

Wemyss Bay Village News

171st Edition

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MERRY CHRISTMAS!!

The Community Association would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The lights will be switched on on the Christmas tree on Friday 5th December at 7.00pm. Santa will be visiting so, if you've not already sent him a letter, this may be one of the last chances to put in your requests. To help us all get into the Christmas spirit, the Community Association will be holding a community get together in the Community Centre after the switch-on. Come along and enjoy the carol singers and Christmas music, mulled wine and mince pies. This will also provide an opportunity to meet representatives from various community organisations and to find out a little more about what goes on in Wemyss Bay.

Parking around the School

Perhaps it takes someone without children to realise how precious they are and what a privilege it is to have them. Certainly a small group of inconsiderate parents have little consideration about the safety of our future generation. Despite warnings, and the recent accident when a young child was knocked down, people are still parking in a dangerous manner. The school have even had to resort to locking the gates to the car-park around starting and stopping time to prevent a small number of parents using the car-park as a drop-off point. Children are not allowed into the car-park with good reason – it is dangerous. One parent who was obviously in a hurry was recently spotted by staff racing into the car-park at such a speed that stopping the car resulted in a skid and a great screech of brakes. Anyone crossing the car-park, whether pupil or member of staff, would not have stood a chance! Your child could be the next victim. It only takes a split second distraction to result in a tragedy. For over a year now the school, the school board and the Village News have been appealing to drivers to take more care when passing or parking near the school. Does a child have to die before this happens?

Community Association

The next meeting of the Community Association will be held on Wednesday 3rd December at 7.30pm in the Rogues Room, Inverkip Hotel. Anyone interested in getting involved in the Association is very welcome to come along. A recent discussion on the village web-site suggested that members of the committee of the community association and other community groups were self-promoting wind-bags with their own vested interests at heart. The Community Association is a voluntary association which runs the Community Centre and various community events such as the Gala Weekend. None of the members of the association committee get paid and meetings are open to anyone interested in attending. Meetings, including the AGM are publicised in the Village News which goes to every house in Wemyss Bay. Certainly meetings are at times poorly attended but this is perhaps typical of a society which is happy to sit back and let someone else do all the work and then complain about how it is done. Without the work of the Community Association the Community Centre would close affecting all the groups and organisations which meet there and there would be no Gala Weekend or other community events, which help foster the local community spirit. If this is what you want fine, otherwise come along to the next meeting and get involved.

Thank You

The Woodland Association would like to thank everyone who responded to their Bulb Appeal, either by handing in bulbs or making a monetary donation. Over £500 was raised. Some money has been held back to purchase a variety of wildflowers in spring but in the meantime a large quantity of bulbs have been purchased. Along with the bulbs donated the Association is about to plant almost 3000 bulbs including Alliums, Bluebells, Daffodils, Star of Bethlehem, Winter Aconites and Wood Anemones. Over 1000 Snowdrops were donated by Finlaystone Estate at the end of their flowering period earlier this year and have already been planted. Spring promises to be a colourful time!

School Proposals

A public meeting will be held on Monday 1st December at 7.30pm in Greenock High School Assembly Hall to discuss the provision of primary education in Inverkip and Wemyss Bay.

The public notice which appeared in the Greenock Telegraph stated that the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee wishes to seek views on these proposals (the future provision of education in Inverclyde) from interested parties, including the parents of children attending any of the schools affected by the proposals and the parents of children who would be expected to attend any of the schools affected by the proposals within two years of their implementation.

We understand that the latest proposals for primary education in Wemyss Bay involve an extension to the existing Wemyss Bay Primary school to provide an additional two classrooms. This meeting is open to all parents and concerned individuals. In addition to changes to primary education in the village, there is also a possibility that the Community Centre will be knocked down to make way for additional school premises and therefore the meeting is of relevance to everyone in the village.

School News

Last month Wemyss Bay Primary held several very successful events in the lead up to Christmas. Primaries 6 and 7 have been studying the Scots Language and this prompted p7 to run the annual Fun Day on a Scottish theme. Senior pupils thought out and organised all the games and events during the day and all the school pupils took part in some way. The pupils' hard work paid off with £551 being raised for charity. Although p7 have not made the final decision, the money will go to a Scottish based charity for young people. The Christmas Cracker Fair was also very successful and raised £1474. This money will boost the school funds, with some of it being used to provide transport for the festival, while the rest will help purchase some much needed educational resources. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the Christmas Disco, and the Family Ceilidh for relatives and pupils from p6 & 7 proved to be a successful and very enjoyable culmination to the Scots language project.

