas we were living with Covid restrictions, which unfortunately meant no activities could take place inside the church, though it was good to be able to have some decorations outside. This year we look forward to celebrating advent inside the church (all going well!).



Throughout December there will be the usual services on Sunday at 9.30am. On Christmas Eve there will be a Watchnight Service at 11.30pm, led by church members with lots of carol singing.

On Christmas Day there is a short Service in Newtonmore at 11.30am, led by Rev Mary Ellen Thomson. There is also a service on Boxing Day as it is a Sunday, this will be a joint service with Newtonmore and Kingussie churches, held in Laggan at 10.30am, led by the Worship group.

Everyone is, of course, always very welcome.

At the time of writing masks are still required to be worn in church, and contact details taken.



We hope to deliver Christmas cards to everyone again, and these should have all the Christmas service details too.

It was great to see so many along at the October Helping Hands lunch. It was unfortunate that our November lunch needed to be cancelled at the last minute.

We won't have one in December but hopefully in January.

We wish everyone a Peaceful Christmas.

Alison Armstrong

Session Clerk Laggan and Newtonmore Church of Scotland

Laggan resident and Artist, Robyn Woolston, recently headed to Glasgow for the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties. During her visit she presented a 10yr solo retrospective eco-art exhibition titled 'Last (Chance)' (2021), attended the "Global Day of Action for Climate Justice" (a march with over 100,000 participants) and listened to Greta Thunberg and her famous 'Blah Blah Blah speech'.

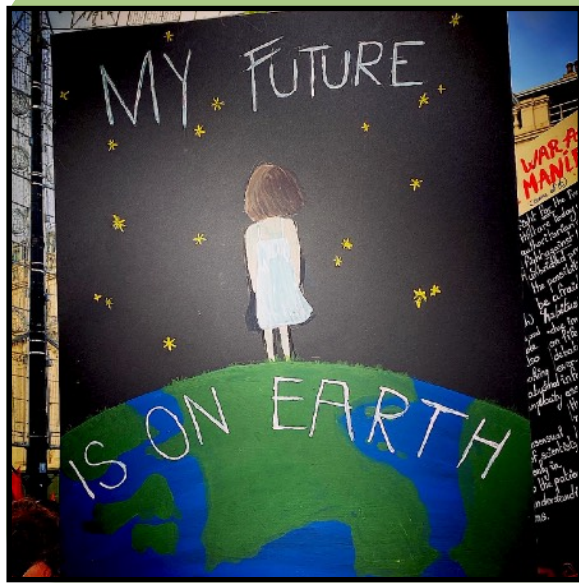
Below, she shares a snap-shot of her trip, as well as images from the exhibition itself.

You can also watch her Artists Talk here:

<https://www.robynwoolston.com/work/project-two-e66pz>



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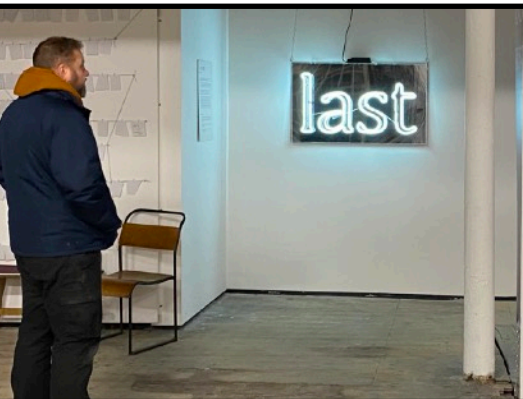


Did you know...

Protest art acts as an important tool to form social consciousness, create networks, operate accessibly, and be cost-effective. Social movements produce such works as signs, banners, posters, and other printed materials used to convey a particular cause or message...

Protest art also includes (but is not limited to) performance, site-specific installations, graffiti and street art, and crosses the boundaries of Visual arts genres, media, and disciplines.

- Wiki



Q: What did your exhibition contain?

A: The show contained environmental protest banners that I exhibited previously in Australia during 2020 @ Curve Gallery (Newcastle), a neon sign, photographic prints and protest banners first shown at the Quiet Carnival in Birmingham with Friction Arts.

Q: Can art create change?

