



## A Town In Lockdown

At first sight nothing much has changed in Cromarty. Dogs are still being walked on the Links. The firth is still busy with rigs, and getting busier. We still put our bins out on a Wednesday and there is a seagull on top of Hugh Miller's statue.

But on closer inspection life in our wee town has changed utterly since the lockdown.

There are no sounds coming across the water of oars been pulled on Cromba or Tess. There are no gatherings of the Fourways Club at the hall on Thursday afternoons. Nobody is going out for a pint at the Arms or the Royal, or a pizza at Sutor Creek (takeaways still available). The library has closed its doors, while our new cinema is having a rather long intermission.

Family conversations increasingly conducted through windows or at front doors. Young children don't understand why their grandparents are no longer giving them a hug.

The pride taken welcoming visitors has been strained - the more so for those who have arrived since the lockdown in defiance of official governmental instruction north and south of the border.

The pandemic has been compared to the Second World War. But in those years of imminent danger, people were drawn together whether it was in bomb shelters, the pub or at garden gates. It is the natural human reaction when faced with a common threat. But the real cruelty of corona is that it dictates that's the last thing we should do. We must stay apart.

It is the challenge the virus has thrown down to every community in the land, how to help protect each other when we can't get close. Cromarty for one has accepted the challenge.



A finger-painted rainbow by Douglas Shepherd Jnr. Look out for them around the town!

## A Diary of Recent Events

### *from the perspective of the Cromarty Care Project*

Things have happened at whirlwind speed in the last 4 weeks. On Monday 16th March it became clear that there was a major pandemic spreading across the UK which would affect the way we lived our lives in Cromarty. Vulnerable people were warned to stay at home.

By the end of that week all homes in Cromarty had been leafleted. Eighty volunteers were in process of being registered for various tasks and the grocery delivery service was started.

On Monday 23rd restrictions were put on social distancing. By the end of the week with the exception of food outlets, all other shops, cafes and the restaurant were closed. The Cromarty and District Community Council (C&DCC) met and agreed that a member of the Cromarty Care Project (CCP) should be adopted as an associate member. This was done to strengthen the partnership

between the two organisations spearheading the community's fight against the corona virus

Very quickly it was realised that the Cromarty Stores would be a lifeline for the town. Staff there had been working 15 hour days to ensure that basics were available. This was at the time when big supermarkets across the country were having their shelves stripped bare, as panic-buying gripped the land.

What became apparent was that the Store was very vulnerable to disruption, or even closure if the virus established itself here. This would have made things very difficult for the community. So the Cromarty Store, C&DCC and CCP started working on strategies to ensure that a volunteer grocery service was sustainable, and that the Store and its staff were protected.

Reduction of footfall in the Store had to be addressed quickly. It was partially achieved by the grocery delivery service. But it was also realised that numerous visits to the store could be reduced by a daily newspaper delivery service.

This would decrease the risk to both staff and customers of picking up the virus. So on Monday 23rd March planning for the newspaper deliveries started with a small committee. Since then a number of young people from the community have stepped forward to help run the service. The enthusiasm with which they have tackled the project has been a joy to experience. The service started on Monday 30th March.

One of the other big issues was the loss of income as employers closed their doors under the government-ordered lockdown. The impact was felt by individuals and families in Cromarty.

On Monday 30th the Karen Napier Charity was approached by the CCP for support. The grant application was entitled "Filling the Gap". The money would provide for any resident of Cromarty and district whose income was adversely affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. It would be distributed in the form of vouchers to buy necessities from the Cromarty Store.

The Karen Napier Charity informed the Cromarty Care Project the next morning (Tuesday 31st March) that it had successfully received approval for £5000. This money was transferred on Thursday 2nd April. In the meantime a small committee was developing a simple application process for local residents to apply for help filling the gap.

Meanwhile a further component of the strategy to protect both Store staff and the community, was implemented. By Sunday night 5th April, with the help of a skilled carpentry volunteer, it was in place and symbolised by a new protective screen at the counter for the staff.

Opening hours changed (9-12 and 2-6, Monday to Saturday) enabling shelves to be restocked and deliveries picked up, without the pressure of customers. The restriction on numbers of people allowed in the Store at any one time, matched what is happening around the world.

