



The Wee Blether

Winter 2020 Edition

I'm so excited to be with you at last!
Get yourself comfy,
Open me up, and
We can spend some beautiful time together.

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791



Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791



Mince Pie & a Cuppa ...

... goes virtual.

Please join us on Zoom for a festive get-together.

We've got three dates/times to choose from:

Thursday, 10th December, 6:30-7:30PM,

hosted by Catherine;

Monday, 14th December, 10:00-11:00AM,

hosted by Susan;

Tuesday, 15th December, 2:00-3:00PM,

hosted by Ruth.

Each event is hosted by a different member of staff so, if you have a favourite, be sure to get in quick!

To join us, please get in touch with your Co-ordinator and the host will email you the joining link and guidelines a few days beforehand.

Bring your own cake and cuppa – and if you're in the mood, wear your Christmas jumper, or better still, make and wear a festive hat!

Are we going to let any Covid19 restrictions get us down?

... "Oh no, we're not!"



Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

A little winter-time word-search quiz to keep you occupied whilst you have a cuppa....

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

Try to find these winter words below hidden in the above. They may be written forwards, backwards, diagonally, downwards, or going up! (Answers are at the back)

Blankets, Boots, Carols, Christmas, Cold, Crackers, Fires, Frost, Gloves, Gritters, Holly, Hot Chocolate, Hot Toddy, Jumpers, Mince Pies, Mittens, Pantomime, Pinecones, Robin, Santa, Scarf, Skating, Skiing, Stockings, Storms, Snow, Snowplough, Tinsel

Good Luck!!!

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

Message from David Stallard, Convenor



As we approach the end of the year I'd like to wish you all the very best for Christmas and the New Year from me and from everyone on the BHL Board. It's been a pleasure to work with you all for another year, even if there has been less chance than usual for us to meet face to face. I am *slowly* getting the hang of group video calls and there are some real pluses to being more creative about how we meet. Our virtual AGM in September allowed people to join in who simply could not have attended an evening meeting in Inverness due to where they live.

We've had some good news recently on funding, after long discussions with NHS Highland, with delayed payments from last year received for our Memory Loss and Carers service and funding for our Mental Health service confirmed already for next year. After quite a long time with our financial reserves just at the lowest level we thought safe, we are now in a healthy position again and can look forward with confidence. I must pay credit to everyone who has worked so hard to secure funds for us; staff, Board members and individual fundraisers. You've done a great job. Thank you all very much.

I am very grateful to NHS Highland for their continuing support - and for the generosity of various trusts and charities, particularly the National Lottery who have played a big part in enabling BHL to expand and develop over many years.

It is the obvious quality of what you all do, and its impact on each other's lives, which gives us the evidence we can use to persuade these different funders to offer us their support. Thank you all very sincerely. It is a real pleasure to be part of our wonderful service.



Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

Towards the Sunshine

Towards the end of this terrible year
We remember the burdens some have to bear.
The empty chairs at the tables, they fear,
The empty hearts for those not there.

But through all the darkness and negative air,
We remember the things we can smile at out there,
That brighten the darkness some of us wear
And lighten our hearts, so raw and laid bare.

We're not allowed to mix and wander
But things are there we can look on in wonder.
The beautiful sunrise, blue sky, even thunder
The magic of nature is there for to ponder.

We still have the rainbows, the autumn colours,
The sunsets, seashores and beaches are ours
To wander in peace and wile away hours,
Admire the trees and the beautiful flowers

Smile at that stranger and make their day
Phone that friend, you'll have something to say
Colour is out there, there will come a day
When this is a moment in time put at bay.

An original poem, by Alison Campbell



Message from Susan White, Executive Director

"Hi everyone, Susan here again! My message this time around is one of heartfelt thanks from start to finish.



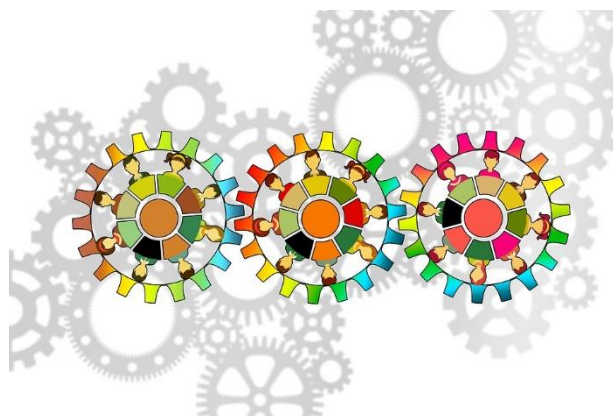
Thank you to everyone who came to our online AGM and to all the amazing long-service volunteers who inspired us all with their stories of befriending, and what volunteering has meant to them.

