

February

- 21 Film "Fisherman's Friends"
- 25 Community Council Meeting

March

- 15 Lenten Lunch
- 16 Church Guild AGM
- 31 Community Council Meeting

April

- 18 The Barrstools at Ballantrae
- 28 Community Council Meeting

Contact

If you have an activity or event you would like publicised on the Ballantrae website, on the Community Centre noticeboard, in this newsletter, or in the Stinchar Valley Magazine, please email andy.mcalpine@btinternet.com or drop the information in to 42 Foreland, Ballantrae.

Next Deadlines

Ballantrae News (May)

6 April for distribution at the end of April

Stinchar Valley Magazine (Summer)

24 April for distribution w/c 1 June

Ballantrae NEWS

Ballantrae Community Association

The Christmas themed Craft Fair on Saturday 30th November was a wonderful festive day. There were a wide variety of stalls including wicker and woodwork, baking, cards, knitted goods and many more. Santa took time out of his busy schedule to meet some of our younger residents, who were all delighted to see him!

The seniors table tennis club is still in full flow. We have 3 tables available, along with bats and balls and there are always refreshments available. Please come along and have a go on a Wednesday afternoon between 1pm and 3pm - it's completely free. There's no need to bring any equipment or a partner, just turn up. We look forward to welcoming you.

The annual children's Christmas Party was held on Saturday 14th December. The Elves ensured that all the Ballantrae children had a fabulous time. Santa came along to the party and all the Children were able to meet him.

If you would like to help out with the Community Association please contact either Stacey Stewart 07809 266526 staceystewart21@rocketmail.com or Laura Cunningham 01465 831785 lauracunninghamruby@hotmail.co.uk.

Laura Cunningham



Ballantrae Primary Parent Council

On Friday 29th November we staged a fashion show which featured a range of garments from Louise Ladies Boutique in Girvan. Thank you to everyone who supported our evening by attending, donating and volunteering. We raised the fantastic amount of £430 for school funds. We appreciate all the help and encouragement we receive from our parent body and the wider community, and are regularly overwhelmed by your generosity. We would also like to thank Louise, without whom the evening would not have been possible and Beth Whittingham, Liz Jenkins and Suzi Curtis our fantastic models who "volunteered" for the evening.

Laura Cunningham



Ballantrae Primary School and Early Years

Donna Ball

December is always a busy month for our staff and pupils. They rehearsed for their shows during November. This year we held our shows in the school, in our lovely new Games Hall. Our Early Years to P3 classes put on a wonderful nativity "Hey Ewe" and in the evening our P4 to P7 children's show was "Children of the World". It too was a fantastic show. Well done to all our pupils and thank you to parents/ carers for supporting both shows.

All the children enjoyed themselves at their Christmas parties and we even had a visit from Santa Claus. We welcomed Colmonell Primary 5-7s for the upper school evening party.

On Wednesday 18th December our Early Years visited the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway. We participated in a Tim'rous Beasties Workshop and got to spend time in the museum and its different areas. At lunchtime, we all got to meet and receive a gift from Santa Claus.

Friday 20th December was the last day of term. Our P1-P7s went to the Gaiety Theatre in Ayr to see "Jack in the Beanstalk". Everyone agreed it was a great way to start the holidays and we all thoroughly enjoyed the Pantomime. While our Primary School was at the Pantomime, our Early Years children hosted a Festive Morning. Parents were invited in and we sang some Christmas songs. A delicious buffet was served and we enjoyed homemade soup, sandwiches and festive sweet treats.

Many thanks to our Parent Council who funded the tickets and transport for both outings.



Ballantrae Church

I hope that you have all had a good start to the year. As a new year begins it is good to reflect on the year past, and consider what we have to be thankful for as well as any testing times which came our way. 2019 was quite an eventful year for me. At the start of the year I was half way through my "Familiarisation Placement" for the Church of Scotland after having transferred from Baptist Ministry. Then began my exploration of where the Lord might be calling me to serve which led to my appointment at Ballantrae linked with St Colmon church. Then we had removal to face followed by our attempts to settle into a new area. We are very much enjoying being here and the churches are very welcoming.

