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Tel: 200439	Tel: 200225	Tel: 200774	Tel: 200343

## **Tynron Community Council Newsletter**

**Autumn 2008**

Dates for your diary

All events are in the village hall unless otherwise stated.

Community Council meeting on the last Monday of every other month at 7.30.  
The next meeting is on 24 November.

SWRI First Monday of every month. Phone Linda McDonald 200469

November 3rd: Open evening (open to everyone) Calum Murray: Red Kites in Galloway  
Competitions - Blackcurrant jam, ornamental jug

December 1st: Sheila Nixon, Planning ahead for Christmas  
Competitions - 3 Mince pies, article in any craft

December 10th: Christmas Dinner at Burnside Tearoom, Sanquhar followed by Helen's Quiz

January 5th: Morag Murray, Visit to Kyrgyzstan  
Competitions - Broccoli and cheese soup, favourite antique

February 2nd: Michelle McCrindle, Food Train  
Competitions - Yoghurt Loaf, portrait photograph

March 2nd: David Hale, Acupuncture  
Competitions - 4 unfilled meringue shells, pot plant

April 6th: David Bruce Hunter, Family trees  
Competitions - Savoury picnic item, Spring flower arrangement

May 11th: AGM, Taste and try  
Sing, say or pound pay

Halloween fancy dress Ceilidh: October 25th, 8.30 to midnight. Tickets at the door.

Halloween party for the children 6-8pm

Tearcraft Sale: November 15th, 11am - 2pm Soup and Rolls, Tombola and Sales Table.

Christmas Lights: December 7th, 5.30pm.

Ceilidh at Hogmanay: Terry Kirton 200379

Ceilidh Dancing classes: Tuesdays from 8:00 pm until 10:00 pm. £3.00 including refreshments. Lots of fun. Everyone welcome. Mary Newbould 200379

Tai Chi group: Fridays from 8:00 pm until 09:00 pm. Beginners welcome. Mary Newbould 200379

Dancercise (term time only): Wednesdays 8 to 9 pm. Frances Forsyth 200695

## Community Council Notes

Appin Forest The vexed question of timber extraction and the consequent road damage in the Shinnel glen is still being addressed by the Community Council, Scottish Woodlands and our D&G councillors. It has been suggested that a vehicle with low pressure tires should be used to cart the timber. This should reduce road and bridge damage, mean fewer daily trips, but an extended extraction season. The existing passing places should be brought up to standard and routine road and bridge maintenance stepped up.

Tynron Kirk After exhaustive enquiries we located the owners of the kirk. When approached, Tods Murray solicitors the owners, offered us the kirk for community use free of charge. Very good; but the building needs to be renovated and maintained; a costly process. We investigated various sources of funding without success until contacting the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust, a charity that preserves our architectural heritage by renovating and bringing back into use superfluous historic buildings.

We have presented our case supported by a series of photographs showing the pros and cons of the project. This is on the agenda of the trust meeting this month so we hope for the results of their assessment within days.

Gala, August 17th: The Gala proved very successful with a bouncy castle, a gladiator challenge and sumo suits among the attractions. The weather was very kind and Terry reprised his role as the 'Burgermeister' with the barbecue. Thanks to everyone who supported the day and to the Hall committee & Community Council for their support.

Halloween Ceilidh: October 25th, 8.30pm-midnight, preceded by a party for children, 6-8pm. There will be shepherd's pie and a vegetarian option for supper. Fancy dress will be in order, with no theme.

**Hall report** Once again the Hall is embarking on a busy autumn / winter season. The Rural, Carpet Bowling, Ceilidh Club, Tai Chi & Dancercise have already started or are starting soon. On the maintenance side, dry rot is evident in the entrance store and the Gents & Ladies cloakrooms. Three estimates have been obtained and approximately £1,300 is needed to deal with the problem. An application for funding will be submitted to the Nithsdale area committee.

The extension proposals crawl along. We are presently waiting on an estimate from a local contractor. The car park surface has been collecting water around the Hall entrance for some time. Mary & Terry from Dalmakerran have generously donated some surface dressing which will be spread around the problem area. The bench purchased from funds donated by the late Mr. Kerr is now in place, thanks to Terry Kirton for the work on this one.

In the New Year we plan to have a book sale and a silent auction; donations gratefully received. Recent events have seen cream teas in the Hall organised by Margaret Irving, and 'Walk & Soup' organised by Linda McDonald & Eunice Laidlaw. These events were extremely successful and well supported.

The Hall continues to be a focal point for the village: thanks to every one for supporting it.  
*Phil, 07795 391 280, 01848 200225*

The Kiwis are coming .... Many of us have walked up to the ruined cottage of Cormilligan and have read the messages left by the descendants of William and Isabella McCaw, who emigrated to New Zealand in 1880 with nine of their 10 children. You may also have seen William's headstone in Tynron Churchyard, with the names of eight of his grandsons who were killed in the First World War.

