

# LAGGAN MATTERS

Neoni as leith an t-sluaigh, gun aorta an t-sluaigh

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## Welcome to Laggan Matters



*'Nothing on behalf of the people without the agreement of the people'.*

Welcome to the Spring edition of Laggan Matters.

Thanks to Phil at Ardverikie for continuing to print hard copies for those unable to download electronic ones.

As always we welcome your contributions as there wouldn't be a newsletter without them! Therefore please keep sending them in along with any ideas for articles to [jillvn@aol.com](mailto:jillvn@aol.com)



## Remembrance Sunday



Around 30 members of the Laggan community gathered at the Laggan War Memorial on Sunday 10th November to commemorate and remember those from the community who had served and fallen in wars around the

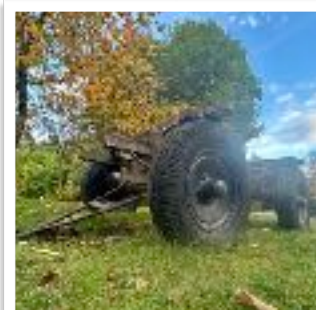
globe in the past century. As ever a poignant day made more so with the names of those who had made the ultimate sacrifice being read out by Rev Robert Brookes.

Four Wreaths were laid by Badenoch Shinty Memories, Laggan Church, Laggan Community Council and Highland Council.

## Where is it?



Photographed by Trevor Warner within the Laggan Parish

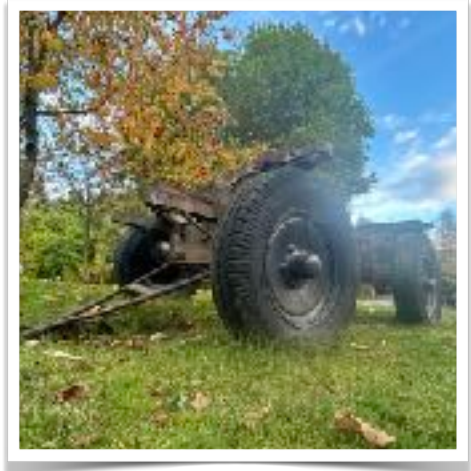


If you would like to send one of your photos for this regular feature, please email it to [jillvn@aol.com](mailto:jillvn@aol.com)

Answer to last issue's photo:-  
Wolftrax, Strathmashie

Jackie Ashworth

## Pole Wagon



The Pole Wagon was used for extracting timber. It had been abandoned near Ayres Rock high above the Wolfrax Centre.

Laggan Heritage, following their Archaeological Survey of the Strathmashie Forest around 20 years ago, thinking it had been used by the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit during WW2, bought tyres and had Marcus Macbean and James Robertson renovate it for display at Wolfrax. Afterwards it was found that the Forestry Commission had used it in the 1960's.

## Helping Hands



## The Helping Hands Team

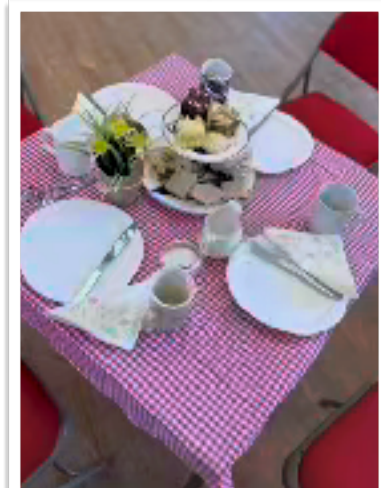
### Closure of The FoodShare Shed

Regrettably we had to close the Food Share Shed at the end of February. This was as a result of electrical items, inappropriate material, used foods and alcohol being continually left in there despite repeated requests on our part asking for them not to be.

For health and safety reasons we have no choice and whilst it is closed we will review how it is going to be used moving forward. We hope to reopen in due course.

### Afternoon Tea and Cakes

We all enjoyed our first get togethers of 2025 with two afternoons of tea and cakes! It was lovely to see so many folks catching up and enjoy a blether. Our next afternoon tea is on April 3rd.



Our thanks to Fiona Grant for the daffodil table arrangements.



## Laggan Church Final Service

**Campbell Slimon**

The closing service of Laggan Parish Church took place just before Christmas, so it was a service with carols interspersed with recollections of times past.

Rev. Robert Brookes led the Service, with the senior Elder, Graham Grant reading the lesson and Campbell Slimon sharing some memories of the past 75 years. Elizabeth Thompson played the organ, as she had done for the last several decades.

There was a request that a photo be taken of the congregation outside the church at the conclusion of the service, but such was the ferocity of the horizontal storm that this was impossible. It also meant that the numbers were not as big as might have been but still a healthy number attended.



