

HOW TO FORGE AND CHEAT LEGALLY* - Tales from Charlie, the Smithy

Charlie Slater was born in Portknockie in 1933 into a seafaring family. After the usual village boyhood (no tales, no pack drill...), he surprised everyone by turning his back on the sea and taking up a "land" profession: he became a blacksmith, following an apprenticeship at the Bauds smithy (now the Bauds garage). He is one of the last, trained, all-round metal workers.

Apart from plying his trade in Scotland, England, the USA and Australia, Charlie Slater has turned his hand to a few other ways of making a pound (or a dollar) during a career spanning all the second half of the 20th Century. Among other things, he has been a football goalkeeper, an iron worker on the docks of Aberdeen, a farrier in Inverurie, a photographic model and (say it softly) a policeman. Charlie says, "I was determined to try every facet of Blacksmithing, which I have, having worked in Shipyards, Quarries, Coalmines and with Oilwell Equipment and then I was for a spell a design Engineer."

He has lived in Australia since 1964. A few years ago he ran a course in blacksmithing there for adults and they suggested that he should put the course content into a book, so that his unique, practical knowledge could be preserved. This book was duly published in 2002: "Charlie the Smithy", with the subtitle "How to Forge and Cheat Legally". In its final form, the book also contained interesting chapters about Charlie's early life and apprenticeship in Portknockie. **Cont p2**

PORTKNOCKIE TO BE LINKED WITH PETERHEAD FOR VOTING PURPOSES!

A review of Scottish Parliament boundaries has proposed a change to the area presently, covered by the Moray parliamentary constituency. Buckie, Portknockie, Findochty and Cullen will be incorporated in a new county constituency called Buchan Coast stretching around the Moray Firth coastal strip to Peterhead. The change is to achieve a better balance of the voter numbers in NE Scotland. The Scottish Boundary Commission rules state that there should be similar numbers of voters in each constituency. The proposed name of the new constituency seems inappropriate and it has been suggested that a better name might be Banffshire & Buchan Coast. Representations about the proposals can be sent to the Secretary, Boundary Commission for Scotland in Edinburgh by 21st March 08.

VILLAGE NEWS & AROUND:

Continued from p.1 - The limited print-run was snapped up and the book is now out of print. One copy has been made available locally to the K'nocker and, with Charlie's permission we will be publishing extracts from it over the next few editions. These extracts will mainly be about Charlie's young days in Portknockie, but we hope to have the space also for some of his writing about blacksmithing, which he illustrates with his own drawings.

Turn to page 8 for your first instalment about "Charlie the Smithy".

* In case anyone is reading this for the wrong reasons, please note that "forge" and "cheat" are blacksmithing terms.

Portknockie stories from the late 1920s flash to Queensland, Australia: Janet Creese has helped her neighbour, Miss Lillian Simpson, respond to the e-mail from John Ross that was printed in the last issue of the K'nocker about his mother Alice Slater, better known as "Poppy".

Miss Simpson was pleased to hear news of her old friend (Poppy), but sad to hear about her car accident. Lillian and Poppy were good friends at school and Lillian shed tears when she went away. Poppy has made several visits to Scotland over the years and has always visited Lillian when she has come over. Lillian is now 93 (Portknockie's oldest resident?) and almost blind, but still takes a great interest in what is going on in the world.

In the e-mail she asks Poppy if she remembers their teacher, Miss Mair – she was elderly, as was possibly the elastic in her breeks, for when her breeks began to come down, she would go behind the blackboard to haul them up, which the class used to giggle at! She also recalls that a man called John Mair (Shanker) lived in 'Roselea' and he was a school governor. One day he came into the school and asked to see the Headmistress. The boy who introduced him said "Here's John Shanker, Miss." "Mr Mair", the Headmistress corrected him. "Well" said the boy, "He may be Mr Mair, but he looks awfa like John Shanker to me!"

Lillian wonders if Poppy remembers when Robert McIntosh (Tosh) did not come back after the dinner break and they all wondered where he was. About 3pm the pupils who were sitting by the ½ glass door saw Mrs McIntosh pushing Robert in front of her. "Miss Mair, Miss Mair will you speak to our Robert? I made him broth for his dinner and he wouldna take it!" She thrust Robert forward for Miss Mair to give him a good talking to!

Lillian hopes that Poppy will soon be well again and sends her good wishes.

Who said this and where just before Christmas?
"Sensible people know you can't knock a K'nocker, but you most definitely can't knock those K'nockers who produce 'The K'nocker'". Here is a clue- it was connected with the surprise award of Citizen of the Year 2007 to the editorial team of this paper.

Bow Fiddle Rock – a library? Our famous, local geological feature has taken on a novel role, a place to find and exchange books. Early in the New Year an unknown, one of some 633 000 participants from 130 countries, left a book for a passer by to pick up and read at Bow Fiddle Rock. The idea is that books are left in a public place, where they can be found, picked up, read and then passed on to someone else to discover. These books on the move can be tracked in transit around the world. The whole idea is to share with others the joys of reading and to work together

to make the whole globe an exciting lending library. Did anyone local pick up the book, what was the title, did you enjoy reading it and have you passed it on? To find out more about this scheme log on to:
www.bookcrossing.com

Kut 'n' Kurl
of
Portknockie
840366
Kerry, Susan, Claire & Joanne

Roy Geale e-mails from Gravelly Beach, Tasmania

His step-mother was born in Portknockie in 1924, her name is Ann Findlay Slater and he thinks she stayed at 12 Church Street. Her father, William, was a fisherman and they moved to Aberdeen around 1930. She has since then made regular visits to aunts and uncles and has rich memories of her time in Scotland. Roy downloaded the winter edition of the Audio K'nocker and his step-mother loved every minute of it. He had also ordered a copy of Willie Slater's book, "Memories of Portknockie" and she avidly read that. The K'nocker team is delighted to have played a part in bringing back treasured memories for Ann now living the other side of the world.

Portknockie business on the move? As we go to print the following local businesses are on the market: the Paper Shop, the Costcutter Store, and the Seafield Inn. The current owners of these local businesses have served us well and will be missed.

Pharmacy news: since December, we have had Sarah Elizabeth Plume in post as the Portknockie pharmacist. Sarah, originally from Fordyce, now commutes in from Elgin. Her predecessor, Claire Gordon gave birth to baby, Rebecca Chloe weighing in at 8½lb on Saturday 26th January 2008. Our best wishes to Claire and father, Graham.