Towards the end of November our baby boy Simeon was born in the manse which was a time of great joy. Unfortunately he took ill just before Christmas which meant an extended stay in intensive care. As we were with him I sadly missed the Christmas services. Thankfully he is back home and doing well! We thank everyone for their concern and prayers.

So yes 2019 was quite a year in different ways. Each year brings new opportunities and there will be good times as well as challenging ones for each one of us. As we begin a new year may we ask ourselves if there are positive things that we might do to grow in our lives and journey of faith.

Every blessing for 2020 Rev. Theo Corney



Ballantrae Cinema

organised by
The Ballantrae Trust
in partnership with
Driftwood Cinema

on Friday 21 February at 7.30pm
in Ballantrae Community Centre
"Fisherman's Friends"



**Tickets £5, £4 (Concessions)
and £2.50 (Children)**

Family Ticket (2 adults + 2 Children) £12.50
from Craigiemains Home and Garden Centre



Ballantrae Youth Club



Youth Club members taking a break from their Christmas disco party before the Christmas holidays.

Thank you to Gary Thomson for supplying the disco.

Cathy Lopez

The Kings Arms Community Consultation

To buy or not to buy - that was the question!

In recent years, hundreds of successful community enterprises have sprung up all over the UK. For example, in 2019 Gartmore, in Stirlingshire, became the first Scottish village to have both its shop and pub in community ownership, when it purchased and developed the Black Bull Hub and Pub. Buying and redeveloping the Kings Arms, will allow Ballantrae to join the 600 or so other Scottish ventures that own and manage major assets for the benefit of their local community. If we achieve our goal, we will have restored a well-loved building to its traditional place at the heart of our community, where among other things, locals and visitors can meet to socialise, enjoy food and drink in comfortable surroundings.

The Kings Arms, a historic building at the heart of the village, dates back to the 18th Century, and until quite recently was one of three hotels in Ballantrae, the others being the Ardstinchar and the Royal Hotel. Along with the loss of the dozen or so shops that provided everything from shoes to groceries and hardware, and most recently, of the RBS branch, the disappearance of these centres of community life is a great loss. The idea that the Kings, which has been so important for so many of us, might not survive, is a worry that gradually crept up on us all.

The Kings Arms has been on sale for some time, but has attracted little interest from prospective purchasers. This, along with awareness of the significant role it has played in village life, and worries about what might happen if a buyer could not be found, gave rise to the idea that maybe the Ballantrae Trust should try to buy the building and develop it as a community hub. There followed many hours of discussion, in the Trust Board and with people in and around the village, about how the Trust might bring the Kings back into the centre of village life. As well as talking about it, we looked round at what folk in other places had done in similar situations, and thought carefully about the different ways the building could be used, to exploit its full potential.

We concluded that as well as providing food and drink; occasional live music events, and a place for families and larger groups to celebrate and relax, the new Kings Arms hub could also meet some other current needs. Among these were the idea that it might provide much needed office space for the Ballantrae Trust, which is successfully working to support other developments in the community, such as the Play Park; installing new cinema equipment in the village hall, and a programme of cinema and live theatre/ music. We also hoped the Kings Arms could house a small display telling the story of our village, including our farming and fishing heritage,



As the Trust's enthusiasm for the idea of purchasing and developing the pub for the community grew, we came to the conclusion that if we really thought it was such a worthwhile idea, we should ask Ballantrae folk whether they agreed with us. That is where the idea of a community consultation came from. After all, there would be no point in buying and redeveloping the Kings Arms, if those who live here had no interest in doing so.