As part of the 2009 'Homecoming Scotland' year, the Hall Committee are organising a day of events on Saturday 27 June 2009 to celebrate the lives of William and Isabella. This event is being generously supported by the D & G Homecoming Fund. Mary Stewart, a McCaw family member living in London, has helped us to send out invitations to the McCaw clan in New Zealand, Australia, America and the world. So far it is rumoured that around 25 people may be coming over!!!

The day will include:

- a walk to Cormilligan, with kind permission of John Maxwell.
- well-known local poet Rab Wilson will read his haunting sonnet 'Cormilligan,' which is based on the story of the McCaws' migration.
- an evening of celebration in the Tynron Parish Hall, including food, music and talks from Ian Millar and Mary Stewart of the McCaw clan.

Mary Stewart has researched the family history and has uncovered fascinating accounts of Cormilligan, the voyage to New Zealand and the life of an emigrant family. We will have a display of photos and documents telling their story.

So put the date in your diaries – and if anyone would like more details or if you could offer accommodation to our visitors, please contact *Linda McDonald on 01848 200469*.

Hydro energy Many of you came to the open meeting in the Tynron Hall on 22 September about renewable energy and the possibilities of having multiple micro-hydro electricity schemes in this area: about 70 people attended, not all from Tynron.

Joe Fergusson of the Energy Agency gave a presentation on heat pumps: how they work, their different forms (ground to air, air to air, water to air), and what would be needed to install them. This was interesting not only to those who do not have water on their property that might be used for a hydro scheme, but also to those who do, as a way of making best use of the electricity they could generate by hydropower.

Gavin King-Smith then reported on how his hydro scheme at Appin had been performing: it has been running for 20 months. What with the returns from exporting unused electricity, the sales of Renewable Obligations Certificates that green electricity generation attracts, and the savings on the electricity bill, the capital outlay for this scheme should be repaid in the next 5 years; after this, the scheme should provide a clear revenue stream. One other house in the Shinnel Glen also has hydropower: Frank and Margaret Irving at Shinnelhead have an off-grid scheme which has put their trusty generator more or less into retirement (except when suffering from teething troubles or when their burn is too low – not often this summer).

Gavin has identified 54 other homes in the Shinnel, Scour and Cairn glens that look likely to have viable hydropower: he outlined what the costs and returns might be, the benefits of co-

operating to bring these schemes to fruition, and the possibilities of making a return to the community with some of the proceeds. If anybody missed this meeting and would like to know more about how a hydro scheme works and whether it might be possible for them to have one, they are very welcome to contact Gavin on 01848 200770 or by email: [gkingsmith@gmail.com](mailto:gkingsmith@gmail.com). Please also get in touch if you are interested in options for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from your home but have no opportunity for making hydroelectricity.

Since then a few people have expressed an interest in following these ideas up, notably the Estate Manager for Buccleuch Estates, Mark Coombs. He is enthusiastic about Buccleuch Group getting involved in developing smaller schemes across the estate. This is important as a number of potential schemes are situated on or run through Buccleuch land. Buccleuch Estates may be looking to set up their own capability to design and install hydro schemes in the future. People with electrical engineering skills, plumbing know-how and electricians' qualifications, as well as those with diggers and brawn, could be in demand in the near future.

Gas works in Tynron. In early spring this year I was killing half an hour while waiting for Angus to finish his piano lesson. I had bought the Wednesday Standard bearing the rather alarming headline "TOXIC SITES!" informing us that some families in our region are living in homes built on land contaminated by cancer-producing chemicals. Living in the rural idyll that is Tynron I rather quickly scanned the article at first, selfishly assuming that this was something that would be happening elsewhere. Out of the 16,125 potentially contaminated sites was a rather prominent list of 43 sites that had been deemed by D&G council as of "significant risk"... alarmingly, Lannhall being one of them.

The council is legally required under the Environmental Protection Act to identify contaminated land sites. These sites; old gasworks, gasometers and tanneries were found by studying historical maps.

James Collins Taylor managed to find an old map from 1860 which clearly shows the gasometer next to the little building adjacent to the main steadings (our house). Lannhall would have been illuminated by gas produced here by burning coal or coke. Experts warn that the chemicals still lingering from past operations could include arsenic, lead, cyanide and chromium. Other nearby sites are at Capenoch, Drumpark and Moniaive. As part of the council's decontamination plan the Contaminated Land Officer spent a day with a digger excavating and filling soil sample bags. He found the footings for the old gasometer about 4 feet down; full of water and tar.....this seemed to produce a rather excited gleam in his eye!

The results are back and yes we are toxic! We have all the previously mentioned chemicals with lead levels being especially high. We are not living on top of it and there is no danger of any leaching into water courses so the responsibility and expense of decontamination is ours.