As part of their Enterprise Scheme p5 and 6 formed the "Colourful Card Co-op" and produced 100 packs of beautiful Christmas cards which they sold for £2.50 each during the Christmas Cracker Day. They sold out in no time at all! They have now had to produce an additional 50 packets which they will sell when they travel to Paisley to attend an Enterprise Fair on Saturday 6th December.

Why not pop into the Oak Mall in Greenock on Monday 8th December when you will be entertained by pupils from p4 – 7 who will be singing some of the songs from their show Bugsy Malone. Unfortunately due to an outbreak of flu and all the other Christmas activities, the show has had to be postponed and will now take place on 21st and 22nd January, so by visiting the Oak Mall you will get a sneak preview!

On Wednesday 10th December the school will be visited by a Theatre Company who will be performing the pantomime "Beauty and the Beast", for all the pupils. This is something which is sure to prove popular with all ages.

The afternoon of Tuesday 9th December sees the production of the Nursery Nativity and show, while the p1 – 3 Nativity will take place in Skelmorlie and Wemyss Bay Parish Church at 6.30pm on Wednesday 17th December.

During the last week of school parties will be taking place for the different year groups. After all this activity, everyone is going to need a holiday!

Ardgowan Football Development

AFD will be stopping on Sunday 7th December for the Christmas break. They will be rounding up the year with some 5-a-side matches. Parents will be very welcome to stay, but be prepared - you will be expected to join in. We understand that there is a chance that Santa may manage along provided he can organise the elves to keep working while he is away!

Training sessions will resume again after the holidays on Sunday 11th January.

Pharmacy Christmas Opening

Wemyss Bay Pharmacy will be closed on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. They will however be open on Boxing Day and the 2nd of January from 10am – noon. If you take regular medication remember to order and collect your prescription in advance, and while you are in the pharmacy why not check out some of the lovely Christmas gifts.

Surgery Opening Hours

The surgery will be closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, and New Year's Day and the 2nd of January. During these times, as with all other out of hour's times, an emergency service will be operated by Ayrshire Doctors on Call Service. You can contact them directly by calling 0845 741 3003. If you mislay this number call the normal surgery number and a recorded message will tell you what to do. Hopefully no-one will require to make a call this Christmas.

Comments from Councillor Eric Forbes

The past six months has been an exercise in trying to have the whole area “cleaned and tidied up” and by that I mean grass cutting, verge tidying etc.! I would like to comment on some issues from last month's edition of the Village News:

Road Safety around the school is certainly an important issue and it is down to local drivers to play their part. I hope that the sentiments expressed last month are taken on board and that everyone will play their part in preventing any further accidents. To demonstrate the importance placed on safety, the Scottish Executive has released a substantial amount of money to be spent in providing “Safety Zones” around schools. Inverclyde has received an allocation of this money. Our youngsters are precious and our future. **Recycling** is an important issue and at present the council is working on a “Waste Strategy” which is a statutory requirement. In time this will cascade down to householders who will be required to play their part in the exercise. The new roundabout at the **Cloch Road junction** is well underway. Patience and safe driving are the watchwords and at the end of the construction the new “Bankfoot Roundabout” will be a bonus and a lifesaver to all road users. The issue of a Pegasus crossing is ongoing. I am involved in discussions with the Roads Department and John Wilson of Ardgowan Estate to see if we can come up with an appropriate scheme. The **School Proposals** for Inverkip and Wemyss Bay will be discussed at a public meeting to be held in Greenock High School on Monday 1 December 2003 at 7.15pm. I would encourage parents and interested parties to attend as your views will assist in shaping the future provision of education in Ward 20. In last month's issue Duncan Mc Neil MSP eluded to the possibility of a **pedestrian crossing at the pierhead** in Wemyss Bay. The Scottish Executive has confirmed to me that traffic assessments carried out by them support the need for such a crossing. The location is vitally important as it will affect the availability of parking on both sides of the road and information is to be made available to residents and shopkeepers in the area. The Scottish Executive has sole responsibility for any change of traffic management on the A78 although other stakeholders such as Calmac, Railtrack, SPTE and the Council's Roads Department are involved in ongoing discussions. Duncan advised that he has been approached by constituents in favour of the idea; however I have been confronted by a number of residents and retailers in the area who feel that it will have a detrimental effect. We shall wait and see what the final decision on location is. During the recent configuration of one **Community Council** to cover Ward 20, no-one came forward to represent Wemyss Bay. The present members of WB Community Council withdrew as they were unhappy with the new set-up and felt that Wemyss Bay was not getting a fair crack of the whip by having its own council. The Wemyss Bay Community Council at present is run by hard working and committed members of the community who have to be thanked for their service to Wemyss Bay. The current councils will cease to exist on 11 December and the new one will take over. It will comprise 6 Community Councillors from Inverkip and no-one from Wemyss Bay although there are 4 places available for co-opted members. I look forward to the Christmas Lights Switch-On on Friday 5th December and hope as many people as possible will turn up.