In a way the rest is history, because everyone in the village and surrounding area has now had the opportunity to say what they think - through the invitation to attend a consultation day on 10 November, and through questionnaires, which were available in prominent village locations and via social media, as well as being delivered to every door in the Ballantrae Trust area. In addition, many people had a member of the Trust call on them personally. Gathering people's views about such a complex initiative as buying a hotel and developing it to address their needs, as well as attracting visitors into the village, was important if we are to make the project a success. We were overwhelmed by the extent of the support and interest shown and are grateful for the contribution to our thinking, of all of those who took the time to write down their thoughts.



The community consultation: - what did we find out?

Enthusiasm for the idea of buying the Kings Arms building for the village was strong, with 90% of those who completed our questionnaire supporting the proposal. Only a few people (3%) were against the idea, but some (7%) were unsure, or felt they needed more information before deciding. Overall, what emerged was a picture a community that cares about what their village is like now and will be like in the future. There is lots of talk about 'bringing the village together', with many people thinking that purchasing the Kings Arms will help do this. One person summed things up, saying 'The Kings could be a great place for the community to come together'.

Many of the 312 folk who completed the questionnaire, talked about the part the Kings Arms has played in their lives and the life of the village in the past, and expressed disappointment that it no longer does so. For some, the sense of loss seems to verge on grief. One said, 'This pub holds a lot of memories for me', while another told how 'it used to bring the people of Ballantrae together.' At the consultation event people shared stories about times when 'everyone' went to the pub 'young and old alike' after events in the village, and the party would 'continue in the Kings with everyone mucking in together.' The tales told were clearly important, because they were fresh and alive as they poured from their tellers' lips.

What did the consultation tell us about the reasons for people's views?

Many folk who completed the questionnaire shared the reasons for their views about the proposed purchase of the Kings Arms. Though diverse, they cluster together in groups of comments that overlap with one another.

The 'heart' of the village

The first group clustered round the hope that the project could help to restore the 'heart' of the village, and focused both on the part the Kings Arms has played in the past, and on the part they'd like it to play in the future. One person lamented that 'It's a shame the village has no "heart" anymore' while another wrote that the Kings 'used to be the heart of the community, unfortunately this isn't the case anymore.'



Looking for a solution to the problem, someone wrote that they would 'like the village to have a pub with an atmosphere that brings the village together', while another went further, pointing out that 'The Kings Arms could be the heart of the village, somewhere to eat, to meet and socialise, somewhere anyone at all could enjoy.' Some people justified their hopes for the future, by

remembering how things used to be when the Kings Arms was central to village life. One reported that the Kings 'used to bring the people of Ballantrae together', and suggested that 'It needs to be changed so that it can be that place again for everyone in the community.' Another predicted that 'If the Trust took over it would bring the heart of the village back for families to come together.'

Availability of food, drink and accommodation

The second group of reasons focused on Ballantrae's need for a setting that provides good food, drink, and accommodation, at affordable prices. Several folk referred to the importance of the Kings Arms as a place to go for a meal or drink, including one who wrote that 'The village needs somewhere to eat and drink other than the garden centre or shop for a take-away', and another who pointed out that there is 'no place to eat in the village for locals or tourists after 5pm if the pub closes.' The scarcity of places to go out for a meal without having to drive, was pointed out again and again. For example, one person said 'We need somewhere nice to have Sunday lunch or a take-away - a place that is affordable' while another, focusing on the problem faced by villagers whose families live elsewhere, wrote 'There is nowhere to take visiting relatives locally for a nice meal or just a social get together without driving.' One frequent visitor to Ballantrae lamented the fact that 'The village lacks a good pub and hotel, as visitors we always go outwith the village, which is a pity.'

Business benefits

In justifying their support for the Kings Arms project several people talked about the implications it might have for businesses. Among these, some referred to the business opportunities that will be open to the revamped Kings Arms village hub, including one who wrote 'It would be good for tourism, which would benefit the community indirectly, but it would also benefit the community directly through jobs, opportunities to promote local crafts etc. It would really enhance the village.'

