



A Festive Season Beckons... Come What May

Advent Window Trail

Becky Richmond writes:

The time for the trail is upon us. The first Window will be revealed late afternoon on the 1st December. Each day a new Window will appear and will be lit at 5pm. Once you spot a Window, don't keep it to yourself. Tell all your friends and neighbours. The hope of the Advent Trail is that we generate conversation and give everyone something good to talk about. Join us on Facebook (Cromarty Advent Window Trail) to discover more of the Christmas story and to download an Activity Sheet for Children. From Christmas Eve, you will also be able to download the route and follow it all around the town. The Windows will stay up until Sunday 3rd January, 2021.

From all of us on the Advent Team, Cromarty Sunday Club, The West Church and St. Regulus we wish you A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS and we hope you enjoy the Advent Window Trail.



And Santa Too...

On Monday 7th December he'll be at the 'Forsyth turning spot' (the Links car park to the rest of us) between 7.25-7.50pm

Stagecoach Highland have teamed up with Santa and are heading out to all the towns, villages, and communities that often get forgotten about.

Santa's travelling around 24 different Highland locations on the top of an open top double decker. For a small donation of £1, with all proceeds going to Maggie's Highlands, you can even post a letter to the North Pole via the magical post box on the bus.

Businesses Feeling Buoyant

Phoebe Fox expresses a sentiment on behalf of all small businesses in the town:

'If you normally head to the big supermarkets for all your Christmas goodies, please consider shopping local and supporting independent businesses this year. Your support in Cromarty is very much appreciated!

Sutor Creek

With no film festival, Christmas Parties or family get-togethers at Sutor Creek this year, we have had to adapt to keep our wee business going. In addition to serving take-away food & drinks and introducing a deli, we've stocked up with an assortment of lovely food & drink inspired gifts and goodies for the Christmas season. Our shelves are bursting with all things Christmas: brandy butter, real Ale Christmas puddings, (including a Gluten Free version), champagne truffles, Gingerbread House Kits, gifts sets – both alcohol and food, and range of delicious treats for everyone on your list. We have also stocked a lovely selection of Scottish Craft Spirits and Liqueurs that are great for presents!

We offer a Specials menu weekly in addition to our regular and wood-fired pizza menus – visit our website at www.sutorcreek.co.uk, follow us on FaceBook or Instagram for weekly updates. Our Christmas Pizza is now available alongside a range of delicious seasonal dishes

and special offers! Delivery free throughout December – book online or give us a call on 01381 600 855.

Winter Hours: Open Wednesday to Sunday 10-8pm

Christmas Hours: Open Monday 21st, Tuesday 22nd and Wednesday 23rd December, 10-8pm. Closed Thursday 24th, Friday 25th and Saturday 26th December. Open Sunday 27th to Thursday 31st December, 10-8pm.

Closed Friday 1st January to reopen Wednesday 20th January 2021.

Calluna

Lots of gorgeous items in store for gifts! From candles to jewellery, books to clothing (men's too), we have something for everyone on your list! Our Private Shopping Evenings are a great option if you want to spend some time browsing or fancy a fun night with your bubble. Complimentary Prosecco is provided and the chance to win a £50 Calluna Gift Voucher. Phone 01381 600 464 to book an evening or pop in and see us on Church Street. Open daily 10-5pm.'

The Cheese House

Things are likely to be a little congested this year with only one household permitted in the shop at any one time. To avoid standing in a queue - unless you enjoy the chance of a blether - a pre-ordering service is available, for collection 22nd-24th and 30th/31st December. Give us a call any time on 01381 600724 to discuss your order and you can pick it up by knocking on the front door of the Old Police House. Contactless card payments taken when you collect. A home delivery service is also available for anyone in the Black Isle - delivery day is Monday 21st December. Please order by 6pm Friday 18th December.

The shop will be open 10am-5pm every day from 15th - 24th and 27th-31st.

For more information go to www.cromartycheese.com

Last week we bought in just short of 600kg of cheese, with more to come, so there should be enough for everyone!

Jon & Emmy (Eight Years and counting.)

Cinema Latest

Gift Vouchers are for sale for Christmas - £5, £6, £7.50 £60 - from Ingrid's House. £60 is the price of a 3 hr private hire. The person who is doing the hire has to be/become a Friend (cost £25) - but anyone can buy a gift voucher for the hires.

