

Weekly Bulletin 49

Lochaber Rotary

10 March 21

A warm welcome to this week's bulletin, the 49th since the original lockdown was announced last year. If all goes in accordance with the Scottish Government's latest 'Road Map', we'll be back in the tiered system from 26 April with non-essential shops reopening then. The stay at home restriction will be lifted from April 5 - all this to be reviewed in mid-March.

This week's photo is of the spectacular sunset last Friday evening - taken from Mamore Lodge above Kinlochleven by David Loudon and reproduced with his permission.



.... and we'll start with a brief round-up of **last week's meeting**...

More than half of the club members attended last week's online evening meeting and we were also joined by Faye Steele who is still keen to help us celebrate our belated 70th birthday. President Richard should have been at a District 1230 Council meeting but it clashed with ours.

While travelling to a parishioner, President Richard spotted two otters in Loch Leven and regaled us with a fascinating video of them; President-Elect Simon is still decorating and walking his dog while Secretary John reports very little traffic on the A82 passing through Onich; Iain is making progress following his treatment, he walks for exercise every day; he brought regards from both Ian Abernethy, who is still awaiting his delayed operation, and the ever-active John Rosie who is currently installing en-suites in his Bank Street Lodge!; Ron and Christine continue with their

walking and cycling including a 24 mile circuit taking in Gairloch and Brackletter; Flora is still running Voluntary Action Lochaber, grandchild minding, walking when the weather is opportune; John from Banavie has been enjoying the rugby and is busy with community council business and the forthcoming Linnhe community alliance meeting; local concern about campervans; Hon member Charlie's daughter visiting him at Mossbank;

Jenny had a 'big birthday' and has been walking, quilting and looking forward to the opening of the fishing; Mike very busy at work and also celebrated a 'big birthday' - no fun during lockdown!!!; John from Arisaig is installing a new window in his boat, dog walking; he also reported local issues with campervan hygiene; Edoardo is writing and hosting quiz sessions on line, and raising funding for the local Food Bank; Sheana still gardening; Nevis Centre still closed; Ian reported all well in Spean Bridge; Sheila doing well; Donald from Banavie busy demolishing a shed, rebuilding a wall; preparing seeds; David M just back from Strontian; repairing two sheds, waiting for the better weather.

Pipers in the papers...

by John Hutchison

I recall from an edition of the P&J several months ago that Highland Council is soon to consult on a review of its funerals policy which will involve families asking consent from the Council to have a piper at a funeral, to do with Covid of course. What next? Many will react so I'm sure it will be withdrawn stopped.

One of the councillors speaking at the committee said: "I was at a funeral of someone recently who had played a mouth organ. One of the mourners reached into his pocket and produced a moothie which he played - now how are you going to stop that?"

A consultation to watch out for!

CORROUR BY BICYCLE - Paul Brian describes a favourite Lochaber excursion.

As the days lengthen and the prospects of a gradual easing of lockdown increase, I'm sure that I'm not the only one anticipating expeditions and treats in the near future. If so, I can recommend highly the "Corroul Circuit" by bike and train. If you go in early June you will catch the magnificent rhododendron/azalea display at the east end of Loch Ossian, an added bonus.

The trick is to catch the Glasgow train at 7.35am at Fort William (book bikes on first) and alight at Corroul station shortly before 9am. Coffee and bacon rolls at the

restaurant make for a welcome pause after such an early start. Well, early by my standards!

This was Helen's first trip - she had just acquired her ebike and was keen to try it out but not to subject it to difficult surfaces if possible. The track on the north side of the loch is level and smoother. The southern side is very rough due to the installation of the cable for the new hydro scheme and it's best avoided. It's getting more difficult to get a good view of the "new" Corrour Lodge these days due to increased security and more tree cover. However, the estate workers are very friendly and knowledgeable about the owners "rewilding" policy and they are always happy to chat to passersby. They may even allow you a stroll in the garden - unless, of course, there are high profile guests in the big house. The rhododendrons are truly spectacular at this time of the year and seem to be getting bigger and better each season. They involve a short diversion along the lochside but they are well worth the time and effort involved.

After leaving the Lodge area the day takes on a more serious feel. The cycle along Strath Ossian and up to the summit of the route at the tree line takes you through wonderful highland scenery but it's extremely hard work - even on our shiny new ebikes! After this, it's an exhilarating descent to the north. Near the bottom it's best to take the sharp left turn along the forestry track beside Loch Laggan. Although there's a wooden sign to Fersit at this point it's easy to miss the turnoff and, if you do, you'll end up on the main road at the concrete bridge near Muriel Gray's house. That's not a big problem, but you'll miss an interesting section of the route.

As you cycle along parallel to the loch you may spot, on the left, a series of sinister looking metal gates labelled ADIT in gothic letters. These give access to the huge tunnel taking water to Loch Laggan as part of the extensive hydro project. They were part of the excavation process and are still used occasionally for maintenance work. Shortly after this section you will be in Fersit having passed a magnificent isolated rhododendron "Rex" in full bloom. (Who planted it all those years ago I sometimes wonder).

A short haul on a good tarmac road takes you past a beautiful small lochan and then over the railway and the Spean to the Fersit road end and the main A86. The descent to Roy Bridge is a highlight of the day, it's fast and exciting, freewheeling almost all the way, although with busy summer traffic, high vis clothing is highly recommended. At Roy Bridge there are several options for getting home. You can cycle all the way back by a choice of routes most of which involve a short stretch of main road. There is also a west bound train at Roy Bridge at about 4pm but check the timetable first. Alternatively, you can always phone a friend with a car and a bike carrier for a lift home - you have my number.



Corrour Lodge - built 2004; designed by Moshe Safdie
An architectural composition "daringly alien to the Highlands"

Lochaber Rotary and the Polio Plus Campaign

Over the decades, and thanks to our generous supporters, Lochaber Rotary has raised and donated thousands of pounds to the "End Polio Now" campaign. Our Club's efforts date back to the 1990s when we made a commitment to donate £1,000 every year and we regularly dedicated the income from many of our events, and Robbie's "Purple4Polio" annual crocus sale, to help the fight to rid the world of the dreadful scourge of polio.

Holger Knaack, this year's President of Rotary International, is stressing why it is more important than ever to support Polio Plus, Rotary's polio eradication programme, and what lessons it can offer to the COVID-19 pandemic global response. An interesting read - in the latest RI press release.