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JOINERY MANUFACTURE REPLACEMENT WINDOW SPECIALIST

Margaret Downie e-mails a follow up to Vera Findlay (last issue): "I'm glad Vera Findlay pointed out the mistake about Mr Main. That was entirely

the fault of my bad handwriting. Maybe things will improve now that I have acquired a computer. Just to add to the Woolie's cartie stories – I remember when we first moved to Coventry in 1954 I was shopping with my mother in town when we met the “Woolies” in the market and my mother greeted them like ‘long lost freens’ but I am sure they would not have recognised the Portknockie wifie who bought hair nets and elastic from them! Anyway they chatted and told her of all the places in Scotland they went to. I saw them another time in Evesham with their motor bike and sidecar so they probably had their base in the Midlands somewhere. A few years ago, when I was in Vancouver, I thought about Vera and got as far as looking in the telephone directory but I'm afraid making a phone call from the hotel seemed such a complicated business that I gave up on the idea of trying to contact her. She was another one from my class in school.”

The Portknockie Memories of the late Willie Slater was launched in book form in Cullen by the local Heritage Group on Saturday 3rd November. Willie Slater provided a number of his stories of earlier times in Portknockie for printing in early issues of the K'nocker. Now you can purchase an edited set of his personal memories in a 74pp book available from the Cullen, Deskford & Portknockie Heritage Group and local shops priced at £4.95.

Two new green and yellow bus shelters have at last, after a long gestation, made a welcome appearance in the village. For those Aberdeen bound the old, badly scratched shelter in Bridge Street has been replaced. The other one is an entirely new facility built into the Millennium Garden by the Post Office stop in Church Street for passengers going towards Elgin. Sadly, the shelter in Church Street already has attracted graffiti scrawl.

We extend a warm welcome to Pat and John Dennis who have recently moved up from Woolwich, London to take over Kirk House. They would welcome any history folk might have relating to their new home. Indeed, the story of Kirk House would also make a good future feature for the K'nocker.

Adult Evening Classes at the School: Three classes are running – Tai Chi on Mondays 7.30 – 9pm, an Art Class on Wednesdays 7-9pm and Aerobics to Jazz on Thursdays 7-8pm. New members very welcome.

A STORY WILLIE SLATER PASSED TO THE K'NOCKER A FEW YEARS BACK:

Early years in Portknockie

Lots of young people I talk to these days imagine that the Portknockie of my early years must have been very primitive and lacking in all things needed for a young person to enjoy oneself. Admittedly, there were no cars, few buses, no cinema, no TV, nor radio, no holidays and very little money. There was Peter Fair on the third Friday of July, but that was five miles away and not worth the walk if you had no money to spend.

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What did we do? On a Saturday if you were lucky enough to have a penny or half penny, go across to Jimmie Anderson's and go round the back where the ice cream was made. If you arrived too early you got a chance to turn the handle of the ice cream machine; then you got a slightly bigger cone or slider. But for a real treat you would save up four pence and, in the evening, Nellie McArthur's chip shop was the place to be, no need to go to a city for haute cuisine. Nellie had converted her “but end” into a gastronomic masterpiece.

Her husband, who was the mason, had built a cooking range with white ceramic tiles using an ordinary wash boiler and a metal top that held the chips. A coal fire provided the heat. Let me take you with me on two different occasions.

First time was for a penny bag of chips. When I went in the place was empty of customers and Nellie had let the fat cool, so she took a wee shovel and put some coal on the fire, this made her hands dirty so she wiped them on a wet cloot lying handy, then she used this to wipe the counter and round the chip pan. On the counter was a salt cellar, a vinegar bottle and a bunch of old newspapers.

Seeing I only wanted a penny worth of chips Nellie took a page of newspaper and formed it into a cone, giving the pointed end a few twists with her thumb and middle finger. As she was doing this I noticed that the outside of the paper was all black. Pointing this out to Nellie she replied “Aye, somebody has been cleaning a lamp glass with it but it's all right,

it's a long way from the chips." I said it would make my hands dirty, she murmured something about "fashes bairns" but I did get another paper.

The next time was when my uncle Beelie was visiting us. He lived in Liverpool but was here on holiday to see his mother. He asked me if I would go with him to McArthur's to have fish and chips as he knew she got fresh fish every day from the ripper boats and that was something he could not get in Liverpool. Now this was something of a new experience to me and I jumped at the chance. After Nellie telling him how glad she was to see him again and him telling her how he had longed all these years for the taste of her fish and chips, we were served. Again everything went into a newspaper but it was two sheets thick this time. Now to really enjoy the atmosphere they had to be eaten there. Nellie had foreseen this eventuality and had made what was the "bun-en-bed" into a cosy cubicle, a bench seat on either side and a narrow table in between. Lifting our suppers across, we opened them up and started eating, no knives and forks, and if your fingers were clean when you started they certainly were not when you had finished. Fish had taste, but no smell in those days.

On a Saturday morning in the summer there would be drifters coming home to change their nets or land some herrings to be cured locally. The first thing the skipper did after mooring his boat was to put a sample basket on the quay for anyone to take a "fry". We used to stick one on each finger, sticking the finger into the gills and bring them home. If they had been caught the day before, my mother who had gone to the gutting in her teens took only one look and told me they were "over days" and to get rid of them. If we wanted cod for our tea I went down to the harbour when the ripper men came in the later afternoon and got a fish for nine pence or a shilling. That was fresh fish! Now I am lucky to get a piece of fish less than a week old and not having been kept in the best condition.

Maybe some day we will be able to get fresh fish i.e. caught that day fish, but I am afraid I cannot see the "Heathery Brae", "Tyro", "Lochie" etc coming back. So I'll just go and open another tin of tuna!!

Editor: Willie writes about ordinary everyday things but he paints such a real picture you feel you can almost taste the fish and chips!

VILLAGE IN BLOOM PROPOSALS FOR 2008

At an open meeting on Tuesday 29th January those taking the initiative for Portknockie's Village in

Bloom preparations drew up an outline plan for the coming summer season. Proposals were considered in the knowledge that this year funds would be tight, costs were likely to be up on 2007 and the energies of the current Community Association's workforce have to be focused on much-needed maintenance to the McBoyle Hall. Ideas put forward dwelt mainly on economies rather than any further expansion. The proposals are not, however, to be seen as set in stone and could be altered by fresh ideas and offers of help.