### What Memories Lie Within These Walls

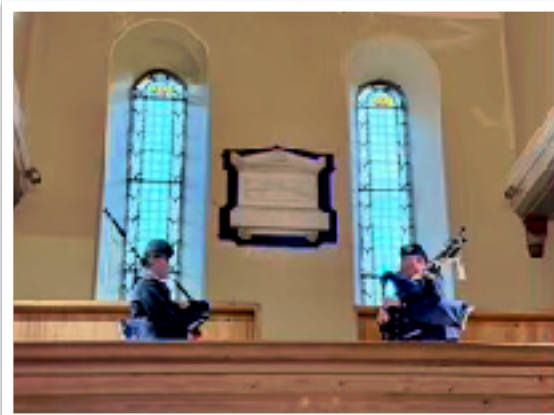
*What memories lie within these walls  
Of folk who came to worship long before us all.  
Their lives marked deep within the stone, lest we  
forget it was here they belong.*

*What draws us to this beautiful place where each  
week as a family we meet?  
Perhaps simply our love of God and his of us, we  
individually seek?*

*Today especially we give our thanks for a building  
where we feel safe and loved.  
And despite any feelings of grief and sadness,  
As God's family we know that wherever we  
worship together, we will do so with gladness.*

*For our faith isn't bound within one space, we're  
always surrounded by God's love.  
And as we leave here today let's do so with  
grateful hearts for each other and our Heavenly  
Father above.*

*Jill Warner 22/12/24*



Rachel Slimon & Chris Thomson

## Laggan Church Update

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The church has been in the hands of the Laggan Church Partnership for nearly two months now, but with Christmas falling immediately after the purchase went through, it's been a busy time getting all the necessary details in place.

The trustees met in mid January to map out a way forward and address the most pressing needs. These were to set up a bank account, get insurance cover and commission the preparation of a website. In future, we intend to advertise the meetings taking place and the community will be welcome to sit in on proceedings. We will also be posting the minutes of the meetings on the website.

The website which will be located at [lagganchurch.org](http://lagganchurch.org) and will contain a little bit about the history of the church and its place in the community and will also provide updates about its future use. It will be the first port of call as a reference - and hopefully we will be able to report on its successful launch in the next update!

In the coming months, we will be hoping to commission an options appraisal to draw in professional views on future use and possible adaptations. We will, of course, be seeking input from you to help guide this process ...

In the meantime, the church is open for business in a limited way; we have insurance in place and accordingly, it is available for weddings, funerals and other appropriate events.

Please contact us if you have any queries, or would like more information:

[lagganchurchscio@gmail.com](mailto:lagganchurchscio@gmail.com)

## Who's Who? C1965

Answer's in next edition ...

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## Time Flies By(e)?

Graham Grant

Already, incredibly 25 years of the 21st Century have slipped past. Here are some newspaper reports at approximately 25 year intervals over the last 300 Years ....

### 1715 New Cour Highland Dress Wearer Shot

July 2. We hear from Inverness, that four Prisoners were lately brought in thither, for not conforming to the Act of Parliament relative to the Highland Drefs, and that a Gentleman in Badenoch refusing to surrender, was shot dead on the same account.

### *Extrakt of a letter from Badenoch, June 14 1746*

The Duke of Cumberland with his Army are expected here every Day from Fort Augustus, in their Way South. — The Countries of Glengarry and Glenmorifon, belonging to the Macdonalds and Grants, are mostly burnt, and their Cattle taken in to the Army; fo is most part of Lochaber. Three Men were hanged the other Day who were found there in Arms. — I hear that most of the Cattle of Stratherrick, belonging to the Frafers, are also taken. — 'Tis fill faid Lord Lovat is taken in the Western Iflands. — There were found laft Week two Women and four Children dead in the Hills, who petrified through Want, their Hutts being burnt.

### C 1773

We hear from Strathspey, that the poor people in Badenoch and Lachaber are in a most pitiful situation for want of meal. They are reduced to live on blood, which they draw from their cattle by repeated bleedings. Need we wonder to ear of emigrations from such a country?

### IMRPOVING PASTRUE GROUND

To Mr Alexander Lefli, tackfman of Croftcroy, parifth of Laggan, in Badenoch, for having made the most judicious improv emmet by means of conducting Water over the greateft proportion of Pasture Grounds, of as to rededicate heath, and produce grafs, of an tenant in the country of Inverness and Highland diftricts of Moray and Nairn fires in the years 1796 and 1797

### 1825 Bridge Washed Away

**EFFECTS OF THE STORM.** — We learn that the late tempestuous weather has been productive of serious losses in the districts of Badenoch and Strathspey. Friday and Saturday last, great quantities of snow fell on the hills, which suddenly thawing, raised the Sepy and its tributary streams to a greater height than they had been for many years. All the low lands about Belville and Laggan were flooded, and some fields considerably injured. S sudden ad rapid was th erise of the waters, that numbers of cattle and sheep were carried away before they could be driven in from the pasture. We are sorry to add, that th fine bride of two arches at Lagggan, on the Parliamentary-road, was, on Sunday morning, wholly carried away; and several injuries of a minor description have been sustained on these roads and bridges. The Parliamentary inspector in the Highlands, having however, been on the alert, we are assured that these casualties will be attended to with the least possible delay. (**Inverness Courier**)

**1849 Eagle Captured**

AN EAGLE CAPTURED. — A full-grown eagle was captured very cleverly in Glendale, Laggan on the 3rd instant, by Peter Grant, gamekeeper. On the day preceding he had seen the eagle, and he immediately set to work with his traps to catch her. Early on the following morning he was lucky enough to meet with the noble bird within three miles of the place where the traps had been set. She sat down to rest; and before she was able to rise again he had got hold of her, and after a sharp struggle, secured her in good condition, without a bone being broken. The bird is said to be full grown and a very large size.