I would at this time, on behalf of my wife, Fiona, and myself, wish all the residents of Wemyss Bay a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous 2004.

Councillor Forbes can be contacted by Tel: 01475 717171 or E-mail: eric.forbes@inverclyde.gov.uk

Christmas Refuse Collection

There are likely to be changes to the normal refuse collection times over the festive period. Unfortunately at the time of the Village News going to print discussions were continuing between Transport and Cleansing and the relevant unions so we are unable to bring you details of any changes. We have been assured however, that all customers affected by changes will be notified in plenty of time. If you require to check out the details contact Transport and Cleansing Department Tel: 717171

Wemyss Bay Babes

For some months now in Spar, you have had the opportunity to support a variety of good causes, either by making a cash donation directly into the collection cans, or by choosing to sponsor particular staff members to take part in their annual fund-raising event.

Sunday 9th November dawned cold and windy, with blustery winds – definitely a day for going back to bed for a few more cosy hours. Resisting the temptation and determined to show their commitment to fundraising for good causes, 7 of the staff from the Wemyss Bay store left the village at 8.00 am heading for Aberfeldy. Calling themselves the Wemyss Bay Babes, they included a couple of male members of staff!

A few hours later they were in the middle of the River Tay, taking part in a White Water Rafting Race. They led for the first 1½ miles before being overtaken and finished in a very respectable 4th place. The water was bitterly cold and by the time they were finished they were exhausted but delighted at having completed the race. Although taking part was fun there was a more serious side to the event – through donations by customers and a car-wash event at Port Glasgow Fire Station, a total of £1160.47 was raised for the charity fund organised through all the A. J. Gillespie's Spar stores. At the end of the year the money raised is distributed to a number of very worthwhile charities. Who won the race? The team including Mr Gillespie himself! Well done to all the staff taking part – we admire your efforts, but still think that you were mad!

Skelmorlie and Wemyss Cubs

Our local Cubs are holding a Christmas Draw with tickets priced at 25 pence each. Prizes include a bike, DVD Player, a case of wine, Whisky and many more. You can obtain tickets from parents of cubs, or from leaders. The draw will take place on Wednesday 10th December. Good Luck!

Local Wildlife

Yes – Sammy is back! A seal was spotted sunning himself on the rocks at the Meigle a couple of weeks ago – perhaps this was Phyllis's elusive Sammy. Several seals have been seen regularly off the rocks at the back of houses on Leapmoor Drive, so it looks that Sammy has found some friends!

Often people say that there is not much in the way of wildlife around Wemyss Bay but nothing could be further from the truth. Take a close look when you are near the water and you may be lucky enough to spot a Minke Whale. Although easier to spot from boats, occasionally they have been seen from land as far up the Clyde as Wemyss Bay.

Watch carefully around the wood or your garden and you may spot hedgehogs, wood mice, grey squirrels, rabbits or foxes. A number of other mammals including moles, shrews, stoats and weasels are less easy to see although you may find other signs that they have been around. Look up from dusk until it gets dark and don't be surprised to spot bats – most commonly pipistrelle, Daubenton's or long-eared. (They don't get caught in your hair – with the sonar ability to catch small flying insects, do you really think that they would be unable to detect us?). Roe deer are regularly spotted in woodland, particularly on that of the power station, but it is not uncommon for them to pay a visit to gardens, either passing through or, if you grow vegetables, helping themselves to a handy snack.

Next month we will cover the birds which you are likely to see in the area.

Toc H

Many people ask what the letters Toc H stand for. They come from the army signallers' code for the letter T, "Toc", and "H". The organisation began life at Talbot House, named after Rev. Gilbert Talbot who died in 1915, and offered friendship and support to soldiers of all ranks. The work was handled

and supported by another army chaplain Philip Clayton, affectionately known as “Tubby”. His drive and influence continued to exist well after the end of the First War. It was he who defined our four aims which still exist: to love widely, welcome all in friendship, build bravely and give personal service.