Over the years our annual Village in Bloom display has been a major event in the calendar of activities in Portknockie so it was decided that the various proposals should be put in a letter to every household in the village to seek reactions from public opinion. This was completed in February with the hope that the open consultation would result in offers of help and ideas to enrich the plans.

Most of the Village in Bloom features which are permanently planted will be retained – the Beach feature with lighthouse at the west end of the village, the two gateway arches and the trains, the Cottage Garden in Station Road, the Ship's Wheel in Church Street, the Millennium Garden, Treasure Island in Bridge Street, the biblical features outside the school, the three beds in the McLeod Park, the north end of Admiralty Street, the Haig Street and Slater Crescent circles, the Cliff Terrace dolphin, the Remembrance Garden behind the Chemist shop, the hanging baskets in the Square and the War Memorial. Other features normally receive help from the Moray Council: grass cutting of all the public places around the village, strimming in the Old Railway Cutting, the bedding plants at the Bowls Club, care of the wild roses on the Addison Street banking and the shrubs in Seafield Terrace and provision of the hanging baskets in the Square and the Millennium Garden. This year we will be asking the Council to use our own hanging baskets, with built in reservoirs, to reduce the need for frequent, labour intensive watering.

The features that will be cut out this year are those that require bought-in bedding plants and involve a lot of labour in planting out, weeding and watering. It includes the hanging baskets and troughs along Church Street, most of the tubs and barrels between the School and Station Road (any surplus barrels to be offered for adoption or sold), the hanging pouches outside the Youth Centre, along the school railings and on the gable end of the house in New Street overlooking the Square, the various containers by and opposite the Newsagent's and the troughs along Harbour Road overlooking the harbour. A few of the

tubs e.g. in the Millennium Garden will be retained by using bedding plants provided by the Council

Some folk have already kindly offered to take on particular floral features like Treasure Island, the Ship's Wheel, the War Memorial, Jenny's Well and the Slater Crescent circle. A few more such willing volunteers are needed but the arrangements at Slater Crescent are an excellent example of how neighbours can get together, share resources and make a real difference to the appearance of Portknockie.

What was once a plain grass roundabout has been transformed into a distinctive floral feature using donated plants, rocks, barrels and regular care. Just recently the group, led by Shirley and "Mambo" McLean with neighbours, Tracy Stevenson and Alec John Wood, has imported tons of recycled soil from the extension work at Beelie Wood's home in Park Street and created a distinctive rockery (they have named it – the 'Circle of Friends') on the spare ground adjoining the eastern side of Slater Crescent. Once the better weather arrives, the group will be setting up a picnic table in the main circle. The table was purchased from the "Aye Afloat", Scottish Country Dancing Collection royalties that are being distributed by Catherine Ritchie.

We can all admire the initiative and goodwill that such community enterprise has demonstrated. As Shirley, herself puts it "Don't wait to be asked just get your b***** gloves on and help!" There are opportunities for this self-help approach all over the village. Why not talk to your neighbours and offer to takeover a nearby feature or create something from scratch?

Until we have in place an effective, low cost system of support and self-help organisation for our floral features, the village will not be putting itself forward for the Beautiful Scotland and the annual Best-kept Village in Moray competitions. We have 2008 to face this challenge and to get things sorted.

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YOUR EDITOR MUSES: I recall, in the time that I have lived in Portknockie, that we once had a Gala with young Lucy as "Princess" and a lively Dog Show; several organised sponsored walks to raise funds; a Fishing Festival with people in traditional dress; civic celebrations for the Re-instatement of our coat of arms and The Millennium; model boats on display chugging round the harbour; an Easter Spring Clean of the beaches and the local footpaths; a busy Flower Show; community tree planting in the Old Railway Cutting and regular quiz nights in the village hall. Whatever has happened to all that community togetherness? Have all the organisers retired from public life, are we too sophisticated for this type of community fun or are we all just leaving it for others to come up with village events?

COMMUNITY COUNCIL NEWS:

The Council comprises: **Chairman:** Alan Beresford (840534/07790023983), **Secretary:** Karen Campbell, **Vice Chair:** Helen Sammon (841794) **Treasurer:** Gladys McKenzie (840542), **Press Secretary:** Pearl Murray (841087) with Lil Urquhart, Sam Muir, Cathleen Harper and Angela Mair.

The Community Council has been briefed by Alistair Campbell, Head of Moray Council Libraries and Museums on the arrangements for the move of the Library from Park Street to the School. It is likely to happen in the summer. Health Visitors, the Home Care Team and other NHS services have expressed interest in make use of spare accommodation in the school to host community clinics.

Parking places that create problems for road users have been identified where Church Street bends into Station Road, at the bend by the Happy Hen Hoose and at the south end of Admiralty Street. The matter is being examined with the help of the local police.

The possibility of setting up a twinning arrangement for Portknockie with a community in Europe is being explored by the PCC. Recently, PCC members met with neighbouring community councils, Findochty and Cullen to discuss matters of mutual interest.

At the February meeting the PCC showed interest in the idea, floated in the last issue of the K'nocker, of establishing a regular "Portknockie Day". It would be good to receive feedback of any interest from other groups, the school, businesses and individuals in the village. Would such a day enhance our lives?

Dog fouling complaints are an on-going issue, the public should be aware that offenders can be reported to the Moray Dog Warden service on 01343-563345.

Reports of faulty street lighting or damage to the roads can be notified to the Moral Council on 01343-557300 (office hours) or to the Emergency Out of Hours number, 08457-565656.

The February PCC meeting received a briefing from Moray Council on the situation at the village school following the resignation of Mrs Cooper. Mrs G. McWhirter will deputise until a replacement Head is appointed. The PCC re-stated its desire for the school to have a place at the heart of the community.

COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION NEWS:

Over the winter months management of the McBoyle Hall has taken up much of the time of the committee. A very thorough "autumn" wash down was carried out so that the new, volunteer freshening roster could get started with a clean sheet so to speak. Clearing up the Hall after each hire can be a tough job and it is tremendously helpful if those using the hall leave it as spick and span as possible. The hiring conditions have been tightened up and publicised so that the obligations on those using the village hall are now more transparent. It has also been necessary to check and clarify arrangements for security, fire safety and emergency evacuation in the light of new, national regulations like the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005.