*Inverness paper.*

**1876 Quoits**

Quoits. — The members of the Laggan Quoiting Club competed on Tuesday of last week for their gold medal and championship of the club, when William Kennedy, Esq. Sherramore, president of the club, carried both laurels.

**HIGHLAND PARISH MINISTER AND HIS STIPEND**

The Court of Teinds to-day considered an application by the minister of Laggan for an augmentation of his stipend. It was stated that the parish had a population of 850, and was a wide-one, extending 22 miles from east to west and 18 miles from north to south. There were parishioners as far as 17 miles away, which necessitated the applicant keeping two horses. The last augmentation was in 1884, when the stipend was increased to 17 chandlers, and it was now asked that it be augmented by three chandlers. It was explained that the present value of a Chandler was about £12.10s. The application was granted.

*1900 Edinburgh Evening News*

Inverness-shire Branch of the British Red Cross Society was visited recently by Mr Lartey, the assistant secretary of the Gold Coast Branch of the Society. Mr Lartey who is a very well educated coloured gentleman, reached Inverness from Perth one Wednesday evening, and on the Thursday he was taken to Gergask School, Laggan Bridge, to visit the Junior Red Cross link there. He gave the Children a most interesting account of the work done by the Junior Red Cross in his own country.

The Children of Gergask were fascinated by Mr Lartey, and never took their eyes off him, and at the close they presented him with a hand-made needle-case and brought shortbread and scones for a tea party.

*Inverness Courier 1950*

**LAGGAN**

The opening meeting of Laggan W.R.I.'S session took place on 7th October when a very interesting slide show was given by Mrs Beryl MacRae, Balgowan, who is a native of South Africa and had re-visited it.

*Inverness Courier 1975*

## **What's On in Laggan March to July 2025**

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### **Quiz Night Saturday 8th March**

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- Saturday 8th March
- 7.00 for 7.30pm
- Laggan Community Hall

### **Laggan Community Council Meeting Monday 17th March**

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- Monday 17th March
- 6.30pm
- Wolftrax

### **Hamish Napier Music with Jordan Neil Thursday 27th March**

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- Thursday 27th March
- 7.30 - 10.00pm
- Laggan Community Hall

### **Tree Planting Badenoch Shinty Memories Group Saturday 29th March**

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- Saturday 29th March
- 10.00 - 3.00pm
- Laggan & Dalwhinnie
- Contact 07517467517

### **Helping Hands Afternoon Tea Thursday 3rd April**

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- Thursday 3rd April
- 2.30 - 4.00pm
- Laggan Community Hall





## **Easter Church Services Sunday 20th April**

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- Sunday 20th April
- 7.30am Laggan Outdoor Service with bacon rolls - Venue to be confirmed
- 10.00am Kingussie Church
- 11.30am Newtonmore Church

## **Laggan Community Council Meeting Monday 19th May**

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- Monday 19th May
- 6.30pm
- Laggan Community Hall

## **Helping Hands Afternoon Tea Thursday 22nd May**

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- Thursday 22nd May
- 2.30 - 4.00pm
- Laggan Community Hall

## **Ardverikie & Aberader Gardens Open Day Sunday 1st June**

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- Sunday 1st June
- 2.00 - 5.30pm
- Entry £10 per person & Refreshments at Aberader £5 extra
- Adverikie and Aberader Gardens

## **Laggan Community Council AGM Monday 16th June**

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- Monday 16th June
- 6.30pm
- Laggan Community Hall

## **Helping Hands Afternoon Cream Tea Thursday 26th June**

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- Thursday 26th June
- 2.30 - 4.00pm
- Laggan Community Hall

## Gergask School Memories

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### Three generations of the Slimon Family: Sisters Jean & Elspeth

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#### Which years did you attend? Who joined with you?

1951 - 1956 we joined in December. I don't think any other pupil joined with us.

#### How many were in the school?

Not sure of numbers. There is a photo in the village hall which would give you a good idea.

#### Who were your teachers?

Miss S. Cattanach, Miss Murray, Mrs MacKellar



#### Did you get the belt/strap/Tawse? If so, what for?

Yes I got the belt for giggling while Miss Cattanach was teaching a class how to say a poem to a different class at the front of the class room.

#### What other punishment did you get?

A rap over the knuckles with a ruler.

#### What is your favourite memory?

Playing in the playground at the seasonal games such as marbles, skipping with a long rope cowboys and Indians,(Alister Maclean still running when he had been shot dead)!! Playing in the burn which was just outside the school boundary. Selecting books from a "library" (bookshelves) down one wall of the classroom.

#### What is your worst memory ?

I don't really have a worst memory. Elspeth said she detested the rice pudding we had for school dinners (the school dinners were on the whole very good.)

#### Any other memories, pleasant or otherwise?

Elspeth remembers having a class outside in the field. I remember taking your turn to clean the milk bottles . I can't remember how often they were delivered per week but were 1/3 of a pint. In winter the milk was frozen and sometimes the bottles were cracked.! The other thing I remember if two people were fighting as in fisticuffs a shout would go up "fight" and everybody would make a circle around the two fighters. The one I remember was Elspeth against Johnny Menzies! I think Elspeth came off worse!