The instruction is to have all the toxic ground removed or alternatively have it hard capped and noted in our title deeds. In the meantime we have been advised to keep the chickens away from the area! *Jane Blair*

Walking Despite the "summer" weather we did have some nice Thursday evening walks with good company and a blether, although that tends to slow down a bit on the hills, until we catch our breath again.

In May we went across to Pielton to see the gardens, and then we went up to the old Crawfordton School and had a walk round the grounds and chapel – sad to see it empty and deteriorating.

A couple of weeks after that we went by car to Carron Linns for a short walk, then drove home via Drumlanrig Castle, Ballagan and down Scaur. Another nice “away” walk was from Keir Bridge along the river and back past Blawplain. Of the walks round Tynron, I think the favourite is down past the Linn, over the Ford hill, up to Airds loch and back along to the village. This was the route I chose for the Walk and Soup in the village hall on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October, and we could not have had a better day with sunshine and clear blue skies. Unfortunately the walkers were sparse, but maybe next time we will attract more, although more people turned up for the soup and rolls and it turned out to be a nice social occasion for a Sunday afternoon.

I would have liked to organise a walk to Cormilligan during the summer, but with the weather being so unpredictable it never happened, however there is a visit organised for the Home Coming next June – more information on that above.

Paths for Health have launched a walk in Moniaive on Thursday afternoons and, although we started off small, the numbers are growing and hopefully it will continue to flourish. The Thornhill walks are still well attended and, again, we have been lucky with the weather most of the time, even if it gets a bit muddy underfoot.

Now that the evenings have drawn in and the winter activities begun the Thursday evening walks have been stopped and we have not yet decided when to have them so that we can continue over the winter – it will be at the weekend, but a poster will be posted in the notice board.

PS. On the walk on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October I lost my silver chain bracelet – a long shot, but if it is found I would be so grateful to have it back. *Eunice*

Dalmakerran Carriage Driving Event The South West Scotland Horse Driving Club held their annual carriage driving event at Dalmakerran again this year. Apparently we are now the highlight of the season, as is evident by the event starting earlier each year, with people now arriving on Friday. The pretext for this is to set up the course; however it clearly increases the opportunity for social events too. The kitchen table discussion on Friday evening was a lively affair and the usual barbeque on Saturday evening for drivers, grooms and event helpers was a great success.

Unfortunately the weather for the event on Sunday was rather wet but that didn't dampen the spirit of the competitors. The dressage test in the morning was judged by John Cowdery, followed by some fast times round a very tricky cones course. In the afternoon the marathon route was shortened due to the weather but took the drivers up the Shinnel valley road as far as Killiewarren, over the concrete bridge and across to Stenhouse Wood and back through the village to Dalmakerran. This year we were able to have six hazards due to the number of volunteers that offered to help – a bonus for many drivers who rate events by the marathon and number of hazards. This year instead of providing prizes for each of the classes, we decided to donate a sum of money for each class to Redwings Horse Sanctuary, the charity where

Roxane, our daughter, is currently working. The club also kindly donated money raised by raffling a bottle of whisky.

We would like to thank John for judging the dressage and a huge thanks to everyone who helped with the marathon on a very wet day. Thanks are also due to the landowners who allowed us to use their land for the marathon route, also Hugh & Madge Rorison for the use of their tractor to tow the horseboxes off the extremely wet field and Ashley & Tom who gave up their time to drive the tractor. Thanks also to those who stayed to help clean the road afterwards.

The drivers and the club also asked me to pass on their thanks to everyone for helping to put on yet another great event. They have already requested a booking for next year!

*Mary Newbould*

Silence of the Lambs Having been asked to write another article on agriculture, my initial reaction was what on earth to write about. After much deliberation, I felt the most logical step was to follow on from my last article, if only I could remember it. After rummaging through the archives of Tynron Newsletters it all came back to me, along with some much needed inspiration.

In the last article I discussed the ‘tupping to lambing’ process. The obvious transition from this stage is to talk about what happens to the lambs, who buys them, where do they go, and who actually eats them.

The challenge is to convert a small cute lamb to a sellable product, while remaining profitable. Easier said than done. In August, we have what we call ‘our first draw of lambs’. These are the lambs that have reached the desired weight and body condition for entering the food chain. The most profitable lambs I sell are straight from their mothers to slaughter, as they have the least costs attached to them. After the first draw we wean all the lambs. This basically involves taking all the lambs away from the ewes. Initially we group the lambs in their sexes, in large numbers, a safe distance away from the ewes, until they all quieten down. This can take about a week. Once they have settled (and forgotten about their mothers) we sort them out. The first step is to go through the ewe lambs and select our replacements for future breeding. These are the lucky lambs with their futures sealed for the next few years. The remaining ewe lambs are further sorted for selling as replacements to other farmers. Again there are few costs attached to these lambs. The remaining ewe lambs will now join the male lambs, unfortunately for them, their future is not quite so optimistic. Whether lambs have been selected for breeding or the food chain, their time grazing in the lush Dumfriesshire landscape can only be described as idyllic, not just for them, but for those of us living and working in the countryside.