A: Art provides a powerful tool in terms of consciousness-raising, agitating, re-framing and addressing both the impacts and the outputs of human behaviour. It allows us to question how we can live in **'full presence and be useful while this is happening'** (Joanna Macy) by channelling our emotional responses into a desire for radical, social and environmental change.

Exhibition location: The Pipe Factory, 42 Bain St, Glasgow, G40 2LA

The exhibition was made possible thanks to the crowdfunding support of over 70 individuals.

Laggan Helping Hands

It was great to see so many along at the October Helping Hands lunch. We won't have one in December but hopefully in January.

Alison Armstrong



**LAGGAN'S
HELPING HANDS**

Laggan Community Housing Ltd Annual General Meeting was held in Laggan Hall on Wednesday 18th August

The meeting was held with distancing and masks as appropriate.

The Chairman Angus Macpherson summarised the past year, our change of name from Community Trading when we owned the shop, to Community Housing, which explains better what we do now.

Covid-19 prevented us delivering on further insulation and new dormer windows for our Strathmashie tenants, we hope to rectify this over the next 12 months.

Thanks given to John Grant for keeping the Picnic Site paths strimmed and noted we should be paying the Hall Committee.

Public Toilet still owned by Highland Council and Scottish Water has agreed to adopting the septic tank, but we do require a sewage engineers report, which will be incorporated into the housing feasibility report.

The plan for the 4 houses in the picnic site moves along slowly and we will keep the community informed and involved as this project progresses.

Sheena Slimon

Editor's post script:

Unfortunately we were not able to include this update from Laggan Community Housing in the last newsletter.

Margaret's Girdle Scones

Having lived in our lovely village for almost 3 and a half years now, I heard a lot about Margaret Sharp's deliciously famous scones. However, being coeliac (no wheat, rye or barley gluten for me sadly!) I have not been able to sample one for myself. So I thought perhaps I should be cheeky and ask for the recipe so I can try making a gluten free batch ...

Margaret kindly gave me her recipe:-



- 16 tablespoons of self-raising flour
- 1 small teaspoon of salt sifted
- Rub in 2 ozs of stork margarine or butter until like breadcrumbs
- Add 2 tablespoons of sifted caster sugar
- Mix 1 egg with sufficient milk to make a stiff consistency.
- Turn onto a floured surface, roll quickly and handle as little as possible
- Cut into triangles - should be about 16 scones
- Sprinkle some flour onto the smooth surface of either a Rayburn, hotplate or frying pan ... if it burns at once it is too hot. It should take a few seconds to turn colour. It can be quite tricky!
- The scones should be cooked for about 3 minutes each side



Having borrowed a griddle pan I have no excuse so here goes ...!

Well, the proof of the pudding is in the eating and I although I say so myself, for my first attempt and being gluten free, they weren't half bad!

No competition for Margaret's scones but I'll definitely be making some more.

Thank you so much Margaret for sharing your recipe.

Jill Warner



FESTIVE COCKTAILS

How lucky are we to have two award-winning gin distilleries on our doorstep. They are kindly sharing a couple of their delicious cocktails for us to enjoy over the winter months and during the festive period.

52 Cocktail Freya's "The Bee's Knees"

Don't be intimidated by working with honey in your mixology. It is much more simple than it appears and adds a beautiful and intriguing new dimension to your cocktails.

- To start, add 50ml Kinrara Artist Edition Freya the Fox gin and 25 ml of freshly squeezed lemon juice.

- Now for the honey, add 25ml of runny honey and then stir until the honey is completely dissolved.

- Add ice into the mixture and shake until chilled and then double-strain into a cocktail glass.

- Serve garnished with a twist of lemon.



Daffy's Winter Warmer

Fancy a winter warmer? We think this one will send you up skipping round the Christmas tree with a glow in your cheeks! The glow comes from a modest dash of our local Daffy's Gin from Strathmashie and there is no need to go out and buy fancy ingredients as we use store cupboard essentials in this delicious festive cocktail!