## Jean

### Which years did you attend and who joined with you?

I started school in 1975, in those days (there's a phrase to make you feel old!) In those days there were 2 intakes depending on your birthday, I started in March with Tracy Macdonald, in August we were joined by Anne Wilson, Shirley Maclean, Steven Millar and Steven Thompson. We were one of the biggest classes and got bigger in 1977 when Gavin Fraser joined us. We went into the wee room which had primary 1-3. Above us were Elizabeth Wilson and Lynne Grant in P2 (they were joined by Simon Fraser in '77 and Andrew Macdonald in 1979), and in p3 there was David Miller, Christopher Thompson, Gary Grant, and Dougal Clark- they were joined in 79 by Jane MacDonald.



### How many were in the school?

I think at a rough count there was 23 when we started- think in the "big room" -p4-7 -there would have been Norman and Andrew Simpson, 2 Bain boys, Linda Clark, a Macdougall girl, Easton Thain, Angela Ross, Donald Thompson, Vicky Wilson, Alison Macrae and Lorraine Matthews there might be someone I'm forgetting. When we were about to leave in primary seven I think we had 20- My sister Maggie was on her own in p6, then in p5 Aileen Thompson Catriona Macpherson, Kevin Miller, Scott Macdonald and I think John Campbell, then in p4 Archie Slimon and Claire MacDonald-and now I get more fuzzy-p3 would maybe be Andrew Campbell, Glen Cadwallader, Lachlan MacPherson.

### Who were your Teachers?

Gergask was always a 2 teacher school when I joined, the Head teacher was Mrs Thain and teaching us in the wee room was Miss Robb who became Mrs Watson, followed by Mrs Gallacher. After Mrs Thain's tragic death, Mrs Ballantyne was head teacher for a short time until Mrs Geddes arrived. We also had visiting teachers - Mrs Scott for PE, Mr McMorrine (on his motorbike!) for art and then Miss Jack. Mrs Thompson regularly came for music and the minister Mr Stoddart also visited the heathen children!

We should not forget our Dinner Ladies!-Mrs Maclean, Shirleys gran-when I first went and then later Mrs Macdonald - Tracy's mum. Worst food memory's - frogspawn, doughballs and warm milk in plastic bags. Best - Chocolate rubber pudding and custard or the pink pudding with matching custard!

**Did you get the Belt?**

Aye in p7 - we were not meant to throw stones in the burn - anyway a lot of us were on either side of the burn throwing stones in to splash those on the other side, one stone bounced and hit Scott Macdonald on the head in we all went-and all of p7 were belted for not showing a better example and possibly because earlier that week we had also got into trouble-the 2 Stevens were practicing escapeology -we would tie them to desks with skipping ropes and they escaped-except this time they didn't and the bell went!

**What other punishment did you get?**

I remember getting rows, but I don't remember being kept in or lines (but then who would want to read my writing!) - even when I broke the window with a hockey ball!

**What is your favourite memory, your worst memory and any other ones, pleasant or otherwise.**

I'm answering this all in one because there are many and generally all good- I suppose the worst would be those doughballs and I can still remember the slightly sour smell of those milk bags!-even the belt was not as bad as not being able leave the table until we had eaten everything - the belt was over quicker!.

Strong memory's were the school concerts-first in the old hall ( the one that stands out is where I the girls (I think me Tracy and Shirley) dressed in feather boa's sung "sisters" -and then the boys (I think the 2 Stevens and either David or Chris) sung the same dressed as girls -with the feather boa's-oh we were WOKE before there was WOKE!. I liked the old hall because there was a proper stage!. There were the festivals which were a bit nerve wracking but the dramatised songs were good craic-and we were good at them with Mrs Geddes and Mrs Thompson's training and patience!.

School projects were enjoyable (maybe because it didn't feel like proper work!)-The wild-west /WW2 and Edwardians stick out. Also Top of the Form-probably because we did quite well - Me, Anne Wilson, Steven Thompson and John Campbell.

Having a field and a burn as well as a playground was great-houses in the rushes -with shops where you traded with quartz stone and made tv's by sticking sweetie papers to stones. The whole school playing Don't Cross the Rainbow River or Statues.

Finally a strong memory I have and later remember having one of those "oh thats what was going on there" moments-an epiphany I suppose you could call it - was watching the older pupils marching round the school shouting "down with school" and other chants-I later realised it was the end of the 70's and the news was full of strikes and protest. The ringleaders got the belt for that one, in my memory, because they had done it when there was a school inspector in!-aye Happy Days!



## Katy

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### Which years did you attend?

I attended from 2009 in nursery and left in P7 in 2017.

### How many were in the school?

In my year in nursery, there was Millie Grant and Samia Cumming. Although more people came and left throughout my years. When I started there were 25 pupils and when I left there were only 9 pupils.

### Who were your Teachers?

My nursery teacher was Mrs Richardson, I was Mrs Munro's first primary 1 pupil as head teacher and through the years I had Miss Tannock from P1-3, and then Mrs Munro, Mr Derbyshire and Mr Maclean for the last 4 years. For art I had Miss Wallace, music was Miss Jack and P.E was with Mrs Douglas. Mrs Macdonald was the dinner lady and I don't think any food ever went back from our school.