Public screenings in conjunction with Eden Court are being planned - details will be publicised locally shortly - to take place in the first instance on 11th, 13th & 17th Dec. As the COVID situation hopefully improves as we go through 2021 we will endeavour to ramp up the number of public screenings.

Several special community events are in the diary for December & January, including a one year anniversary.

Private hires continue to be extremely busy with events ranging from Star Wars themed birthdays to screenings of old classics such as 'Casablanca' proving especially popular.

All the details are on the website
www.cromartyandresolisfilmsociety.org

Fraser Mackenzie

Cromarty Rising... And Still Battling On

It is almost four years since MSPs on Holyrood's Public Petitions Committee (PPC) began their consideration of the petition from Cromarty Rising. Earlier this month they decided they needed to continue their deliberations.

It was in March 2017 that Cromarty Rising lodged its petition – “Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that environmental legislation in Scotland is sufficient to prevent ship-to-ship transfers of crude oil in environmentally sensitive locations, such as the Inner Moray Firth, and to enhance the accountability of trust port boards to their stakeholders.”

The PPC's meeting of 12th November questioned Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands as part of its review of the petition. Committee members then "agreed to consider the evidence heard alongside forthcoming written evidence from the Minister, and others with an interest in the petition, at a future meeting."

The event was available live on Holyrood TV and a recorded version is available [here](#).

In previous correspondence with the PPC Mr Wheelhouse had been extremely evasive, and as a result, was finally called to attend in person by committee members. He attended together with Marine Scotland's Head of Ports and Head of Marine Conservation. Prior to the hearing, Cromarty Rising were invited to give an update to PPC members. A copy of that submission is on the Cromarty Live website and reading this may help understanding before watching the video, it can be accessed via [this link](#).

For background, two documents are referred to during the engagement. One is the Scottish Ministers publication "Modern Trust Ports for Scotland: Guidance for Good Governance" (November 2012). It is important to note that this document has no force in law and, it absolves Ministers from involvement in port business. It also defines communities as "Stakeholders" of ports and sets a burden on communities who dispute port activities, such as ship-to-ship transfers or noise problems, that they must take the port to court as Ministers will not become involved. In the early part of proceedings, Mr Wheelhouse can be seen to read his answers directly from this guidance.

The second document is the "Harbours Scotland Act 2015". The key part of this Act of the Scottish Parliament is that ministers relinquished all control of Scottish trust ports in law, in exchange for several hundred million pounds of ports borrowing being removed from Scotland's national debt.

The video lasts for 1 hour and 3 minutes, those interested to see a Cabinet Secretary squirm and flounder may wish to make a pot of tea and have a wee seat. We lobbied PPC members extensively beforehand – very much within PPC rules - and were delighted to see our prompts arise as

questions to the Minister. John Finnie MSP, and former policeman, asks his own very incisive questions with some vigour.

The next steps will be for Paul Wheelhouse to reply to the PPC with the action points he took away. We will then have an opportunity to comment on his responses.

Thanks to all who contributed. Comments are welcome to info@cromartyrising.com. People can also write to their 7 MSPs.

Duncan Bowers

Harbour News

From Pat Haynes:

The Cromarty Harbour Trust has issued its annual report, published on the website and which covers probably the most transformational period in the harbour's recent life!

Work is continuing with many loose ends being completed before the start of the new season, including a refresh of our CCTV, three more pontoons to be installed (their anchoring brackets were installed last week) and guttering and drainage for the sheds. Hope you will agree that the harbour is looking very smart after its recent tidy-up.

As announced on Facebook the other week, new funding applications to Historic Environment Scotland's Year of Coast and Waters Fund and the FCC Communities Foundation Fund have been successful enabling the Trust to progress work to progress some repairs to the stonework on the West pier, particularly in the area leading up to the bridge. Not only will this project improve access for all abilities but provide a work place training opportunity for trainees from the UHI Construction and Built Environment Course. We hope to start this by early March.

Lastly, the Trustees of The Friends of Cromarty Harbour charity thank everyone for their support in buying our latest jigsaw. Sales are now well over a hundred and twenty, more stock will arrive in January. Order through

the harbour website. Finally, a big thank you to The Emporium for their stellar support in helping make this enterprise so successful.

As always, we would welcome any one who would be interested in becoming a volunteer to contact us via the website, Facebook, or by contacting any of the volunteer team directly.



One of a series of stunning drone images taken by Garry Mackay on 26th November. The town looking very neat and tidy, with the new slipway just visible too.