Lil Urquhart is managing bookings and supervising the volunteers carrying out the cleaning while Jim Urquhart has drawn up a plan of maintenance for the year. So far the electrics have been checked and new, emergency double doors have been fitted at the rear of the Hall. The steep step down from these doors needs modifying and it would be desirable to fit a powerful light to illuminate this emergency exit. Still to come, as funds come available, are sanding and varnishing of the floor, fitting low maintenance pvc fascia boards and, perhaps an external paint job.

Fund raising ideas being planned include starting regular bingo sessions in collaboration with the Seafield Inn, entering a village team again in the Rotary Club of Buckie 6 Harbours Walk in May, an Easter Tea on Wednesday 26th March with members of the SWRI featuring an egg decorating competition for children and an Easter Bonnet making challenge for adults and a Quiz Night with teams in May. Look out for bills in the shops giving details of these village events. Sadly our submission, "A Village Hall fit for the 21st Century" for an award from the Press & Journal's Year of Giving Trust in December did not result in an offer. A representative from the PCA will be attending seminars, in Fochabers and

Elgin during February to search out other possible sources of funding for the village hall.

100 Club Draw: November – R Shepherd, Linda Sutherland, John Bell. **December** – Laura Cowie, Mary Smith, Catherine Ritchie. **Christmas** - Gavin Allan, Kerry Wood, Helen Reynolds. **January** – John Reynolds, Catherine Ritchie, Mary Smith.

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MORAY CITIZEN'S PANEL:

The January 2008 Citizen's Panel survey sought public views on the Grampian Fire & Rescue Service draft Annual Action Plan which sets out the Service's key aims and actions for the coming year. The main aim is to develop a more flexible and risks-based approach that focuses on prevention, protection, value for money and a speedy and safe response.

Comments from the public were sought on the main aims of the 2008 action plan:

- The development of strategies, in partnership with Grampian Police to reduce the number of Road Traffic Collisions in our area. This involves educating the public about safer driving, targeting those most at risk.
- To work with partners to reduce the incidence of deliberate fire setting – how best to educate children about the dangers?
- To reduce the number of false automatic fire alarm calls to cut the cost of unnecessary call outs and the disruption it causes to business.
- Improving our educational programme with children and young people e.g. visits to fire stations, activity packs, leaflets and school visits by fire staff – what is the best delivery?
- Raising public awareness of the need for fire service staff to be better trained for high profile national emergency incidents.
- Reaching agreement on the right type of support/fire vehicle equipment for dealing with trauma and serious injury at accidents.

- Assisting the business sector to understand their responsibilities both to their staff and the public under Part III of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005.
- Researching and publicizing the safety benefits of sprinkler systems both in the home and businesses.
- Promoting a healthy work force by looking to introduce private health care for fire staff.
- Seek options for promoting more fire service employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

The final question asked for any other suggestions that the public might have that would help improve the Grampian Fire & Rescue Service.

“WILD ABOUT PORTKNOCKIE” a series of local nature notes by Mary Thorpe:

Ducks and Pipits

I think we could be forgiven for thinking that starlings were a recent invasion to our shores. They seem to be featured more and more on wildlife T.V. programs and news papers often have photos of huge flocks in amazing formations of shape and form. Of course, we have starlings all year but the numbers are swelled by millions more that come in from the continent so the flocks of birds that collect at dusk to roost are much more spectacular to see as they gather.

When we had our dogs I used to take them for their last walk around the braes at about four o'clock and, when this coincided with dusk, I often used to just stand in awe and watch these birds flocking and twisting and turning as one. It was quite mesmerizing in its beauty. It is thought that they gather this way as a way of avoiding predators. A peregrine, for example, would find it very difficult to single out a particular bird in amongst the throng of birds. Also when they roost there is warmth in cuddling up together! **(Editor:** a group of scientists have recently published a study of starling flocks over Rome's main railway station. Apparently each bird focuses its attention on seven of its neighbours (not just the one in front!) and, as the flock wheels around the sky, it responds to the movements of these particular individuals. The flocks are seen at dawn and dusk when they are going out looking for food. One of the largest flocks of starlings to be seen in Scotland is near the A74 at Gretna Green. Although one of our most common garden birds, Starlings are declining in numbers across Europe and the British breeding population is now red-listed by the RSPB).

We put out a mixture of food in the garden and the starlings eat it all! Most of the other birds have a preference. The blackbirds like the raisins, sparrows the seed, blue tits like the nuts and the goldfinch eat the niger seed only but the starling are not fussy and even eat Chinese take away! It is, of course, rinsed of any sauce. One day when I went out shaking the raisin tub which brings blackbirds from everywhere I had to laugh when the first to appear in the queue was a little robin. He obviously wasn't fussy! The starlings are easily spooked though and they fly off as soon as I appear. The jackdaws are much the same in that they will eat everything but soon fly off.

A bird I have seen over the winter months is the Goldeneye. I saw just one pair the first time which was at the end of December. Goldeneye are seemingly black and white ducks although, on closer inspection, the head is actually bottle green (females dark brown) and highly domed and they do have a gold eye but their most noticeable characteristic is a large white cheek patch below the eye. The female lacks this. They were once just a winter visitor from Scandinavia but it is now known that since the seventies there are breeding birds in some areas of Scotland. They breed in inland waters but often move to the coast in winter where they dive for food turning over stones with their short wedge shaped beak. One month on when I next walked near the Preacher's cave I saw around a dozen birds. I also spotted a small flock of about ten Turnstones feeding on the strand line. At the same time I saw what I estimated to be seventy plus Eider ducks scattered about off from the Bow Fiddle rock.

Crossing the golf course one Sunday we saw three roe deer grazing in the rough grass. We startled them and they bounded off up the slope towards the old railway line. I wondered if they were the same three I'd seen two days before that ran across the road in front of my car as I drove along by Hill Head.

I watched some rock pipits one day down at the Portknockie end of the beach. They were flitting about on the rocks and flying up to the vertical rock surface that faces toward Cullen. It occurred to me that this was, as habits go, just about perfect! Their roost in the cliff face facing the sun all day, the lovely sandy beach, the grassy golf course to the right and the sea with the views all around to the left. Oh yes I think I'd like to come back as a rock pipit thank you! Mind you it must be hard work finding enough food, as a study once showed that they actually eat just a bit more than their own body weight each day mostly made up of periwinkles and midge and fly

larvae found in rotting seaweed..... On second thoughts!