### Did you get any punishments?

Our punishment was a "Blue Hippo" if we were naughty then we would lose out on goldentime. And we received "Happy Hippos" if we were good. I received many of the HappyHippos and got the least blue hippos in the family!! I am not sure my brothers would agree with that!

### What is your favourite memory, your worst memory and any other ones, pleasant or otherwise?

Some of my favourite memories are from nursery, playing in the sand pit and dolls house. By the time it was time to go to P1 nobody wanted to move up? My favourite days in Primary are going to Laggan Sands for days out, the music festival songs we performed as a school and dressing up in Mrs Munro's old clothes during golden time on Fridays!

There are not many bad memories from Gergask. I can only think of the times when my friends that I had made in school had to move away.

A big event every year was the nativity, which I am pretty sure I played every role in by the time I left. We also had soup lunches & poppy lunches. We raised money for Marie Curie and planted the field of hope. The P6 and 7s also took part in the rotary quiz and we also got to go skiing. The parent council organised the 10k and fun run which raised a lot of money for the school. I met Julia Donaldson with the school in Aviemore and was lucky that I could run lots of cross country races with the school. We had several trips away Nairn beach was always good, we went also went to Glasgow and Stirling.

We also started a call croft called Bumble Bee Farm. We grew lots of vegetables and made jams and soup. We also followed a group of Breakachy sheep through a year and sold the lambs in Kingussie Market.

Tiggy was my school car driver and always had a pot of sweets. It was always nice when you go to be the older one and be promoted to sit in the front seat. The people that didn't get Tiggy were always jealous.

## Splash Back Winter Edition 2003 Gergask School - Our Poems

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### A Snowy Day - poet unknown

I woke up, got dressed and went outside into a world of flickering and swirling snow flakes.

The dancing snow as white as clouds in the sky.

The wind blowing around me - a blustery wind so cold I shivered and shook.

My legs as stiff as boards, I took in a work of glistening snow.

People in the distance building a snowman piece by piece. I ran to them, the snow crunching under my feet.

The wind gusting around. Which seemed like ages when I got to them.

Helped them finish the snowman until the day was done. The snow as cold as ice as tasty as rice when the snowflakes fall on my tongue.

The day is done.

The snowman is finished

Snow starts to fade.

No more snow flickering in the sky

Only snow under my feet.

Go inside leaving the world of snow behind me.

**If you recognise this poem please do let us know who wrote it.**

### Laggan Toilet

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In 2019 Highland Council reduced their financial support of the toilet to a comfort grant of £100 per month, not enough to keep them open. With Laggan Community Association finishing, funds were distributed to various groups to be used for Laggan. The church received £6000 and suggested they used this and the comfort grant to take over the management of the toilet, to be reviewed after 3 years. With the help of donations the money lasted longer than anticipated, but is now running out and regrettably they will close on 31<sup>st</sup> March.

## Memories of Bob Cargill

### *As Told To Laggan Matters*



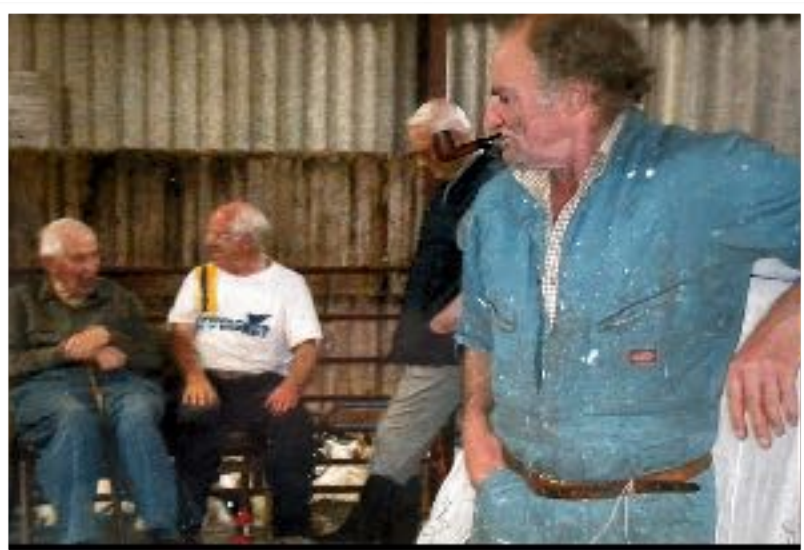
Bob Cargill died suddenly on 11-1-25 at home in Balgowan. He was born in the South almost 80 years ago, but his first contact to Laggan c1970, was when lorry driving west in Corroul on the Forestry Commission road squad. Here the Strathmashie Forestry Squad spent years creating the large plantations. Bob then joined this group where he carried an alarm clock to check on lunch time - but he never brought a 'piece'.

Always keen on the outdoors, Bob then took up Keeping. When at Coul and Dalchully, he shared the top house at Crathie with a horse - causing terminal damage to the flooring. Then returning to Corroul, occasionally his long strides took him down to the pub in Laggan, staying in his caravan below the Gaskbeg fank for a couple of nights.