Some comments focused specifically on the ways in which the project could impact on the social and economic sustainability of the village, including one from someone who believed that 'Retaining the Kings Arms will improve the social and economic viability of Ballantrae' and another who wrote that 'It would be extremely beneficial to the economic and social development of the village.'

As folk who live in the village know, the flow of ferry traffic to and from Cairnryan is huge, with around 4000 vehicles a day. Conscious of this, several people drew attention to the business opportunity each of these vehicles creates, because the Kings is an 'ideal place for tourists and passers-by to stop'. This was echoed by another contributor who welcomed the Kings Arms development, as a 'Fantastic facility for the village with good traffic flow and car park to attract passing trade.' In order to capitalise on its proximity to the A77, perhaps we simply need to follow the advice of another contributor, that 'We need to "capture" the Irish Ferry traffic.'



Just as important as comments about the business opportunities the new village hub could generate, were contributions that pointed out that B & Bs and self-catering holiday homes depend upon the availability of decent food and drink, to keep their customers happy. For example, one person wrote of the Kings Arms that 'it supports a lot of local businesses - supplying meals for B&B guests/holiday cottages etc', which finds support in a comment by the owner of such a business, who said 'We have a self-catering cottage...many visitors wish there was a good pub/restaurant as they are mostly disappointed in what Ballantrae has to offer at the moment.'

Finally, hinting at the style and standard of both residential and catering facilities they would like to see us providing in future, and also at the ways in which attention to such details could be helpful, one person wrote that 'Conversion to a boutique hotel/gastro pub highlighting local produce, would provide a valuable facility for local people and attract visitors to the village.'

Which services, activities and opportunities should the community hub offer?

In addition to asking people whether they agreed with the proposal to buy the Kings Arms for the village and to share the reasons for their answer, we invited them to consider a list of things that are happening in other community projects, and to say which they would like to see at the Kings Arms. This list included, for example, the possibility that the Kings Arms village hub might run 'Gourmet Nights' and put on 'Live Music' events; showcase Ballantrae's history and heritage; display and sell work by local craftspeople, and offer the Kings Arms as a venue for meetings and training events which, marketed well, could be a significant source of income. Almost all of the 20 items that appeared on this list received support from more than half of those who completed the questionnaire. As we move forward with the project, this information will be extremely helpful as we decide on both economic and social grounds, what facilities, services and activities we should provide.

Listening to the views of those who are against buying the Kings Arms

As lots of folk will recall, we were very keen to hear the views of those who are unsure about or against buying and developing the Kings Arms, because we need to reflect on their reasons for feeling or believing what they do. Some folk are clearly unsure whether it would be wise to take on the gigantic responsibility of an old building and a business that has undoubtedly seen better days. We can assure them that we are doing so carefully, taking advice from others with relevant experience and expertise, who know more than we do, at this point.

A few people have expressed concerns about whether a redeveloped Kings Arms building could ever be financially viable as a community enterprise. This is related to the idea some seem to have developed, that because it is a community venture, the Kings Arms hub will be run by volunteers who know nothing about the hospitality industry. These concerns are unfounded, because as a Trust, we are taking very seriously the need to consider whether the project can be established as a sustainable business that through time can make, not only a huge social contribution, but also a financial contribution to our community. That is why we have commissioned Community Enterprise, who have huge experience of helping community groups undertake development projects, to assess the financial viability of our proposal and help us to write a 5 year business plan. And since the only way this project can be viable is if it is run on a sound business footing and run by people who demonstrably have the experience necessary to do so, finding the right manager and helping her/him to find a suitable team will be our highest priority, after ensuring that the building is fit for purpose.