These remaining lambs are sorted into size. The small to medium sized lambs are carted off to grazing. This grazing is usually dairy farms desperate for sheep to graze their grass, as by this time of year most dairy cows are inside. Unfortunately this arrangement does not come free. By removing the lambs this decreases the stocking rates on the farm, creating much needed space for the ewes, which are now on a mission to get back into condition ready for the tup in November. The larger lambs remain at home and are put onto a good bite of grass along with a creep feeder. A creep feeder allows the lambs access to a limitless supply of a cereal based ration.

Every fortnight we go through the lambs. Every lamb is put over the weigh scales and their back handled. In our system, the target weight is generally 38kg and above. By feeling the back of the lamb I can determine the fat level. For example, the lamb may be the desired weight but too lean. Once the prime lambs have been selected they are then tagged with our flock number, thus allowing traceability back to the farm. Depending on the time of the year, the lambs' bellies are clipped. This is to prevent contamination going into the slaughter houses.

Farmers have two options how to sell their prime stock, either dead weight or live weight. To sell dead weight the lambs are taken straight to the abattoir where the farmer is paid per kg of meat hanging up. With live weight the lambs go through the market, where buyers bid for them, with their value determined on the quality of lambs on display. These lambs are valued on a per head basis. In both scenarios the farmer is a price taker not a price maker. A number of factors affect the price of lamb, mainly supply and demand on a global level, with imports from New Zealand being our biggest threat. Supermarkets also have a huge influence with last year's Foot and Mouth outbreak being a prime example. While farmers were selling lambs for half their usual value, a certain super market was selling them at an inflated price.

Out of the 31,000 tonnes of sheep meat or £96 million worth of meat produced in Scotland, 30% remains in Scotland, while 49% is sold into the UK markets outside Scotland. This leaves 21% for the export markets. Demand for lamb is strong in England and Wales where consumption is more than double that of Scottish Consumers. New Zealand supplies the UK with 74% of all imported sheep meat. France remains the single most important market for UK sheep meat and receives nearly three quarters of all exports.

Getting lamb to a sellable product is a challenging and often infuriating process. There is a fine line between making and losing money. In real terms the price of a prime lamb paid to farmers has reduced from £5.07/kg live weight in 1951 to £1.24 in 2008. To remain profitable sheep farmers have had to increase economies of scale and spread fixed costs. With ever increasing costs, but a growing demand for the product there is still uncertainty in the future of the sheep industry.

There we have it, a quick lesson on the sheep industry. Next time the beef industry and the joys and challenges of shifting cattle along the Glen road! *Colin Forsyth*

Finlay's Scooter Wrapped up and with wellies on, Finlay, Angus and I set off for our Autumn treasure trail. It was a beautiful October afternoon. We decided to take Angus' trike and Finlay's scooter to make the walk a little more interesting. Unfortunately the walk was to become more eventful than we expected.

We trundled along Shinnel Glen and stopped to pick conkers just before the double gates opposite Stenhouse Field. Finlay wanted to walk further on to see the pigs and black sheep at Stenhouse, so we parked up his scooter and helmet against the dyke. We were gone for no more than twenty minutes.

When we returned we discovered, to our horror, that Finlay's scooter and helmet were gone. We looked everywhere but they were nowhere to be seen. With our faith in humanity we hoped that someone had perhaps returned it safely home for us having seen it abandoned by

the roadside. But no such luck. Our only hope was reporting our loss to the Police. Unfortunately there has still been no news.

That Monday night we had a little boy who couldn't sleep. "*If someone has stolen my scooter, what happens if they come back and steal me?*" I am horrified and disgusted that someone could so callously take a toy belonging to a little four year old boy and in doing so robbing him of some of the trust and innocence of childhood. It is upsetting that my little boy has had to experience the heartless side of mankind at such a young age. Sadly it is a wake up call to all of us to be more vigilant.

I appeal to anyone who was on Shinnel Glen on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October between 2:30 and 3:30. If you can remember seeing Finlay's scooter and helmet or anything that may be helpful please contact me on 200695.

The scooter has a blue base with an orange brake at the back and black handle bars. The helmet is dark blue with a red band across the back. *Frances Forsyth (on behalf of a very upset four year old)*

### **Thanks, comments, suggestions**

A big thank you to all those who distribute the Glencairn Gazette and to those who contribute to, and distribute, our newsletters. Pieces of interest, comments etc. please to Christopher Craig at The Garth, phone 200364. The Community Council's decision on editorial matters is final.