Editor: do folks know the collective noun for a large gathering of Starlings? It is a "murmuration".

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PORTKNOCKIE'S "AYE AFLOAT" SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE COLLECTION UPDATE:

The "Aye Afloat" collection of Scottish Country Dances continues to sell well. Already this year £500 has been received which has gone to the village school to help purchase a reading scheme that will improve the reading skills of the older children in preparation for secondary school. The other allocation of Royalties went towards a picnic table to be placed in the Slater Crescent Friendship circle. The table has a plaque in memory of the Mackie family. The book of the dances and the CD are available from Mrs C Ritchie (840554) and from W&F Johnston's in Buckie. A copy is also available to loan from the Portknockie Library.

WHAT ABOUT THIS FOR AN IDEA? This is a feature that any reader can use to put forward a proposal to make Portknockie a better place. Pass on your ideas for the village to the Editorial team. Here is a suggestion to improve the Remembrance Garden. A few interested folk get together and give the Remembrance Garden, behind the Chemist shop, a makeover. The central area and some of the individual plots are looking rather sad and it has been suggested that it would be better to have a unified theme to the many plots – perhaps, as a rose or herb garden. It would still retain its role as a remembrance area within the village but it would, hopefully be better managed as a display feature.

Let your views be known and aired in the next issue of The K'nocker. Minor repairs are needed to the stone work and it might be an idea to consider a piece of art work as a feature within the central plot. What do you think?



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"Charlie the Smithy" – Extract 1
Early life and school

I grew up in a fishing village in the north-east of Scotland in a seafaring family (known in the nor'east as fisher folk). It surprised both 'Fisher' and 'Country' folk that I should even contemplate becoming a country blacksmith. At least 95 per cent of males in the village either went to sea or worked in an industry associated with fishing.

On leaving school at 14 years of age back then, boys would get a berth (position) as cook on a fishing boat to start their career as fishermen. That's what I wanted to do; as cook on a fishing boat I would have earned a guaranteed five pounds a week, a fortune to my mind as that was all my father was earning as a baker (and he had to support a family of two adults and five children).

Our schooling started at four and a half years (no 'Kindergartens' back then). I still remember that, on my first day at school, my 'big cousin Blanche' came past our house to take me to school for the first time. Nothing unusual for that time!

About two years later, the Second World War started. To us kids, this was great fun: the war was far, far away and, besides, we were too young to understand the implications. It was exciting to see fighters like the Spitfire and the Hurricane. And the big bombers like Whitleys and Blenheims flew so low over the school they made all the windows rattle and we could feel the vibrations in our bellies. All this was a new experience to be enjoyed.

The war really started to affect us kids when so and so's dad had to go away to join the Royal Navy. Then we would hear that someone's dad wasn't coming home again as his ship had been sunk by a German submarine. We now had to carry a little square box as well as a school bag as this box had a 'gas mask' which we were taught to put on every day. As well, there was 'air raid' training, which was a great buzz to us kids as we had to see how fast we could get to the air raid shelters (large concrete box buildings with

a door at one end and an escape tunnel at the other) in an orderly manner.

Inside, we had to fit our gas masks then, when the all clear siren went, we would take off our masks, line up 'like soldiers' and march, with arms swinging, back to class where we were given a strong peppermint sweet. Even today, more than half a century later, peppermint lollies bring back memories of school, and war.

The sweet was a big deal because the war meant we were now on 'ration cards'. Coupons clipped from the ration cards had to be used to buy most items of everyday living. A book of coupons was allocated to every man, woman and child, and each book had a certain number of coupons of different values and ones of different colour for different items, such as for clothing, food, sugar, sweets, draperies (curtains), etc.

Then there were the queues at the bakers, the grocers and the butchers every Saturday morning. Sure enough, there would be a barney (dispute) at one of them because someone had jumped the queue. This was great fun for us kids (the arguments were often instigated by some of us).

Another survival ploy was 'coupon swapping'. People with no kids would swap sweet coupons for other coupons. I must admit we were fortunate in this as mum was a dressmaker and could turn a curtain into a girl's dress and an old man's greatcoat would end up being a boy's winter suit and so on. Also dad, being a baker, was not called up to do service in the Army as he was classed as 'essential services'. He provided bread and baked products to the local Army camp as well as to the local village, so we never wanted for bread. Our coupons were distributed to aunts and uncles.

Later on, when I was about seven or eight years old, dad took me with him down to the local rocky shoreline where there were bountiful species of fish to be caught with the right bait, crab or lobster found in the farthest rock crevices reached only when the tide was out in the pre-dawn morning light. Being a baker, dad was usually out of bed at 3am so would sometimes get down to the rocks at 3.30 and by 4am had enough bait for two or three nights' fishing.

I felt very important helping my father carry his catch home at night from a session of rock fishing, as I was big and solid for my age and my father and my grandfather were always ready to teach me anything I took an interest in. So at an early age I knew what

bait to use, how to fillet fish and even how to smoke fish in an old barrel. I often wonder now why I haven't got gills like a fish and little black eyes, as we virtually lived on seafood, potatoes and bread during the war years.

Usually once a week, a couple of parcels of filleted fish would be put in a basket and I would take them to a couple of farmers who had made deals with my father to exchange them for fresh eggs or home-made cheese, the barter system developed to cope with food rationing in the village. No one starved that I was aware of.

Because of this association with fish and the sea, I always intended to go to sea when I left school. In our final three years at school the boys were taught Basic Cooking one day a week, as well as Seamanship (which entailed net mending, rope splicing and tying knots), then one day a week we had Navigation, covering Morse code, Semaphore code (signalling with flags), Ships' lights at sea (light patterns which designate the type of vessel, if it is at anchor, or fishing, or towing, etc), and we were also taught to plot a course from one port to another. My final exam chart was from Aberdeen, Scotland, to Auckland, New Zealand, via the Cape of Good Hope. In hindsight, these were dangerous notions of travelling the world to put into a young man's mind!