The Toc H profile is now somewhat less than it used to be, but can still be found in Australia, Bangladesh, India, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe. In Scotland there are seven branches between the central belt and the Borders, all doing useful work of a varied nature. The Skelmorlie and Wemyss Bay branch has been in existence for 40 years, and its present activities involve the printing and sale of the local calendar and the Senior Citizens’ Party.

Thank you Maurice Dawson for providing this useful explanation of the work and history of Toc H. Remember you can still buy their 2004 calendar in several local stores.

News from the Pews

In the run-up to Christmas, Skelmorlie and Wemyss Bay Parish Church are holding a number of special services, which you are very welcome to attend:

Sunday 7th December at 11am – Noah’s Ark Nativity
Sunday 21st December at 11am – “Off to Bethlehem” by the Sunday School
Christmas Eve from 10.30pm – Mince Pies and Christmas Punch
Christmas Eve at 11.30pm – Watchnight Service
Sunday 28th December at 11am – Christmas Praise

Inverkip Church Badminton Club

Juniors: The Junior Badminton Club meets in The Church Hall every Saturday between 1.30 and 4.30pm and is open to everyone aged 10 – 14years. There are teams playing in the Greenock and District League and the Strathclyde League. Beginners and experienced players welcome. For more information contact Jean Benson Tel: 520975

Seniors: The Senior Club meets in The Church Hall every Monday and Saturday between 7.30 and 10.00pm and is open to everyone aged 15years and over. All welcome. For further information contact Hilda Adams Tel: 521501

Parliamentary Report – Duncan McNeil MSP

NHS Centralisation – Committee Probe Launched: After a summer of lobbying, persuading and cajoling, my colleagues on the Parliament’s Health Committee have agreed to hold, for the first time ever, a full inquiry into how the recruitment, training and retention of NHS staff is affecting the delivery of health services.

As we know all too well, factors such as Royal College guidelines, the sub-specialisation of clinicians, a lack of flexibility and the agreement on junior doctors’ hours have all contributed to intense pressure to centralise NHS services across Scotland. The highly controversial maternity reviews in Argyll and Clyde, Glasgow, Falkirk, Stirling and Perth are just the most recent example.

The inquiry, then, is going to examine how these issues have arisen and consider how they can be effectively addressed.

Not a small task. But, the breadth and depth of this inquiry certainly gives us a sporting chance. Everything, from the roles and responsibilities for workforce planning to how pressures impact on service delivery will be under the spotlight.

Local Priest to Address MSPs: Wemyss Bay’s own Father Thomas Boyle, Parish Priest of St Joseph’s Church, is to lead MSPs in their weekly “Time for Reflection” – the regular parliamentary slot in which representatives of all major faiths invite MSPs to reflect on current events from a spiritual perspective.

Father Boyle will become the second Inverclyde clergyman to address the Parliament in as many weeks, after the appearance of the Reverend Alan Sorensen, Minister of Greenock's Wellpark Mid Kirk, last week.

You can see Father Boyle's speech live online. It will be web cast at 14:30 on Wednesday 26th November at: www.ScottishParliamentLive.com. Alternatively, you can read his words in the Official Report - www.scottish.parliament.uk/plenary/index.htm.

Duncan can be contacted at the Parliamentary Office, 20 Union Street, Greenock PA15 8JL, by E-mail: duncan.mcneil.msp@scottish.parliament.uk or via his website: www.duncanmcneil.com

Gala Day Treasure Hunt

The Treasure Hunt begun on Gala Day and only recently completed was won by Ernie Pyper. £25 is on its way to Ernie – just in time for Christmas!

Web site

Remember that you can post news directly onto the Village Web-site and can also use this as a means of forwarding news to us. Log on to: www.wemyssbay.net/addnews

Wednesday night is chat night on the site and recent lively discussions have ensued over issues which have included "Changes to Wemyss Bay" and "School Proposals".

Log on and give your opinion on local issues.

News from Canada

Did you know that you can submit articles for the Village News online? Check out the Wemyss Bay website: www.wemyssbay.net and go to the Village News link. We recently received the following article which we are delighted to print. Are the Smyth family the furthest travelled of our readers?