Ingredients for 2 large glasses

400ml milk (whole milk - or oatmilk makes a wonderful vegan alternative)

1/2 tsp vanilla essence

4 cloves

1/4 tsp of mixed spice

4 rounded tsp of icing sugar

50ml of Daffy's Gin

2 star anise to garnish



Method

- Pour the milk into a heavy based sauce pan and add the vanilla, cloves, mixed spice and icing sugar and stir gently over a low heat for around 5 minutes until the sugar has dissolved and the flavours have infused into the milk.
- Do not allow it to come to the boil!!!
- Remove from the heat and allow it to cool for a minute or two, then add in the Daffy's Gin and mix gently to combine.
- Strain into a large wine or martini glass and gently place the star anise in the centre of the glass.
- Sit back, sip and enjoy.

Remembrance Day 2021 - Laggan War Memorial

Over 20 members of the Laggan community attended the Remembrance Day service at the Laggan War Memorial on Sunday 14th November. The service was conducted by the Reverend Mary Ellen Thomson in the first of a series of similar services held that day at Newtonmore, Kingussie and Dalwhinnie to commemorate those who had given the ultimate sacrifice. Two wreaths were laid - one by Gergask Primary School on behalf of the Community and the other by the Badenoch Shinty Memories Group.



In addition, Gergask Primary School also recognised Remembrance Day at the school with their lighted "Poppy Wall".

Colin Morgan



SSE Stronelairst Community Benefit Fund Update December 2021

Because of COVID restrictions and the difficulty in progressing fund applications in the past 18 months, SSE are seeking to extend the present 3 year agreement with all the Community Councils involved with the Stronelairst CB Fund by 1 year to April 2023. This would be without any compromise to the amount of funds being allocated to the Laggan Community. This will give additional time for SSE and ourselves (i.e. all the present Laggan organisations and the community as a whole) to determine how best to manage the fund in the future and for which projects - the latter generally being guided by the priorities of the Community Development Plan agreed in 2019.

SSE fund managers also intend to visit Laggan in the New Year to explain this, as well as a re-promote the existing fund guidelines. It is possible that revised criteria and higher grant levels may be available for the period of the proposed extension. Regardless, and at a minimum, the Laggan Community will be granted a minimum of £61,662 each year in future years - from April 2022 onwards on an annual basis.

We were, however, delighted to be advised that **Laggans Helping Hands** had been successful in a recent grant application to provide an additional 3 Automatic Emergency Defibrillators (AEDs) throughout the community and upgrade the existing one at Laggan Community Hall. With the agreement of the various facilities and owners, the new AEDs are expected to be placed at the Laggan Hotel, at the Caoldair (Pottery) Coffee and Craft Shop and the Laggan Forest Trust (Wolftrax Centre). This is a very welcome extension of these devices to bring medical resilience to the community and its visitors and we are grateful to this Volunteer Group who will manage and maintain the AEDs.

Colin Morgan

Stronelairst
WIND FARM

POWERING CHANGE IN
LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The Stronelairst Community Fund is open for applications from the Laggan area.

If you would like to discuss your project with us, please contact Marianne Townsley (marianne.townsley@sse.com).

Find out more at www.sserenewables.com/communities



Vet Talk

Winter Poisons



Winter time can present with many potential poisons/toxins for dogs and cats.

If your pet does ingest any of the following, always contact your vet as soon as possible for advice as often action is needed in the first few hours. However, the best advice, is to try and avoid your pet(s) coming into contact with them in the first place:

- **Antifreeze:** Some pets are attracted to the sweet smell and taste. Antifreeze is very toxic if ingested and can cause fatal kidney failure.
- **Rodent Poisons:** In winter people tend to have more problems with mice and rats and therefore more rodent poisons tend to be used. There are many types, but all with cause severe effects if ingested.
- **Ice melt products:** Most of these products contain salt (sodium chloride) and small exposures typically lead to stomach upset and paw pad irritation. Large ingestions can result in salt poisoning which is potentially very serious.
- **Plants:** There are many popular winter plants and flowers that can cause serious symptoms if ingested by dogs and cats. These include ...
 - Holly and mistletoe - including their berries
 - Christmas cactus
 - Poinsettias
 - Amaryllis
 - Japanese Yew (used in flower arrangements)
 - Lilies - certain lilies are very toxic to cats (can cause kidney failure) and even contact with the pollen can cause effects
- **Grapes/raisins/currants:** Ingestion can result in acute kidney damage. The mechanism of action is unknown and not all dogs are affected BUT ingestion in all dogs should be avoided.
- **Onions:** All types of onions (fried, diced, raw, powdered) are very toxic to dogs and ingestion can result in severe anaemia.
- **Chocolate and Cocoa:** Chocolate contains theobromine and caffeine which in sufficient levels can cause severe and sometimes fatal effects. Dark chocolate, baking chocolate and cocoa powder have the highest concentration of these toxic substances.
- **Sugarless gums and candies:** These contain a sweetener called xylitol that can lead to a life-threatening drop in blood sugar levels in dogs.
- **Tinsel and decorations:** Ingestion of small decorations can lead to gut obstructions. Glass ornaments can break leading to damage to the mouth and bowel if ingested. Chewing strands of lights can result in electrical burns.
- **Human medications:** During the winter months people often suffer from colds and flu and it is important not to leave medications in reach of pets as many can be very harmful if ingested e.g. Ibuprofen, aspirin and paracetamol.