James' Support Group

From Patrick Mullery:

'Our news this month is that since we officially became a charity in October, we have 'secured' an official association with Ross County FC, which will include our name & details around the pitch all of the time and literally for the December vs Rangers match on the moving ad board.

We like all charities need funds to survive, being new we are desperately looking for donations and ask your readers to give a 'present for Christmas' to James Support Group. You can donate direct to our Charity bank account sort code 832310, account number 19649671

Have a great Christmas everyone, 2021 isn't far away and looks to be a real step up from this year!'

Middleton Trust

Henry McKenzie Johnston, who created a charitable trust in 2012 to “advance the social, cultural, educational and recreational development of the young people of Cromarty and the surrounding area”, has died peacefully on 29th October 2020, aged 99. His daughter Stephanie has indicated his ashes will be buried with her mother in the family grave in Cromarty and this will be organised at a later date. Henry created The Middleton Trust in memory of his wife Marian Middleton who came from this area and was the great-great-granddaughter of Hugh Miller.

Alison Vandyke, Chair of the Middleton Trust, said that Henry had left the most wonderful legacy and Trustees will “feel even more keenly now the responsibility of looking after it for him and to ensure that future generations of Cromarty children will continue to benefit from his generosity”.

Cromarty Youth Café is one of the many local organisations to have received funding from the Middleton Trust over the last 8 years. Wanda MacKay, Youth Development Officer said she felt lucky to have met Henry and described him as, “a kind and caring gentleman who has helped transform the lives of many young people here”.

Gillian McNaught

Courthouse News

Christmas Quiz

£1 each

Don't run out of family entertainment over Christmas. The Cromarty Courthouse Quiz will keep all the family busy with 20 Christmas themed questions and a Courthouse Word Puzzle. Not only will they keep your family happy, just pop one in the post to friends and relatives and you can have a ZoomQuiz!

Available now from The Emporium, the Post Office, Church Street Café and the Cromarty Arms. Answers will

be on www.cromarty-courthouse.org.uk on 1st January 2021.

Arts Trust

Georgia Macleod writes:

'Cromarty Arts Trust have had a busy couple of months, despite everything. There are no events in December as we are busy plotting and planning an exciting programme of workshops, exhibitions and even live music from January 2021. If you'd like to keep up to date and not miss out on opportunities, make sure you've added your email to our Enews database (form is on our website: www.cromartyartstrust.org.uk).

A huge thank you to Simon Evans and Ian Sharp for an outstanding return to live music after an eight month hiatus. Our 'Music 4 Tier 1 Concert' on Sunday 22nd November proved a huge hit and goes to show that a safe and comfortable environment can be achieved for an appreciative socially-distanced audience. There will be more where that came from..!'



Development Trust

Just as the Newsletter was going to press, we received the welcome news that the Highland Council had finally granted the Cromarty Community Development Trust (CCDT) planning permission for a motorhome campsite at Whitedykes.

It arrived just in time. According to the regulations governing the Scottish Government's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF), the trust had until Monday November 30th to get final consent from the planning authority, or it stood to lose the final £100,000 of its RTIF award.

The CCDT had understood all the necessary preparatory work had been done for planning permission back in March. The Highland Council's Transport Department, however, intervened seeking street lighting on the road along the length of the campsite.

Later the council's forestry officer lodged an official objection to the campsite plan. This was because of the number of trees that would have had to be removed. He proposed reducing the proposed fourteen parking bays.

The lighting issue was resolved to the council's satisfaction, but the trees proved more difficult. There was a protracted period of negotiation between the CCDT's architect Neil Grant and planning officials and the forestry officer. New plans were drawn up.

The plan finally approved is not what the CCDT had originally visualised for the site layout (view it [here](#)). There will only be 10 bays, and not the 14 on which the CCDT's calculations had been based. The official planning permission, however, should ensure that Cromarty does not lose out on £100,000 of investment.

It has proved a more complicated process for a voluntary body such as the CCDT to undertake, than originally imagined. The planning and the forestry officers were only doing their best to ensure our project was consistent with council policy. Indeed the CCDT directors are greatly indebted to the many Highland Council officials who have helped us get to this stage, not to mention Neil Grant.

Meanwhile discussions are continuing with Simpsons, the Beaulieu-based builders, with a view to them taking on the construction of the Whitedykes site. The development trust directors were delighted that the firm stepped in to save the slipway upgrading project, which was delivered on time and on budget.