At the same time the “filling the gap” project was advertised on Monday 6th April. On Tuesday 7th April the Cromarty Church of Scotland donated a further £5000 to the Cromarty Care Project. By the end of this week (10th April), over 25 individuals will have benefited from this funding.

Of course in the background are many acts of kindness, people who are looking after neighbours, friends and relatives- these are priceless, long may they continue.

Also C&DCC and CCP are following up with, and passing on to all, the avenues of Government and Highland Council Assistance, as well as from all the offering Charity Bodies.

Phew! What a time we are living in. Please remember that:

- Washing your hands properly frequently (every 2 hours) reduces your risks.
- Social distancing of 2 metres (6ft) reduces the risk of getting or giving the virus.
- Visit the shop at most once every 2 days, volunteers will deliver your shopping if it is heavy for you.
- We need to follow the Government guidelines on exercising and leaving the home. Remember only to go out for necessary walks and exercises alone or in family groups.

**For further information on various things:**

**Filling the gap:** Application forms are available in Cromarty Stores, email [info@cromartycareproject.co.uk](mailto:info@cromartycareproject.co.uk) or by phoning Dr Helen Charley on 07889181529 11-2pm

**Grocery delivery:** [info@cromartystores.co.uk](mailto:info@cromartystores.co.uk) or 'phone 600550 on Monday to Friday between 10am and 1pm

**Newspaper delivery:** leaflet at shop or [shapcott@pitt.edu](mailto:shapcott@pitt.edu) Deliveries start on the following Monday

**Cromarty Community Facebook Page:** [here](#)

**Cromarty & District Community Council:**  
[www.cromartylive.co.uk](http://www.cromartylive.co.uk)



Two incognito volunteers prepare to deliver newspapers on the daily round.

## Business Updates

### Slaughterhouse Coffee

Whilst we are closed for normal operations, one of us has been packaging critical coffee supplies to the needy. You can find Tony on his bike delivering to residents in Cromarty or dropping bags to the Post Office for delivery to places as far away as Spain and Norway. We have

created a new 90g bag of coffee ground specifically for cafetiere (plunger) which will give three generous pots at a reasonable price. This "Buy a Mate a Coffee" programme allows one to surprise a friend or colleague to arrange a video meeting over a coffee. Email [orders@vandykebrothers.co.uk](mailto:orders@vandykebrothers.co.uk) to arrange your order. We have also been dropping coffee supplies to Raigmore to help keep vital staff caffeinated through the long nights.

Here is a brew guide for cafetiere.

Recipe: 30g ground coffee for 350-500ml (roughly 8 servings per 250g bag)

1. Pour 60g of water and evenly saturate the coffee
2. Gently stir the ground to ensure all coffee is immersed
3. Wait for coffee to bloom (bubbling and pale crema or foam on surface)
4. Pour in the remaining water in a spiral motion
5. Allow to steep for 3 minutes
6. Gently press the filter down and serve in a warm cup

Tony Vandyke

## **Cromarty Arms**

The Cromarty Arms are continuing with a Take Away and Home Delivery service 7 days a week 4.30pm until 7pm last orders will be for 6.30pm .

To order phone 01381600230. Payment by card is preferred.



Customers keeping a proper distance at the Stores on a sunny Easter Saturday afternoon.

## Spiritual Needs Catered For Online

### Church of Scotland

Cromarty, Resolis, and Urquhart Parish will held a live streamed service on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The Orders of Service were available for download at [culbokiechurchcentre.org](http://culbokiechurchcentre.org) and [cromartychurch.org](http://cromartychurch.org). The service could be viewed at [cruparish.online.church](http://cruparish.online.church). Earlier in the week Minister Terry Burns said: 'Apologies in advance for any bloopers, we're new to this sort of thing!'

### St Regulus

With churches closed and services everywhere cancelled, Father Mel from the Black Isle Charge of the Episcopal Church area that covers Cromarty (St Regulus' Church) is doing online services daily via Facebook. The Scottish Episcopal Church is part of the world-wide Anglican Communion. At 9am he conducts the Morning Prayer offices and at 6pm Vespers. If you would like to watch these, search for Mel Langille on Facebook and follow him. You'll get a message on Facebook when he's about to start each time.