Two more concerns need to be addressed. First, a small number of people seem to believe that the reason the Kings Arms is for sale, is that it is 'only fit for demolition' (some talked about its 'crumbling structures' and its being 'held together by paint'). The Architectural Report we commissioned about the state of the building, allows us to confirm that these fears are unfounded. Finally, some folk seem worried that if we buy the Kings Arms for the community, everyone in the village will be asked for money to help pay for it. Everyone should rest assured that no one will be asked for any money. However, since we are aware that some people are interested in supporting the project financially, we are exploring with Community Shares Scotland, the possibility of giving folk who wish to do so, the opportunity to invest small amounts of money in it.

What Next?

Our application to The Scottish Land Fund for a grant (not a loan) to help us purchase the Kings Arms, has successfully made it through the first stage, so that we are now able to apply for up to 95% of the purchase price, based on the commercial valuation we have commissioned. The Land Fund, which is administered by the Scottish Government, supports communities in becoming more resilient and sustainable by owning buildings and land from which they can benefit. At the same time, we are looking into other ways of raising the funds we will need to renovate and equip the new Kings Arms village hub.

In the coming months, members of the Trust Board will be paying visits to a number of places where locals have already taken ownership of buildings, including pubs/hotels, to use as community hubs, because we are keen to learn from their experiences. We expect these visits to be enjoyable and worthwhile in helping us to develop our own project and would like very much for some Trust members who are not on the Board to be involved. If you are interested in this possibility, please let us know, using the contact details below.

During the time that we have been talking with people about our proposal to buy and develop the Kings Arms as a village hub, people have raised lots of questions. Hopefully, many of these have been answered above. However, you might also like to look at a list of some of the questions we've been asked and the best answers we have been able to give, which you can find at <https://www.ballantrae.org.uk/village-organisations/the-ballantrae-trust/projects/>

We will be giving regular updates about what is happening with the project in the Ballantrae News and the Stinchar Valley Magazine, as well as posting them on the Ballantrae Trust's web pages, and including them in the quarterly updates to Ballantrae Trust members. If you are not already a member of the Trust, but are supportive of the Kings Arms Project, why not join us? Membership is free so, if you want to join, drop us an email to receive a membership form, or if you don't use email, give us a call.

Finally, to everyone who took part in the Kings Arms Community Consultation THANK YOU. As you can see, we listened to what you had to say, and you have given us lots of food for thought!

The Board of the Ballantrae Trust
email: ballantraetrust@gmail.com
tel: 07920517700





THE BALLANTRAE TRUST

Most of our effort over the last 3 months has been devoted to The King's Arms Project, particularly the Community Consultation which concluded in mid November. A total of 312 completed questionnaires were returned. 281 (90%) support the idea of the Trust purchasing the pub on behalf of the community; 8 (3%) do not support the idea; and 23 (7%) are unsure. In the centre pages of this issue you will find more information from the analysis of the questionnaires, what we have been doing since the consultation ended, and what we are working on now.

The Trust's Trainee Development Officer Fiona Conlan has moved from 2 to 3 days a week as a result of funding from the Ballantrae Community Fund for the Ballantrae Festival of Food and Drink.

We have now taken over responsibility for maintaining and developing the Ballantrae Website from the web designer. We have added more pictures to the group pages and more information and pictures to the historical Timeline thanks to additional material provided by Jean Brittain and Frances Wilkins who provided Smuggling facts from her book "Ballantrae's Smuggling Story".

Work continues on the Play Park and Recreation Ground Development (see back page).

The first event of the new year in our programme of "Music, Theatre and Cinema" was a free matinee screening of "Dumbo Live" for children and adults to celebrate the installation of the new cinema equipment in the hall thanks to a grant from Carrick Futures Community Benefit Fund. The next event will be the screening of "Fisherman's Friends" (cert 12) on Friday 21 February at 7:30pm (see page 2 for more details). We have also booked the Barrstools to come back to Ballantrae on Saturday 18 April. Put those dates in your diary now!