From:

"Charlie the Smithy – How to forge and cheat legally" by Charles Slater, Chapter 17. Quix Mill Publishing Australia 2002 ISBN 0 9580780 0 9

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PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGES:

NHS Grampian Healthpoint Service

The public can visit our local NHS Healthpoint at 239 High Street, Elgin or contact the free NHS Grampian Healthline on 0500 20 20 30. The Healthpoint staff provide free, confidential walk-in health advice on improving your health, health concerns, how to access NHS Services and all the local health support networks and contacts. Self care information leaflets are available for all the main health conditions. You can also e-mail for information: healthpoint@nhs.net

Help for the Homeless (after 5pm and at weekends can be obtained by ringing 08457 565656.

HAME COOKING by SWRI members:

Cauliflower bacon& onion Bake

Ingredients:

1 medium cauliflower, cook florets 2 minutes, drain
 2 rashers bacon, chopped
 50g (2ozs) butter
 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
 1 small onion chopped
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 2 tablespoons fresh breadcrumbs

Method:

First cook the chopped onion in oil for 5 minutes then add the parsley, butter and the fresh breadcrumbs. Place the cauliflower in heat resistant dish and cover with the chopped bacon and the onion mix and cook in a moderate oven 180° C for 15-20 minutes.

Valentine drink, Lochnagar strawberry blush

Ingredients:

450g (1lb) strawberries,
 Asti Spumante sparkling wine
 2-3 tablespoons caster sugar
 Lochnagar or any single malt whisky (a good nip)

Method:

Blend strawberries and sieve and place in pan with sugar. Bring to the boil to make a syrup stock, then add the whisky and sieve again. When this is cold pour on the Asti Spumante and serve chilled.

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“ONE FIRTH VIEW” – by Margaret Dawson.

Life’s Little Ironies

As I write this article early in February I think to myself that this is not the most cheery time of the year. There is a gale howling outside, the clouds are

so thick that darkness falls about 3 o'clock and the few snowdrops that dare to pop up their heads are blown sideways by the blast. Oh, and the "yellow floorers" may not be as plentiful as usual this year – they too have suffered. So I have decided to brighten up my spirits, and hopefully yours, with a few "howlers" extracted recently from various sources which, if they do not fill you with the joys of spring, may encourage you to smile!

My healthy living award goes to the Copeland Council in Cumbria who removed the glass from bus shelters so that passengers could still continue to smoke in them. Trouble was, it let the wind and rain in, so they all got soaked! Back went the glass plus "No Smoking" signs! **Editor:** in this area the shelter was just spirited away for most of the winter!

The most bizarre award goes to the woman who rang 999 when her other half refused to let her watch EastEnders. Another award could go to the woman who rang the emergency number because she did not have a one pound coin for a shopping trolley. Another 999 caller wanted the police to arrest her boy friend "because he has put my hamster out in the rain."

My most heart-warming award goes to all the Indian call centres. Entitled "Romance at the Workplace", a survey found that love is blossoming in these centres where employees spend long hours in close proximity with the opposite gender. Most worked through the night because of the time difference with the West and ended up seeking solace with their co-workers and giving support in occasional stressful circumstances!

Perhaps, the most hilarious award goes to Holyrood where water poured through the roof of the prize-winning building, dripping into corridors and the staff canteen. Even the entrance to the VIP seating area did not escape, and staff were deployed with buckets to catch the drips (the water variety!). A spokesman said "This building may be bomb-proof and blast-proof but it isn't idiot-proof."

The foreign language award goes to police handlers who are learning to give orders to their animals in German, as some forces now import these dogs because of a shortage in the UK. One Police dog-handler said "If you say *let go* in English, they just look at you like you are crazy".

Famous last words. It is said that Benjamin Disraeli refused Queen Victoria's kind offer to visit him on his deathbed saying, "No it is better not. She will only ask me to take a message to Albert."

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SEASONAL OBSERVANCES FROM OUR MINISTER by Rev Graham Austin, Church of Scotland, Portknockie.

Follow up To Rwanda

Well the grand total for the Rwanda Project exceeded £8000 pounds for which I am extremely grateful so thanks to you at Portknockie for playing a part in the fund raisers that occurred before I left for Rwanda. It was a great experience especially seeing what the money was actually doing and meeting the people it actually helps. I would certainly encourage giving to responsible charities in order to help others less well off than ourselves. We need to remember that our money can be used to help people – human beings who want the same things we want – a place to live, food to eat, water to drink, a chance to grow old and to see their children doing well. In Rwanda these desires are very hard to see fulfilled but, thanks to the generosity of our local area, some Rwandans will have a better chance of realising, what for us, are very taken for granted desires.

So let us make the effort to remember our riches, our water from the tap, our food abundance and give thanks for them. You can express that to God (highly recommended by me) or simply be aware next time you turn the tap just how fortunate you really are and then put money into a charity tin.

POETS' CORNER:

"A Warning" by Sheena Pirie:

Katie wis a bonny quine,
The best for miles aroon
Her figure wis jist perfect
Fae her tae up tae her croon.
The loons a' buzzed aboot her
Like bees roon a honey pot.
An' sometimes she wid date them,
But maistly she wid not.

For Katie wisna happy
Wi' men o' ordinary rank.
She wanted an Adonis

Wi' money in the bank.
Noo, years have gone
An' peer aul' Kate
Is still upon the shelf.
Her Adonis didna' come her wye.
An' noo, it's far ower late.

Her figure's gone
She's lost her looks.
So quines oot there tak' heed
Ye quid land like peer aul' Katie
Remember - beauty's jist skin deep!

And two poems from the Davie Mair Collection:

Some fowk are aye grumblin' and niver are content
Nae maiter how weel they may fare,
While others less fortunate niver lament
Tho' sma' be the portion they share.

Dame Fortune is fickle, some say she's unkind
And knocks not at every man's door.
But think on what's gane and maybe ye'll mind
O' chances ye've spurned aft afore.

Gitten doon in the moo' 'ill no help you a lot
Gin things maybe gan a' bit wrang.
A steep brae has ne'er made a willing horse quit
A stout heart jist pushes along.

If ye look in the morning on things at their best
And ne'er meet your troubles half way,
Contentment will bring you a night's peaceful rest
Aifter a' the hard work o' the day.

And:

When things seem upside down for you
And failures tak' the lead;
When fate upsets what'er you do
And you cannot succeed;

Don't hang your head and look forlorn
And wear the sackcloth gown;
For greater burdens have been borne,
So smile away that frown.