Whilst working at Keeper's Cottage, Catlodge, Bob helped out all around - fitting together telegraph poles for Elvira's Gaskmore Cottage extensions; digging into the bank in front of the hotel, huge whitewashed stones announcing HOTEL to tourists driving down Lagg brae; all through the night, stoking the furnace for firings at Mick's Caoldair pottery.

Eventually at Cluny Bob was busy at all keeping and estate work until a sore knee slowed him down. On his 'retiral' to Balgowan, the Cluny gang organised a special trip to Rothiemurchus to shoot Clays. Train to Aviemore, good meal and a dram, then ---- No Bob! The generous group enjoyed their shoot without their special guest, who was eventually found sleeping it off.

Throughout all the years on all the Laggan farms communal sheep clippings, Bob was the expert woolbag packer. He insisted on tightly tramped corners and firm level sides and was a master with the big sewing needle. But he was always kind and gentle with any wee kids wanting a go in the bag.



Bob could sometimes look a bit severe and disapproving, while he thought of what he was going to say, but he had his own principles and stuck to them. When you agreed with something he'd said, then he nodded violently with a cheeky grin. He was well read, wrote some poems and researched the shepherd poet Harry Ross, Drummin.

No TV in the house, but Bob listened to classical music on the radio. In his garden he grew herbs for cooking and he smoked sausages and bacon - said to be delicious!

Bob Cargill was a character, a one-off. He is sadly missed.

## Jahama

Jon Hart

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### Staffing Changes

In the summer we welcomed two new members to the team - Kirstin Oakley, Trainee Stalker based in Glenshero and Cameron Milne, Trainee Stalker based in Killiechonate.

There was a change of staffing in October at Glenshero. Our Stalker, Edward Greenhalgh, and his young family moved off the Estate to pastures new. While we never wish to say goodbye to longstanding members of the team, it's a pleasure to see someone who has grown up and worked at Glenshero, be able to move into a significant stalker role on another state. Edward and his family will be missed. However, we also welcome new faces. This month we have the pleasure of welcoming Stalker Alwyn Paterson to Glenshero Estate - We wish Alwyn and his young family the very best in their new venture with us, here at Glenshero.



In November, we also said goodbye and good luck to Chloe Malcolm our Farm Manager. Chloe worked on the Estate Farm for 4 years, improving the quality of our sheep, building our reputation, starting a flock of pure-bred North Country Cheviots, winning a host of rosettes at Lochaber Show and achieving good sale prices. A huge thanks goes out to Chloe for all her hard work and achievements and well wishes in her new role.

Bruce Hendry, Head Gamekeeper (Glenshero Estate) and Jamie Hendry, Head Stalker (Killiechonate), have taken on the role of managing the farm at Killiechonate, Inverlair and Glenshero alongside their Stalking roles. Annual sheep scanning is due to be carried out at the end of February and the farming team will be in full preparation mode for the fast-approaching lambing season commencing from early April.



## Wading birds

Our work with the RSPB, NatureScot and the CNPA continues in respect of the important wading bird species at Glenshero. This year we have asked one of our staff, Kirstin Oakley, to take on observation of our Golden Eye population. Kirstin will get more heavily involved with the various nest sites, recording of successful hatches and general oversight of the population. Sadly, last year wasn't a great success.



Wader Scrape

We had several Goldeneye eggs, but persistent predation by pine martens means that we are having to consider re-setting the box locations or alternatively making them predator proof. We hope to get more involved this year with the CNPA/RSPB major wading count for 2025.

## Salmon and the upper Spey

Toward the end of last year, we hosted an important meeting at Glenshero between ourselves and the Chief Executive Officers of the Atlantic Salmon Trust, Spey Fishery Board, and the Spey Catchment Initiative. This meeting was very productive, and we hope to be underway with a range of projects linked to the enhancement of many aspects of the upper Spey catchment, working closely with these key organisations and of course with the CNPA and Naturescot.



Sherramore Lodge

## Creag Meagaidh

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The weather at this time of year is no impediment to activity at Creag Meagaidh. There have been several residential volunteers of various nationalities living on the reserve, including an Australian and Swiss citizen; they have been weathering the changeable conditions exceptionally well. The volunteers even had the chance to visit another NatureScot reserve - the Isle of Rum - after Storm Eowyn died down. This was a great opportunity for the volunteers to witness and contribute to the management of another reserve.

This year marks record sales for Wild venison at Creag Meagaidh, with all proceeds being invested back into the running of the reserve. There are always many different cuts available for sale on the reserve: from diced, mince through to entire haunch roasts.

Visitors are making the most of what the reserve has to offer in winter, from short, snowy walks along woodland paths to more adventurous activities like ice-climbing and mountaineering across the tops of the munro's. After their outings, many hungry visitors stop by the farmhouse to buy our local and sustainably-sourced venison.

Enigmatic birds of prey - buzzards, kestrels and perhaps a golden eagle or two - have been spotted in the reserve by walkers and reserve staff, along with black grouse, dippers and bramblings.

The Highland cows, a major attraction for visitors on tour buses, are being well fed by the volunteers with a mixture of haylage and cattle feed. The calves have even been spotted play-fighting with the older members of the herd.