The Board has been considering whether we should bring the Ballantrae Smugglers' Festival back in late August 2020 after a break of a year. Look out for more information on this in the coming months.

We are in discussion with Digital Boast and Business Gateway about continuing to bring business workshops to Ballantrae in 2020 to support our new and existing local businesses and with VisitScotland about how they and the Trust might better support local tourism businesses in 2020.

Our membership currently stands at 148. If you have not already joined the Trust can I encourage you to do so. It costs nothing to join. You can download a membership form from www.ballantrae.org.uk/livinginballantrae/theballantraetrust or email Fiona on ballantraetrust@gmail.com.

By the time you read this, Carol Bell will have taken over from me as Chair. I shall continue to serve on the Trust Board until the AGM in March 2021 focusing mainly on Trust projects. It has been a privilege to be involved initially in the Ballantrae Development Group for 7 years as Secretary, then helping to set up the Trust, and latterly serving as its first Chairman. I wish Carol well in her new role.

Andy McAlpine

Simply the Best Businesses

Ballantrae has in its midst two outstanding businesses which are simply the best in their industry. Both are major employers in the area. Founded in 1992 by brothers Billy and Danny McCulloch, and headquartered here in Ballantrae, McCulloch Rail has established itself as a leading player in the rail industry, developing and operating rail and component handling equipment. Glenapp Castle continues to develop the unique experiences it provides for guests and raise it's profile globally.



Having developed a number of superior and unique machines, McCulloch Rail has installed tens of millions of feet of rail safely across the UK for many clients including Network Rail, London Underground, Balfour Beatty and Babcock. The safety aspect of eliminating as much manual handling as possible is also always at the forefront of the improvements the company undertakes. McCulloch's safety focus has been recognised over the years with a number of safety and reliability awards, the most recent being the prestigious Plant Safety Champion Award, presented to McCulloch by Network Rail in June of 2019.



Mike Smith, Head of Business Development, explains "As clients begin to understand the advantages that our equipment can offer, they plan work around the methodology that we work within. Furthermore, the increasing demand to run more passenger and freight services on the rail network has further reduced the window of opportunity to undertake scheduled and arising maintenance activities."

This methodology includes the ability to offer an integrated service with its range of specialist equipment but is bolstered by efficiency and work ethic, which has resulted in a strong and recognisable reputation. McCulloch Rail's unique technologies and methods of working enable greater productivity in shorter timescales than conventional methods - recently informally referred to as 'The McCulloch Way'.

In recent years, McCulloch technologies have been exported to New York and Pittsburg where huge productivity improvements have been realised and significant risks associated with manual handling techniques mitigated. Through this success and working with their sales and distribution partner, Unipart Group, they are able to use these technologies - designed, engineered and proven here in Ballantrae - across the global rail network.

The company plans to strengthen its foothold in the UK by establishing additional depots in strategic areas, opening operational facilities in Toddington, Bedfordshire, swiftly followed by a sister depot in Bawtry, near Doncaster.

"These depots allow expansion and are logistically closer to our client bases than our headquarters in Ballantrae," explains Mike. "The depots are self-sufficient with workshop mechanics, labour staff, operators and machines. This removes the need to move men and machinery around the country; not only boosting efficiency but it also means we can pass savings onto our customers, through reduced transport costs."

As demand continues to increase for McCulloch's machinery and services, and whilst the company is keen to grow, standards are maintained and its strong reputation is upheld. "We are keen to capitalise on opportunities that come along with a strategy of controlled growth. There is now a huge demand, but we must be careful not to lose control of what we strive to deliver to our customers. Over the coming months and years we want to open further depots in the UK and also increase our international footprint, however, a major challenge for us to do this is identifying the right people with the right attitude and commitment to grow with the company. To address this challenge we are continually recruiting, training and mentoring staff to be able to work The McCulloch Way" Mike concludes.