Why be cast down, if not enslaved
With what the world calls wealth;
For you have much if you're allowed
The bounteous blessing, health.

The wealth and palaces of earth
Ne'er placed a lasting crown;
Bid sadness go, but welcome mirth
And smile away that frown.

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Morag Reid: Admiralty Street and Seafield Terrace.

Karin & John Rose: High Street and Station Road.

Margret Wood: Firthview, Westfield Drive and Station Court.

Isobel Worrel: Seafield Street.

Grateful thanks to Sandra and her colleagues in the Chemist Shop who sell single copies to visitors and those who do take out the annual subscription.

In 2008 the K'nocker will be published also in June, September and December. Copy, letters and adverts for each issue should be passed to the Editor, through the Library or the letterbox of 23 Harbour Place or by e-mail to rmcdram@onetel.com in the month before each quarterly publication. In fact, the earlier you send in articles the easier you make things for your editorial team!

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WHAT'S ON IN THE PORT?

Community Association: You are invited to a village fund raising Easter Event on Wednesday 26th March in the McBoyle Hall from 6.30pm. This will be a joint event arranged by the PCA and the SWRI and will feature an Easter egg painting competition for children and a display of Easter bonnets made by adults. Enter the spirit of the evening and come along with your children and their painted eggs and your own attempt at making an Easter bonnet. There will be genuine home bakes to eat with tea and coffee and a sales table featuring home baked fare and fresh eggs and vegetables. Tickets will be on sale at the door - £1.50 for adults and £1 for children. Look out for bills giving details nearer the event.

Portknockie Seniors Group: Meetings for the rest of the year include: March 18th the Speysiders, April 15th Ray Morton, this meeting will also be the AGM. There will be a Morning Tea fund raiser on May 24th and the summer bus run will be on June 10th. All the meetings will start at 7pm.

Seafield Women's Rural Institute: On Thursday 24th January 2008 the SWRI was joined by Rathven to enjoy an evening of "Music and Magic". Merson and Gordon Grant entertained and amazed us. We sang Scottish songs and gasped in wonder at a ring disappearing before our eyes, playing cards changing suit and water being pumped out of an elbow – a

human elbow! A supper of cheese, oatcakes and home bakes also disappeared fast. A really good time was had by all.

On February 28th the Seafield WRI annual dinner was held at the Marine Hotel in Buckie.

CHEMIST'S CORNER

We would just like to let everyone know that it is **National No Smoking Day** on Wednesday 12th March. If there are any smokers out there who feel ready to try quitting, we would be more than happy for you to pop by the Chemist for some advice and support.

We can talk about what might help you cut down on your smoking. Just a reduction in your daily cigarette intake will make you feel a lot better and will benefit your pocket too. You do not have to aim to stop completely. There are nicotine replacement therapies available if you do feel strongly enough to kick the habit altogether. They are very popular and can be prescribed for you on the NHS. These include self-adhesive patches for the skin, chewing gum and inhalers. They work by releasing nicotine at a slow rate over several hours which helps to stop you craving your next cigarette. We look forward to seeing you soon, **Sandra and Sarah.**

Bowling Club Notes: The winter season seems to be just flashing by. In the warm and out of the elements, carpet bowls has been an enjoyable change from the green, and our HAT nights have seen some keen, but always pleasant, competition. Already we have played most of our league games. While points have not come easily, hopefully we will soon find ourselves marching up the table. There has been a flurry of outside competitions recently and members have been out and about – not always winning but acquitting themselves well. Special mention must be made however of '**not so old**' stalwarts, Linda Wood and Wilson Weir who captured the silverware in both the Cullen Open Pairs and Cullen Mixed Pairs competitions. A really excellent achievement!

As a club fundraiser we have just held a brilliant Sixties Night in the McBoyle Hall. This was very well supported and sincere thanks are extended to all those who helped and supported the event in any way. The Singer, Dave Nash, was much appreciated and together with much dancing the night was thoroughly enjoyed. Planning has already started for a similar event next January.

New (and old) members will be most welcome to join us. There are spare bowls at the McBoyle Hall and if you do not have bowls shoes, slippers will do fine. HAT nights are held generally on Mondays and Thursdays at 7pm.

Neighbourhood Watch is simply looking out for one another. It is one for all and all for one. However, in a village like Portknockie that is what many residents do naturally.

There was a healthy response to the leaflet drop last year when many residents of the village expressed a wish to either join or continue as members. Efforts have been made to secure funding in order to obtain copies of a new Grampian Neighbourhood Watch Association handbook - it is both readable and informative. It is a vast improvement over the previous national handbooks. Unfortunately, printing costs dictate that this cannot be distributed free, but a grant would allow for copies to be provided for the current list of members.

Lastly, if renewing housing insurance, it may be worth mentioning membership of NW. Some companies allow a percentage off the premium for members. Should you wish to join or enquire about joining the local Scheme, please contact the Co-ordinator, John Myles on 840 000.

JMK

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Library Opening Hours: 5-8pm Tuesdays; 2-5pm & 6-8pm Thursdays; 10-12noon on Saturdays.
Library News:

Library News: New titles are coming in weekly, some well-known authors and some not so well-known, so come in and see the stock, you might be surprised! Buckie Library is offering 1 hour long basic computer taster sessions for free during March – telephone Elgin Library Learning Centre on 01343-562603 or E-mail: elgin.library@moray.gov.uk for further information or see the poster in our library. I look forward to hearing from you or seeing you.

Fishing News: The New Year has seen storms and gales of wind; boats have had a hard time dealing with this weather and, after a few fine weeks, prices have lately collapsed – you cannot win in this game!

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Catherine's Ceramics Club in the school is going from strength to strength. The group numbers are up to 16 and Catherine has taken on daughter, Donna Coull and Lil Urquhart to assist with the running of the class.

The Portknockie Book Club meets on the 2nd Wednesday in each month. New members welcome please contact Janet Creese on 840687 for details.

The Move to Portknockie Community Library: Portknockie Library will be moving into Portknockie Primary in 2008 to create a new Community Library for the Village and the School. This will mean computer access with Office, Internet and Email for the public will continue to be available and with a faster connection. The Library will offer a good range of books and audio-visual materials for loan to all with better layout and attractive presentation of materials to ease the browsing, selection of material and to foster a lifelong love of reading. This will include reading for pleasure, fiction, non-fiction, curriculum support, reference books, music CDs and talking books with a separate dedicated children's library offering a choice of popular titles, traditional and modern, authors and formats aimed at the under 5s, 5-7years, 8-12 years and Teenage readers.