A Celebration of the Life of
Donald Grant Sharp

22nd February 1932 — 25th October 2021



Cairnbrae Natural Burial Ground, Kellas
Wednesday 3rd November 2021 at 1.00 p.m.
Service conducted by Pauline Donald

Obituary:

Donnie Sharp

1932 - 2021

by Michael Sharp

Donnie was brought up in a remote part of Strathspey called 'Ranechra', high in the hills, above Dulnain Bridge, and he walked 5 miles to school every day.

He began his working life on Letterene Estate, on the shores of Loch Maree, in Wester Ross as a game keeper before moving to Seafield Estate at Carrbridge with his wife Margaret and two sons, Danny and Roger. The next stop was Cluny Estate where he took on the head stalker's job with Captain Lindsay. Another three sons were to follow, Michael, Calum and Ian.

Ian continued in his father's footsteps right up to the present day.

Donnie moved on to the Tuchar Estate at Glenisla in the Angus Glens where he stayed until he retired in 1997. Donnie and Margaret were a prominent part of Laggan life in the 1960's and 1970's where they entertained everyone with their singing and Donnie playing the Pipes.

Donnie retired to the Glamis near Forfar where he brought up his sixth child, Ailsa with his wife Susan.

He will be sadly missed by his family and everyone who knew him.





Obituary:

Diana Cameron

1935 - 2021

by Michael Sharp



Diana, or "Di" as she preferred to be known, moved into Laggan in the early fifties, firstly to Cluny Estate where her father was a shepherd, before moving into Balgowan where the family took on the tenancy of Balgowan Croft in 1952.

Di worked in Laggan shop for a while with the Gillies family before taking up a post in the office at the Dalwhinnie Distillery. It was in the distillery that she met her husband to be, Ian Cameron. Ian's work took them to Burntisland for a while before they moved back to Dalwhinnie and then to Balgowan to run the family croft when her father died in 1974.

Even when her marriage ended in the mid 1980's Di ran the croft on her own with her love for animals second to none and a "steely" and "thraun" determination few could match. Di formed the backbone of Balgowan with her lifelong friends Alastair and Beryl Macrae and her next door neighbour and best friend "Pendy". Di and Pendy ran their crofts expertly only thinking about their animals and the land.

Sales day in Kingussie was the saddest day of the year for Di when she had to sell her beloved calves, often shedding a few tears which prompted the buyers to put in a few extra bids ... Di always had the last laugh.

Di enjoyed the social life and going to the dances either in the Gaskmore or the hall where herself and Pendy could be seen showing off their dancing skills and believe me, they were beautiful dancers the likes never to be seen in Laggan hall again.

Sadly missed by her nieces Susan and Jeanette and everyone who knew her.



MRS GRANT OF LAGGAN

Over the summer, Laggan Heritage has made a fine job of refurbishing the gravestone in the churchyard to Rev James Grant (d1801), his mother and 3 of his children buried there. It also commemorates his wife, Anne d1838 in Edinburgh, the well known author and poet.

Anne, born 1755, spent much of her childhood with her father Duncan MacVicar, an army officer in America. By 1773 he was Barrack Master in Fort Augustus and here Anne met Rev James Grant, Chaplain to the Fort.