The budding pupils of Kingussie high school have been offering a big helping hand too. In one of their weekly rural skills sessions some of the students planted out Scots Pine seedlings into a new plot in the farmhouse garden. Thanks to their diligent contributions, the pine seedlings will now have extra space to grow and so can eventually be planted out onto undesignated land across the Creag Meagaidh reserve.

Spring is not too far off now, which will be music to the ears of many. With the turning of the seasons comes new experiences, wildlife and activities at Creag Meagaidh.



## Laggan Community Council Report

**Karen Thew**

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It's been a year now since the new Community Council was formed, with a new chair, secretary, treasurer and new members. A bit of a shake up for us all (or a baptism by fire!)

Life continues at its easy pace in and around Laggan, the locals, farmers and larger estates going about their business as usual. Not much changes really does it?

Well let's see...

The church was sold, and thankfully will remain with the community. The Reverend Robert Brookes, although newly appointed is now a firm fixture for us. There has already been a lovely Christmas Carol service with a delightful impromptu Nativity. The LCC look forward to many more celebrations in our little church throughout the coming year.

The school buildings are slowly being emptied, very sad indeed, but a lot of the items have been taken and repurposed by other schools in the Badenoch and Strathspey area and by locals young and old. With permission from the Education Authority the LCC held an "open day" for anyone in the area to come and look at the remaining resources and take away anything they could use or pass on. For some it was a time of reflection on their own time at the school and an opportunity to walk the halls again, for others it was an opportunity to boost their home book and games collections. Some of the school items will be taken as far away as Uganda! A quantity of books and furnishings are still available, so please contact us if you are interested. The future of the school building itself is still uncertain and like everyone else we will have to simply bide our time and see what unfolds. In the meantime we are asking past pupils and teachers to share with us their memories of the school, watch this space.

The Village Park is slowly being brought back to life with the help of the local children, although at times it seems like we are "Painting the Forth Bridge". If you have any ideas for the park or can offer us any help please get in touch, we would love to have your input. (LCC Amenities Group)

The paths network is another slow burn, but make no mistake, we have plans to expand and link our existing paths to a much wider area. There is a special working group looking at this, which includes one of our CC members, and we will report all progress to you.

The Community Council throughout the past year has been asked to make comment on many aspects of planning, some local and some more wide reaching, from the agreement for the installation of an access ramp for one resident to the proposed Loch N Earba Hydro Scheme which is ongoing.

We have helped implement a weekly youth club for the local children which has proved to be very successful. The club allows the children to get together in a safe place over the winter months when it is too dark for them to play outdoors. We foresee this to be a seasonal indoor club going forward and the LCC will continue to support the group. However, there are funds available from a previous Laggan youth club and we are investigating how best to be able to use them year round for the children. The children also enjoyed a Christmas party which was

organised by Fiona Grant. Our thanks go to Fiona for her hard work and for producing a fabulous party.

We were asked by the community to update the Christmas lights for the village, so this Christmas we had new lights, two big trees and ten tiny trees which were decorated by the village children. We then had a switching on evening which was hosted by Sonya and Kevin Fletcher at the Coffee Bothy. The evening was very well attended, and was a resounding success. A collection for the charity CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) was made on the evening and £150 was raised. This amount was matched by Sonya and Kevin and presented to James Falconer and Calum Grant of Kingussie Camanachd Shinty Club as part of ongoing fundraising in memory of Calum Macintosh.

This shows some of our highlights for the past year. It appears that there is actually quite a lot happens in little quiet Laggan after all. Here's to 2025 and all it brings.

The CC continue to meet on a regular basis, and our meetings are open to all to attend so please feel free to come and join us.

## **The Laggan Forest Trust Spring 2025**

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### Forest Management Planning - next 10 years

The next 10 year Forest Land Scotland (FLS) forestry management plan (2025-2035) for Strathmashie Forest is now with the Forestry Regulator (Scottish Forestry) to approve. This is expected in the Spring of 2025. The community's comments have been conveyed to FLS with their future activities needing to pay attention to the forest's appearance, its impact on the environment, re-planting of appropriate native species both broadleaf and conifer and promoting local employment.

The Strathmashie Forest remains very "commercial" to FLS and generates a significant annual revenue for them (and ultimately) the Scottish Government. At least 3 forest coupes will be scheduled for felling in the coming 2 years - one starting in October 2025 in Feagour and others in 2026/27 again in Feagour but also a coupe to the south of the Spey Dam beside the private road. The Trust has reinforced with FLS on the need to be sensitive to any noise and traffic concerns to all Strathmashie residents with access onto the A86.

There has been no commitment from FLS on how the management of the Forest could generate any local "forestry" employment. On the positive side, FLS does have a new procurement director who is keen to engage with the Trust on an appropriate way forward.

### Visitor Management

The recent FLS meeting also explored related "Visitor" Management activities with the Trust extolling the benefits of activities to promote the walking/bike trails and to ensure reinstatement of all core paths in the area which have been subjected to previous commercial



felling - e.g. the trail to and from Drum An Aird specifically referenced for reinstatement. Discussions continue.