### Mindfulness Group

Cromarty sangha/ mindfulness group normally meet in the East hall on Monday evenings 7-9 pm. Due to the corona virus we now meet using zoom 7.30-9 pm . Any new people will be very welcome to join. Contact Maggie Dove on 610212 or [maggiedove29@gmail.com](mailto:maggiedove29@gmail.com) and you will be sent the link.

## Staying Socially Active

### Virtual Drams And Dancing

With the bars and cafes shut and everyone confined to quarters, there are still innovative ways that folk are finding to socialise. You can't keep sitting at home having a dram alone, so groups are popping up everywhere using social media or different apps to meet and chat.

Facebook, Messenger, Zoom, WhatsApp and whereby.com are all different platforms that can be accessed by multiple users at a time for a blether over a cup of coffee or something stronger. At least four groups I know are meeting regularly and one even singles out an individual to provide some entertainment for a few minutes at each meeting – so far, mainly in the form of comedy routines that have included 'stand-up' and comic poetry.

More serious philosophical or political discussion takes place in another, usually punctuated by funnier moments as the evening wears on.

It's created a new discipline of listening as occasional drop-outs occur if the signals are weak and it's clearly not possible to talk over each other if there are millisecond time-lapses. I wonder if this more polite discourse will continue after all this is over and we meet IRL again? (In real life, for the social media Luddites!)

Another group meets for Games and Craic every second Monday and others elsewhere are doing quizzes. In a variety of message apps, quizzes based on identifying people or places via emojis are proving popular, if not slightly irritating and Facebook is awash with so-called quizzes or questions that are actually really used by large companies to harvest information about you.



Another app called TikTok seems to be going wild. It's used for posting short videos of people dancing, lip-syncing their favourite songs or talent videos. A lot of locals can be seen dancing if you're prepared to search for them on Facebook and elsewhere. You know who you are! Dad dancing is probably very much discouraged ...

My concern is that we're all going to be so hooked on our phones, tablets and computers that when all this is over, we won't find it easy to get back into the real world. But when you've got the surroundings we have in Cromarty, perhaps it won't be that hard after all.

Jeremy Price

## Mullery's Music

Wendy Mullery normally holds her music lessons for all ages in 'The Cabin' at her house but because of the virus restrictions she has now gone hi-tech and is offering to continue these lessons via various online platforms.

Messenger and Zoom are both being trialled, with Zoom initially seeming more stable. Wendy has invested in a signal booster for the cabin to improve the experience and has already conducted a number of online lessons. She said "We all have a lot of time on our hands and it seems a shame to lose the impetus with these weekly lessons because of the restrictions when we can quite easily use technology to our advantage. It's important to keep everyone practicing with their instruments, which include guitar, piano, fiddle, mandolin and ukulele!"

The Games Giggle & Craic evenings run by her husband Patrick on a fortnightly basis on Monday evenings also continue using the same technology. The meetings, which were also held in the cabin, are being offered online via the House Party app. The next one is Monday 13th April at 7.45 pm until 9.45pm. Contact Patrick for details.

## Support For Young People

Wanda MacKay is now on Furlough. If anyone has an urgent query relating to youth matters Nigel Brett Young, Youth Work Manager can be contacted on 07795 304939.

# A Personal Journey

Steve Agyei writes:

'At the beginning of March I was down in London raising the finances to buy a hotel, when the global pandemic hit, the stock market collapsed on Monday 9th March and 6 years of hard work and planning went down the drain just like that.

I returned to Cromarty on Thursday 12th, the day we were supposed to bid for the hotel, with my tail between my legs and my dreams and goals shattered.

Something made me self isolate as soon as I got back to Cromarty, as I just felt the tube in London was a Corona Virus hotbed and I didn't want to bring that risk back to the village or my 77 year old mother in her home, so I self isolated from her as well, which living in the same house as her sole carer after her stroke a couple of years ago, was challenging to say the least, especially as I do all the cooking for her - So cooking in surgical gloves and mask it was - Think Hannibal Lecter meets Ainsley Harriet.

Good job I did self isolate because a week later I went down with the virus on March 19th, as did one of my Investors, a tv executive I was in talks with and my manager and PR all of whom I had meetings with and socialised with in London just before I returned to Cromarty, but bizarrely the two people I had stayed with during my trip have not contracted the virus.