The collaboration with Unipart has enabled a worldwide presence in North America, Canada, Europe, Australasia, Africa and the Middle East. Since the collaboration was formalised in July 2019, McCulloch have already secured a significant order from Malaysia, with imminent opportunities in New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, Canada and Mexico. Their biggest challenge might be keeping up with the demand!



GLENAPP CASTLE

Glenapp Castle is owned by Paul and Poppy Szkiller who took over the ownership of the castle in 2015. Prior to this, Paul started out as a hotel porter when he was 16 and - when he then started work in the city - always vowed that he would one day own a hotel. He is now 60 so bought his first hotel when he was 55.

Since Paul's acquisition of Glenapp, the hotel has excelled year on year. It can be said there are multiple reasons for this but one in particular was that for the all-important winter period the hotel was not open under the previous ownership and generally closed from mid-January to late March. Now the hotel trades fully throughout the year.

This success can be seen through the awards Glenapp Castle has won, especially in 2019. Awards include; "Winner of the Independent Hotel of the Year" at the CIS Excellence Awards 2019, winner for "Hotel Restaurant of the Year" at the Hotel Catey Awards 2019, "Housekeeper of the Year" at the Boutique Hotelier Awards 2019.

More recently, Glenapp Castle has continued to deepen its guest experience and international profile increasing total revenue by more than 20% in 2019. In the same year the new and unique Hebridean Sea Safari experience launched adding to the multiple activities already available at the hotel for its guests.

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News Snippets

The Church Guild

The Church Guild's first meeting of the new year was lunch in Malin Court in January. The meeting on February 17th will be a talk on guide dogs at 1.30pm in the Community Centre. The AGM will be on March 16th with a talk on the Sailor Society. The Lenten Lunch is on Sunday March 15th at 1pm in the Community Hall. All will be welcome at any of the get-togethers.

Ballantrae SWI

Fourteen members of the Ballantrae SWI enjoyed a great night out in December at the Craigenelder Hotel in Stranraer with a "Secret Santa". The January meeting was a slide show of birds of the south west coast by Angus Hogg. March will be the group's 90th birthday celebration!



BRICC

On 10 December 2019 the BRICC Club celebrated its 21st Birthday. Three founder members Jean Dunlop, Mary McWhirter and Margaret Maule attended along with around 14 others. The BRICC Club invites seniors and those who would otherwise be housebound to meet in BRICC House on Tuesday afternoons from 2pm to 4pm where they enjoy entertainment, tea with home baking, board games and good company. Membership is free. If you would like to attend please contact Mary McWhirter on 831464 or Jean Dunlop on 831351.

Stinchar Valley Photography Group

Following successful exhibitions in Barrhill and Colmonell in 2019 by the time you read this The Stinchar Valley Photo Group will have held an exhibition in Ballantrae in January. The Autumn / Winter programme consists of practical sessions on Photoshop and Black and White photography and guest speakers. The SVPG is a small informal group which meets on the last Thursday of the month (with the exception of December). As they have members from Ballantrae, Barrhill, Pinwherry, Pinmore and Colmonell, they have started to move around the area rather than only meeting in BRICC House. The aim is simple. They help more people take better pictures. Why don't you come along and join in? Contact Karen on 01465 831717.

Play Park Development

We are delighted to have received confirmation we were successful with our applications to the Ballantrae Community Fund and Carrick Futures Community Benefit fund in securing funding to purchase and install a zip slide in the park. An order has now been placed and our supplier estimates the equipment could be installed and in use in the park by the end of February. At this year's craft fair, we raffled off a Christmas Hamper which raised a fantastic sum of £161. The seating area is looking much brighter, more accessible and more appealing due to improved access and surfacing. We have an additional children's bench to add to the area. This will complement the colourful and inviting space. It's expected to be on site within the next few weeks.