The Future

The board of the Trust have completed its long-term strategy discussions - aided by Karen Derrick of VABS - and we will publish key "bullet points" on our website in the coming months but we remain guided by the articles in our charitable document. This includes our future relationship with FLS, how we use our existing land resource (at Gorstea and adjacent to the Woodshed) and how we are able to continue to support recreational, environmental and economic development from the Laggan area at the Wolftrax Centre especially.

As the long nights recede into a distant memory, our minds turn to planning for the coming year. Comments remain exceptionally positive about the new Blue Mountain Bike Trail, and its success has brought into question the condition of the original trails and a general lack of trail maintenance planning by FLS. We are looking to address this with FLS and CNPA in the coming weeks. We also understand that FLS are looking to make some safety modifications to the Wolftrax car park - hopefully these will not entail any closure of the car park but certain restrictions may be put in place outside the holiday periods.

The centre and café opened for the February 2025 half term and our continued thanks to all our staff who have looked after the centre over the winter months. There are also likely to be some new arrangements for the Bike Shop after the "clocks spring forward" area. As ever, do "pop-in" to the centre - our staff will be sure to give you a warm welcome.

On behalf of The Laggan Forest Trust.

**How Well Do You Know Your Animals?**

Animal	Male	Female	Young
Chicken			
Duck			
Eagle			
Goose			
Peafowl			
Swan			
Turkey			
Frog			
Lizard			
Whale			

**Answers on page 23**



## Exciting Opportunity:

### Launch of the new Apprenticeship Grant Programme!

***Is your business interested in recruiting a modern apprentice?*** The Stronelairg Advisor Panel for Laggan has partnered with other local communities in the Great Glen to offer grants that support the employment of apprentices in Laggan.

This funding will help local businesses cover the costs of employing a Modern Apprentice, with the goal of boosting business growth, keeping young talent in the community, and helping them to develop valuable skills. Grants are available for up to 3 years, depending on the length of the apprenticeship/training being undertaken.

If your business is based in or serves the Laggan area, don't miss out on this opportunity! For more information or to apply, please contact Carol Masheter, SSE Community Fund Manager at **[carol.masheter@sse.com](mailto:carol.masheter@sse.com)** or call **07721 443394** to discuss your proposal before making an application.

For fund guidance, and application forms and deadlines visit:

[www.sserenewables.com/communities/community-fund-locations/great-britain/stronelairg](http://www.sserenewables.com/communities/community-fund-locations/great-britain/stronelairg)

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### Funding Support for Local Groups

If you are involved in a local community group or organisation that benefits the Laggan community, you might be eligible for funding to support a project, new service or activity you are delivering. There are 3 grant rounds per year the next round closes on 31<sup>st</sup> March.

To discuss your project or idea please get in touch with the Fund Manager Carol Masheter at **[carol.masheter@sse.com](mailto:carol.masheter@sse.com)** or call **07721 443394**.

For fund guidance, application forms and deadlines visit:

[www.sserenewables.com/communities/community-fund-locations/great-britain/stronelairg](http://www.sserenewables.com/communities/community-fund-locations/great-britain/stronelairg)

## Pilates Class Update

**Pam Sterling**

Thanks to everyone who attended the taster session in November, which we all enjoyed. I had hoped to be able to run a regular class in Laggan, but unfortunately I have been advised by my GP to stop doing classes until we know what is wrong with my hip. I therefore don't feel it would be right to offer a new class up here at the moment incase I have to give this up indefinitely. I will keep you all posted as it maybe something I can look at later on in the year.



## Answers to: How Well Do You Know Your Animals?

Animal	Male	Female	Young
Chicken	Rooster	Hen	Chick
Duck	Drake	Hen	Duckling
Eagle	Eagle *	Eagle	Eaglet
Goose	Gander	Goose	Gosling
Peafowl	Peacock	Peahen	Peachick
Swan	Cob	Pen	Cygnets
Turkey	Tom or Gobbler	Hen	Poult
Frog	Frog	Frog	Tadpole
Lizard	Bull	Cow	Hatchling
Whale	Bull	Cow	Calf

\* A bird of prey is also called a Teircel, but this usually refers to a peregrine falcon.

## Contact Information

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### **Church of Scotland**

Contact: [RBrookes@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:RBrookes@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Telephone 07555750915

### **Community Website**

[www.laggan.com](http://www.laggan.com)

### **Laggan Community Council**

Contact: [info@laggan.com](mailto:info@laggan.com) [chairlcc@laggan.com](mailto:chairlcc@laggan.com) [secretarylcc@laggan.com](mailto:secretarylcc@laggan.com) or  
[treasurerlcc@laggan.com](mailto:treasurerlcc@laggan.com)

### **Laggan Community Hall**

Contact: [cathyslimon@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:cathyslimon@hotmail.co.uk)

Telephone 01528 544309

### **Laggan Community Housing Ltd**

Contact: [sheena.feithbuidhe@icloud.com](mailto:sheena.feithbuidhe@icloud.com)

Telephone: 01528 544722

### **Laggan Forest Trust**

Contact: [business@lagganforest.com](mailto:business@lagganforest.com)

[www.lagganforest.com](http://www.lagganforest.com)

Telephone: 01528 544366

### **Laggan Heritage**

Contact: [info@lagganheritage@gmail.com](mailto:info@lagganheritage@gmail.com)