The Adult Library will offer a wide selection of general fiction, mysteries, romance, westerns, science fiction, non-fiction, large print, spoken word on CD and tape, reference material as well as a Local Heritage collection. The move will also mean more space for local community groups to meet and to hold talks, events and learning activities such as IT sessions in the Library. Other facilities available will include a scanner, photocopying and printing. The Library will support the community, adults, children and the school through provision of community information and notice boards as well as providing study tables, space and facilities for learning, holiday

reading scheme fun activities, community groups and class instruction.

This exciting development is planned for the summer and information will be publicised, ahead of the move, in newspapers, newsletters, posters and flyers throughout the Village. In the mean time, the Public Library in Park Street remains open to all for enquiries, computer use, borrowing books, talking books, videos and CDs.

Contact: Tel: 841149

portknockie.library@moray.gov.uk

1st Portknockie Brownies meet every Monday in the school hall from 6-7pm. We are always looking for new members aged between 7-11 years.

If there are any adults in the village who think they might enjoy an hour helping out don't be shy, it is fun and all are welcome. Please contact Brown Owl on 480841.

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Portknockie Playgroup: this well-established, privately run feature of the village caters for 2-3 and 3-5 year olds. At the moment numbers are 26 but there is space for up to 35 so take this opportunity and enrol your child now. The Playgroup is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9-3pm, on Tuesdays 9-1.30pm and on Fridays between 9 and 11.30am. The Playgroup is very well supported within the local community and is closely linked with the Primary School.

Saturday April 19th, a parachute jump for charity.

Melvyn Brown, living at 16 Park Street, will be leaping from the sky over St Andrews Airfield, Perth to raise cash for two cancer charities, the Oaks Palliative Day Care Centre in Elgin and Macmillan Cancer Support. His sponsor sheets are available at most of the village business outlets and he can also be contacted at home, on 841223 or via e-mail: melvyn.brown @tiscali.co.uk

Darts successes at the Seafield Inn:

"Grouse 4s" competition : The Seafield Inn 'B' team won the "Grouse 4s" competition in February. The team was: Neil Taylor, Duncan Cruikshank, Jonathan Reid and Mark Simpson.

1st Division Buckie & District Licensed Traders Darts League : The Seafield Inn 'A' team is sitting pretty at the top of this league, in an uncatchable position and with only a few matches to play. Members of the team are also up in the Singles and Triples sections of the league.



Portknockie Primary School

February 2008

Christmas Shows – Hosanna Rock:

It seems a long time ago now, but at the beginning of December P3, 4,5,6 and 7 prepared and then entertained a large audience with their production of Hosanna Rock. The night before our Show, we had entertained the ladies and guests of Buckie North Church Guild at their Christmas party. This gave us an ideal opportunity for our dress rehearsal. The children gave a wonderful performance and that evening was completed by us all singing festive songs and carols. Everyone was very impressed by the children's efforts and behaviour.

We must thank our creative mums for helping us make some of the costumes for our production. Ladies, your help was greatly appreciated!

The Bossy King:

P1,2 and the playgroup children get together for music every Monday morning. We decided to prepare and present an early years Nativity called 'The Bossy King'. Thanks are due to all who helped make this production such a success.

Christmas Parties:

All the pupils had a wonderful time at their parties and we'd like to thank the mums who helped, and, of course, that visit from a very special man in a red suit!

Assembly and Visits:

On the 11th January PC Steve Roberts attended our assembly. He returned to school on 23rd January to give P1/2 a talk on his uniform. He brought along lots of other things which P1/2 enjoyed trying on.

Rev. Graham Austin also came to an assembly and gave us an interesting talk about his visit to Rwanda.

Scots Poetry Competition:

During song practice this term we learned several Scots songs which were to be part of the entertainment at our Scots Poetry Competition on the afternoon of Friday 1st February. Classes learned a Scots Poem. P6 and 7 had to learn a Burns poem. A mixed audience of parents and friends were welcomed by Mrs Cooper who introduced our judges, Mr Frank Reynolds and Mr Gordon McKay. They had a very difficult task choosing a winner from the finalists from each class. We all enjoyed that afternoon, which has come to be an annual event on our school calendar.

Donation to School Funds:

We were delighted to receive a donation to the school from a relative of Mrs Catherine Ritchie who used to live in Portknockie, but now stays in Canada. This donation has been spent on a selection of reading books for older pupils with a lower reading level. They contain stories which will really interest these pupils.

It was very kind of Mrs Ritchie to consider the school worthy of this donation from her relative.

Great News!

Did you hear it? Have you heard? Portknockie Primary School came third at the Buckie Rotary Club Quiz for primary schools. This was held at Buckie Community High School. We congratulate Sammy-Jo, Eden, Erin and Judith who did so well as our Quiz Team and also the supporters who went with them. Their impeccable behaviour was commented upon by other members of the audience.

Music:

P4 took part in a Youth Music Initiative on Friday 22nd February at Millbank Primary School.

P1,2,3 are to compete at Moray Music Festival on Tuesday 11th March at 11.00am in the Action Songs category at Elgin Town Hall. A choir, drawn from pupils in P4-7, will take part in the Festival on Thursday 13th March at 11.15am in Elgin Town Hall.

A recorder group will compete at 2.00 p.m. on Tuesday 11th March at Elgin Town Hall.

We hope that everyone will do their best and enjoy the competition.

Dates for your Diary:

26/02/08-	P7 visit to BCHS library.
06/03/08-	P4/5 team Badminton Challenge.
10/03/08-	P1 Health Checks.
17/03/08-	Parents Evening.
21/03/08-	School closed for Good Friday.
26/03/08-	P7 Cycling Roadshow at BCHS.
28/03/08-	Craft Fayre 9-10am
28/03/08-	Easter Service - Spring term ends
14/04/08 -	Summer term commences
05/05/08 -	May Day Holiday

Finally, Mrs Cooper decided, for personal reasons, to step down as Head Teacher of Portknockie Primary School on February 14th. We wish her health, happiness and success in all she does in the future.

Until a new Head Teacher is appointed Mrs G McWhirter has agreed to take on the role of Acting Head Teacher and can be contacted at school on **01542 840244**.