Ballantrae Scout Group

Our Beavers, Cubs, and Scouts have had another successful and exciting term! Beavers and Cubs camped at the Glasgow Science Centre along with 380 others from across the District, enjoying free access to the science mall, planetarium and science show "after hours". We did manage a "few" hours of sleep whilst there too!! They also all had a great camp at Culzean (albeit it a little wet and very muddy) followed by the District Beaver and Cub Funday where they took part in activities including archery, crate stacking and even made armpit fudge....yum! Two of our hardworking Beavers received the Chief Scout Bronze Award - the highest award available to Beavers. A huge well done to Oscar and Jake.

Before Christmas the Cubs were working on their World Issues Badge, learning about issues that affect different parts of the world such as lack of sanitation and water, and the impact that plastic use and imported goods and food have on our world. They also thought about their impact on our local environment and why it is important that we look after our local area and wildlife. The Cubs made fantastic Christmas ornaments from recycled and upcycled materials which they sold at the local Craft Fair to raise money for the Group.

The Scouts held their first Christmas camp (yes tents in December!) complete with full Christmas dinner, secret Santa, games and a "snowball fight". It was a fantastic night and I'm certain it will become an annual event. Scouts also had the honour of holding a "Lamb for St Andrews" dinner. The aim was to encourage people to eat haggis for Burns night. We served 84 people from our local communities a delicious 2 course dinner. A huge thank you to United Auctions who provided us with the beautiful lamb, to



Hopefully 2020 will be another successful year. We will continue our discussions to hopefully enable the next big proposed step forward... a circuit around the park. Quotes are currently being sought. As you can imagine there will be considerable costs involved with this circuit however, we are not giving up!

To enable us to continue to make these improvements happen in our community we rely on local people, businesses and people volunteering. We would be delighted if you have any ideas or suggestions or indeed would like to join our group. Please get in touch with either Cheryl Agnew or me Fiona Stevenson. Maybe you have ideas, fundraising or suggested sources of funding you could suggest? Fiona: 07917133220. Cheryl: 07767 081602.

Fiona Stevenson



Girvan Early Growers for the potatoes, and Laigh Kilphin for the carrots. The evening was a huge success and our Scouts received many compliments for their efforts. We paid a visit to Boyle Court Nursing Home in the run up to Christmas to enjoy a cuppa and a chat with some of the residents.

To round off the year, we had a great night at our end of term fun session for all 3 sections at The Quay Zone, followed by our end of term badge presentation and moving up ceremony. Kate and I had the privilege of awarding our first Chief Scout Gold Award to Scouts Zoe, Adam, Rueben, Josh, Iona and Johnny.

Wendy McKechnan



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Glenapp Castle has plans to expand the Hebridean Sea Safari offering quite significantly in 2020, including having bases in the southern and northern Hebrides and transporting guests after their experience on the islands to other five-star hotels along the west coast of Scotland.

Glenapp is also expanding its events and casual dining offering in its Victorian Moncur & McKenzie Glasshouse, situated in the beautiful walled garden of the estate. This dining and unique event space is becoming increasingly utilised as another major amenity on the Glenapp Castle estate.

2020 will also see further expansion, with the conversion of the entire 3rd floor of the castle which is being turned into a penthouse apartment with four bedrooms, four bathrooms, private cinema room, sauna and treatment room together with lounge dining and kitchens - planned to be ready by mid-May 2020. The apartment provides access to the roof of the castle with 270-degree views of the Firth of Clyde, stretching from the mountains of Antrim, to the Mull of Kintyre and onto Arran. The apartment can be configured as a full 4,000 sq ft of guest space and it comes with a full butler and chef service allowing guests to dine privately.

As part of this almost £2 million planned expansion, one of the most beautiful garden cottages situated on the edge of the walled garden within the Castle's estate is being restored and refurbished for guest use, creating a beautiful two bedroom, both with en-suites, cottage with a wonderful open plan sitting room with a central wood burning stove. This cottage will bring Glenapp to a total of 23 bedrooms by summer 2020.