[Housing for Communities](#)

A few weeks ago Community Land Scotland (CLS) published a report on the housing challenges faced by communities across Scotland. CLS Chair Ailsa Raeburn introduced the report entitled - “Home Delivery – Community Led Housing in rural Scotland”

She said “For too long people have been leaving villages and small towns across rural Scotland, because they could not find a house they could afford to live in, or were repeatedly evicted...In the fight against such depopulation, communities the length and breadth of rural Scotland have been coming together to build and manage their own affordable housing.”

CLS is the representative organisation for community bodies which own land or other assets such as buildings from Eigg, Knoydart and Abriachan to the Bridgend Farmhouse in Edinburgh and the Kinning Park Complex in Glasgow. The Cromarty Community Development Trust is a member of CLS.

The report charts the success of the very many rural communities who have bought the land and raised the funds to build the required affordable housing over the last five years of the Scottish Government’s Rural and Islands Housing Funds.

These funds were launched in 2016 and were worth up to £30 million. They helped groups such as community organisations, development trusts and private landowners to build new affordable housing or refurbish existing properties, and have already supported projects that will deliver around 200 homes.

The funds (now treated as a single fund) were due to be reviewed early next year after which a decision would be taken on whether they were to continue. The CLS report was designed to persuade ministers to continue the funding beyond this financial year. It seemed to work. Shortly after its publication Housing Minister Kevin Stewart announced the funds would continue to operate. He said:

“It is important for the Scottish Government to help our valuable rural and island communities to provide sustainable affordable housing in their local areas. The Rural and Islands Housing Funds were set up to address

some of the issues these areas have faced and have been described as ‘game changers’ by the Scottish Land Commission, providing a vital boost to affordable housing in remote rural Scotland and on our islands.

“One or two homes in a small community can be as important as a large-scale development in a city. I have seen at first-hand how these funds supported a development of 12 homes in the village of Drumnadrochit that has allowed older residents to live independently, with support from a nearby day centre – an inspiring project created by the community themselves.”

On Skye the Staffin Community Trust faced a big challenge. The island with a population of 10,000 has particular pressure on its housing stock. Research for the Scottish Government last year found that almost 20% of all dwellings on Skye were available for holidays through Airbnb. Hugh Ross of the Staffin Trust said:

“We refused to sleepwalk into becoming a retirement village dominated by holiday accommodation. Our project (seven houses) would have not happened without the Rural and Islands Housing Fund. It is a project that is vital to Staffin as we haven’t had affordable houses here for 21 years. This development will see seven families secure homes, bolster our schools roll, provide a modern health centre and new business opportunities in Skye and Lochalsh’s most economically fragile community. The sound of children playing in the gardens will be a very welcome noise – that of a community with a bright future.”

As we all know Cromarty has also been facing the problems created by the lack of affordable housing for many years. The primary school roll has already been halved in less than a generation. The Cromarty and District Community Council is leading on the issue of housing in partnership with the development trust. Albyn Housing’s plans for a housing development in the field beside the Victoria park, have again been postponed.

The CLS report ([link here](#)) is worth reading to see what can be done. Readers of the Newsletter may find its style familiar, as the report’s author, David Ross, is a member of the Newsletter’s editorial board and a CCDT director.

Anyone for a drop of Cromarty Gin?

CCDT directors have had a very positive follow up meeting with the owners of Sutor Gin to discuss the development of a Cromarty Gin brand. Plans are coming together and we are hopeful that there could be a community engagement event early next year. We hope this might involve some samples!

More information will be available to members at the CCDT AGM on the 16th of December at 8pm. Members will receive an email with a link to the online meeting over the next few days.

Flora Thomson would like to thank everyone who joined in with the window poppies for Remembrance Day.

And Finally...



Congratulations, and huge thanks, to the team of volunteers who did maintenance work on the 100 Steps the weekend of 21st/22nd November. After a period of neglect it was heartening to see that much of the original construction done by Cromarty folk some 20 years ago is holding up pretty well. Testament to their hard work too. It was agreed that the best approach is 'little and often' so there will be more working parties arranged in the future. If you're in need of some exercise and camaraderie there are worse places and ways to spend time in the fresh air. Thanks to Kari Magee for organising the event this time.

We hope you've found this an interesting and informative read.
Please let us know what you think, or send suggestions and ideas
for articles via editor@cromartylive.co.uk

The Cromarty Live Newsletter team is Jon Palmer, Jeremy Price,
David Ross, Laura Shepherd

The Newsletter is currently sponsored by Sutor Creek. Printed
copies are available at the Stores for those unable to access the
online version.

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