Whilst I was ill the Cromarty Care Project delivered our food supplies from the Cromarty Store to our house, Rhonda Lea. They and all the staff at the local stores are doing a magnificent job and I and my mother Sheila Macdonald are forever grateful, because I really do not know how my mother and I would have coped or survived if they had not delivered our much needed daily supplies?

Whilst I was laying ill all day and night struggling to breathe, with a fever, constant cough and having crazy dreams, waking up soaked from endless deep and feverish sleeps, I focused on how to breathe without using my chest, how to keep my mind positive and my immune

system strong to insure I recovered as I totally believe in mind over matter.

I also spent the time thinking, what can I do to join in the community spirit and help other people, when I recover?

I decided to put my skills as a renowned fitness, lifestyle and wellbeing coach with a lifelong passion to help others to use and create a daily schedule and purpose for myself to focus on during the lockdown by sharing my own personal experience of having your business dreams and revenue sources smashed, dealing with having and recovering from the virus and keeping my own physical and mental wellbeing in order by doing my daily meditation practice, yoga practice, walking my dog Zorro and working out in my garage gym.

I decided to film what I was doing and share it by teaching for free on Facebook Live to help as many people as I can in these challenging times through my Facebook profile of 5,000 people and sharing on the Cromarty Community page.

If you think my sessions might help you and would like to try any of them, then please do, my daily teaching schedule Monday to Friday free on Facebook Live is:

7am - Yoga (60 mins)

12 Noon - Midday Meditation (20-30 mins)

5pm - Five o' Clock Fitness (20-30mins)

My sessions are all filmed and streamed live (warts and all) and can be done live with me through my Facebook profile as Steve Agyei, which is open to the public, so you don't need to be one of my friends or followers, if you don't wish to be and as soon as I finish I post each individual session on my page and share to the Cromarty Community Group so you can do them whenever you feel like at your own convenience.

Now really is the time and when you actually have the time to focus on your health, fitness, physical and mental wellbeing, so why not give one of my sessions a go?

If you have any health, fitness and wellbeing questions or need any help dealing with the current situation both physically and mentally please do not hesitate to get in contact with me by email [steve@steveagyei.com](mailto:steve@steveagyei.com) or through my Facebook profile.

I am here to help, we can all do this together, stay safe, stay healthy and stay happy and thank you once again to the wonderful Cromarty Community Care Project and all the Cromarty stores and staff, you are all doing an amazing job and serving the village so proudly.

Namaste.

Steve'

## One For The Archives?

From The Cromarty Courthouse:

'We hope that Covid-19 will be over soon, but we want to remember how Cromarty coped with this crisis, through collecting and documenting from this unprecedented period of living history. Will you help us?

Please collect and keep...

Your **words** (diary entries, poems, thoughts)

Your **pictures** (photos, drawings, paintings, videos)

Your **objects** (posters, masks, empty hand sanitizers!)

and **anything else** you think will be important to remember!'

If you'd like to help contact Mary Bowers (4 High Street) or e-mail [cromartycourthouse@gmail.com](mailto:cromartycourthouse@gmail.com)



For some reason bears have been popping up in all sorts of unlikely places! Image: Dave Newman

## And finally...

This message was sent to the Cromarty Live website:

'Hello from Keith and Katie Norton in Chesterfield, Derbyshire 450 miles away.

We have been coming to Cromarty every year for longer than I can remember, as we arrive along the top road that looks down into Cromarty we just look at each other and say "we're back home". As you can imagine we have seen lots of changes over the years such as old buildings renovated and new premises opening. When we come back each year a lot of the locals remember us and ask what we have been doing over the last 12 months. Some of these people are sadly no longer with us but when we talk about the changes we have seen we always think of those people R.I.P.

Sarah from eco ventures has already posted trips off for the time being.

I hope that all residents and businesses manage to get through this both health wise and financially as it would be a shame to see all the changes and proposed work fall apart.

For the time being stay safe hopefully in the future this will all be a distant memory.

As my 97 year old late mum used to say " we will get their  
" '

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](mailto:editor@cromartylive.co.uk)

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

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

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