"We would just like to say that we enjoy reading the Wemyss Bay Village Newsletter. We still miss Wemyss Bay very much and still like to keep in touch. We have been in Canada now for almost two years but like to rely on our friends for the up-to-date information. We recognised a few people from the Wemyss Bay Gala Day (*photographs appeared on the village web-site*) - our special picture was Stephen Harkins...we know the Harkins family love their football. For everyone that knew us when we lived in Mountstuart, we miss you and think of you frequently - you were a big part of our lives for over 11 years. Miss you all. Love Brian, Jo, David and Paul Smyth, Port Elgin, Ontario, Canada."

Can You Help?

A recent article in The Sunday Post highlighted the story of American writer Phil Penningroth's search for descendants of soldiers rescued by his grandfather, Louis, during World War 1. Louis worked for the YMCA and in early 1919 made his way into Russia with the aim of providing food, money and moral support to Allied POWs. After meeting with the prisoners and having extended talks with Lenin's Bolshevik authorities he eventually managed to get agreement to take 6 American and 6 British prisoners home with him. Now Phil is attempting to track down descendants of these rescued soldiers, one of whom was M. Hyndman of Wemyss Bay. He would have been born between 1890 and the early 1900s. Could he have been your grand-father or great-uncle? Do you have any old photographs of him or perhaps personal papers belonging to him? Maybe the story of his rescue has been passed down through your family. If you think that you can help, you can contact Phil via The Sunday Post. Don't forget to let The Village News know too, as we are sure that many people, like Isabel from Spar who brought the story to our attention, would be interested in finding out a bit more.

Bible Club

The Bible Club will stop for Christmas on Monday 15th December, starting up again on Monday 12th January.

Ice Cream Man is Top in Scotland

Local ice cream man John Harkins, who trades as Bay Ices and can be seen regularly around the village in his ice cream van, made it to the final of the “Mobile Retailer of the Year, 2003” competition. The event, which was held in Blackpool, was organised by the Ice Cream Association. John impressed the judges and took second place in this national competition. As the only Scottish finalist this means that we have Scotland's top ice cream man. Well done!

John would like to thank all his clients for their continued custom and for their votes, which enabled him to get through the initial stages of the competition.

Woodland Association

The next committee meeting of the Woodland Association will be held on Wednesday 17th December at 7.30pm in the Rogues Room, Inverkip Hotel. If you are interested in finding out more about the work of the Association, you are very welcome to attend.

The Woodland Association's Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday 18th January at 7.30pm in the Community Centre. The main aim of the Association is to conserve Wemyss Bay Wood as a safe and pleasant greenspace which can be enjoyed by all sectors of the community and prevent its continued decline. Come along to the meeting and find out more about what's going on. There have already been a number of nominations for office-bearers and committee members and although nominations will be taken on the night, please do not feel that by coming along to the meeting you will be roped into some committee or committed to work. It is your opportunity to discuss what you feel is important about the Wood and the work of the Association.

Kids Stuff

Did you know that even if Santa only visited the children in Britain, he would still spend less than 0.002 seconds in each house? No wonder you never wake up and see him! Hope that you've all been good and Santa brings you lots of lovely presents. This month's wordsearch is all about Christmas. See how many words you can find.

D	C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S
F	R	H	O	L	L	Y	R	U	W
B	A	U	B	L	E	S	A	E	E
N	C	R	U	D	O	L	P	H	E
E	K	Y	M	C	C	E	S	T	T
M	E	V	X	A	A	S	Y	U	S
W	R	I	T	R	R	N	O	R	U
O	S	N	F	O	D	I	T	K	G
N	A	Q	U	L	S	T	R	E	E
S	T	N	E	S	E	R	P	Y	C

BAUBLES	RUDOLPH
CARDS	SANTA CLAUS
CAROLS	SNOWMEN
CHRISTMAS	SWEETS
CRACKERS	TINSEL
HOLLY	TREE
IVY	TOYS
PRESENTS	TURKEY

Editors' Note

As many of you are aware we took over from Phyllis McLeod in September. Phyllis was suddenly taken ill and although making a good recovery still has a bit to go and therefore we will be continuing with the Village News for the foreseeable future. We would like to thank readers, advertisers and regular contributors for their patience during the handover period – we are just about finding our feet now. We are always grateful to receive your comments, information or ideas for articles. We hope that everyone has a lovely time over the festive period and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

The closing date for submission of articles and adverts for the January edition of the Village News is 15th December. We know that this is a little earlier than usual but we need the extra time, as the printers will be shut over the festive period. Send your information to Eila Roberts, 14 Brueacre Drive, Wemyss Bay. Tel: 529375. E-mail: eilaroberts@care4free.net or drop it into the Village News folder in Spar. Adverts should be sent to Ken at the same address.