In 1779 they married and as he by now was minister of Laggan, "after ascending this awful mountain [Corrieyairack] we travel eastwards and enter a vale of rich meadows where stands our humble dwelling". There being no Manse, this was Gaskbeg Farm, their home till 1801. In many letters to her friends, she describes the "comfortable cottage, 4 rooms, closets, nursery, kitchen" and adjacent peat moss. The "brook purls in summer, babbles in harvest and brawls all winter". Fruit trees in the garden and honeysuckle over the porch. The farm "supplies us with everything - milk cows, sheep, young stock and horses, [tax for 2 horses is 4 shillings] wool and flax".

"Were it not for the French and the caterpillars, we should be quite happy; but the former disturb our peace and the later destroy our gooseberries". She continues -- At 4 o'clock one July Monday, from the near summer sheilings [below the 5 Cairns], "Donald arrives with butter, cheese and milk. He asks a blanket, milk cog and a spoon because little Peter threw one in the burn. Also meal, salt and flax for the spinners and food for the old sow being mother of a dozen pigs". Then comes Ronald from the far sheilings at Drumin "where our sheep and young horses are all summer and he desires meal, salt and women to clip the lambs and tar to smear them. He informs me that the black mare has a foal but she is very low". Then the tenants who as part of their rent are "going to stay in the oak wood cutting timber for our new byre" require bread, cheese and ale.



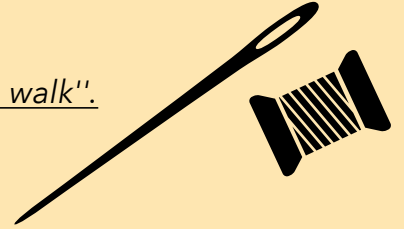
Anne Grant of Laggan
1755 - 1838 (left)

Mrs Grant of Laggan's
son John Peter (right)



Before 11am she sees to breakfast, winds wool for Janet, sends yarn to the weavers, hears K's lessons and rectifies her sampler stitches.

All the *"while his reverence wonders what detains me, urging me out for a walk"*.



After the death of Rev James in 1801, moving to near Stirling and then Edinburgh, and to support her surviving children, Mrs Grant published several works, the most significant being "Letters from the Mountains". This made her a celebrity and an important figure in Edinburgh literary circles. She ran a boarding school for young ladies, but a fall downstairs left her on crutches. She died in 1838 and is buried in St Cuthbert's churchyard, survived by only one of her 12 children, John Peter Grant, who erected gravestones in both Laggan and Edinburgh. His last descendant, an old lady, Miss Grant of Fyvie, visited Laggan around 1970 leaving this likeness of him.



The grave of Mrs Anne Grant, St Cuthbert's churchyard, Edinburgh (above)



Repaired stone photo by Graham Grant

Laggan Heritage



Mrs Grant of Laggan's memorial in the churchyard, has now been fully restored. The project, recently completed, received a very generous donation from Mrs Rebecca Forrester and her mother, who are descended from Mrs Grant and together with local funds raised at the Laggan Heritage / Laggan Church 2020 Burns Supper a successful application to the Stronelaig community fund allowed the work to be completed.

The fund which comes from Stronelaig Wind Farm Ltd and is administered by SSE Renewables. The stonework was carried out by Jon Hearach Memorials Ltd, who are stonemasons from Inverness and the new gate was constructed by local blacksmith Davie Dingwall. It has all now been installed and is a very high quality restoration so do take time to go and have a look.

Calum Piobair Memorial Cairn

The groundworks to form an entrance and off-road car parking at the cairn have also been completed by George Campbell, making the feature safely accessible off the busy road. A bench has been donated by the MacGillivray family and installed on site, in memory of Dr Mackay, and this offers a wonderful view up the strath.

This again was funded through the Stronelaig community fund and Laggan Heritage.

Valerie Macpherson



Did you know...the UK's oldest cemetery has been found in Somerset, in the Mendips. The 10,000 year old inhabitants are thought to have been small, strong, meat eaters who rarely loved to be older than 50.

source: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/sep/24/artsandhumanities.arts>



Santa Haiku

By Kelly Roper

Hoof sounds on the roof.

As reindeer lightly touch down.

Santa has arrived.