With their permission, we are going to use some of those stories on our website. Your certificates and a wee gift will be in the post very soon!

Thank you to all the Befrienders Highland staff who have Kept Calm and Carried On Regardless!

Everyone is working really hard behind the scenes to keep in touch, train new volunteers, make new matches, and to provide support to all of you, and maybe more importantly to each other.

We are small cogs in a big wheel, and the organisation has been ticking along nicely, so I'm sure you'll all join me in saying thank you and celebrating the 40 new matches which have happened in the past year!



And my final vote of thanks goes to all our Board, funders, fundraisers and supporters – what you all give helps us to do what we do to offer friendship to others across the Highlands. Every minute of time, donation, quiz night, birthday fundraiser, Gift Aid contribution or personal recommendation of our little charity is so important to us. It might encourage someone to volunteer, to refer a friend, to spark a fundraising event, or to bring happiness to someone else's life.



Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

CORONA MOON

A rice paper moon tonight
Hanging out there above the city sky
Above the rooftops
And the elder's fingers grasping you
The school clock has stopped
Quiet traffic-less streets
In this temporary state
Where only the crows are crawling
Corona – corona – corona

And down here where I sit
At the foot of a cherry blossom tree
Shuffling in my palms the fallen petals
And counting in my escapist mind
The true cost of it all

Finches whisper the inevitable doctrine
That none of us can hear
Let alone believe
I can only listen – watch and wonder
Turn my face to you, knowing only
How beautiful you are.

With thanks to **John Clyde McLeod**, for his original poem



Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

Mental Health Service Update

2020 is drawing to a close and a new year will soon be upon us.

This has been a very difficult year for so many people in our community and around the world. There has been a lot of suffering, but there has also been a lot of positive things happening within the Highland community, as we have tried to band together to support each other as best we can.

There are signs of a light at the end of the tunnel, which will hopefully start to raise our spirits and help us on the road to recovery. We feel the events of this year have shown the devastating impact that isolation and disconnection can have on our mental health. We are hopeful this will translate into a deeper understanding of these issues and will resonate more with the general public and influence government policy, to help improve the way society treats some of our most vulnerable members. It has underlined the value of personal connections and bonding with others, and highlighted the importance, and need, for befriending services.

We really want to give massive thanks and virtual hugs to all our volunteers, who have given their support throughout this time of uncertainty, and we are eternally grateful for all the donations, fundraising and financial support we receive from varying sources - as without this our small Highland charity could not exist.

Thank you to everyone involved in keeping us going!



Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

Health & Wellbeing

During the winter months many of us have to work harder than usual to keep our minds and bodies as healthy as possible. With any sort of restrictions in place, we may have to focus even more and really think about caring for ourselves.

Have a look at the picture below for some tips on coping with a winter with restrictions.



Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

Memory and Carers Service Update

This year will no doubt be a different festive period for us all and I have been struggling to think about what could be useful to include in the Memory and Carer Service update.

However, I had a word with some of our wonderful Carers and have included some of their suggestions below;

Some ideas of things to do over the festive period:



Write a letter – perhaps if you have time, write a letter or card to someone. Or ask someone to write to you. It is lovely to receive a note or card – and something we can read over again too.



Look back at old photographs or videos and reminisce. Perhaps even making a note on the back of the photograph when and where it was taken, if you know.



If you are online – why not ask some friends, family or neighbours to have a video chat with you? It's not the same as meeting face to face, but it can be good to actually see and interact with others.

**Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791**

Take 5

Take 5 minutes out of your day to do something that matters to you, for example:

1. Sit down for 5 minutes whilst drinking your tea or coffee.
2. Listen to a song that makes you sing along.
3. Do 5 minutes of calming breaths.
4. Give yourself a 5 minute hand massage with your favourite hand cream.
5. Take 5 minutes to think of one thing you are grateful for today.

Take 5

I think it is important to urge everyone not to put pressure on ourselves this year. It is an extraordinary time and it can take a toll on how we are feeling. So it is important not to put any more pressure on ourselves to achieve things. It is good to slow down and relax, if you can TAKE 5!

The Festive Period can also be a difficult and lonely time for many. I have listed below a few key numbers that may be of help over the festive period, when many services may not be available.

Alzheimers Scotland 24-hour Dementia Helpline

0808 808 3000

Highland Council Covid Helpline

0300 303 1362

Connecting Carers (please check for festive operating hours)

Carer Centre Number: 01463 723 575

Carer Support Line Number: 01463 723 560 Monday-Friday (10.00am – 4.00pm)

Samaritans

Free 24-hour call 116 123

Look after yourselves and stay safe, sending kind wishes your way,

Carol

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

How many words can you make from the letters in “**Befrienders**”?

If you're feeling competitive, send your answers in by 31st December, and the person judged to have found the most words will receive a £10 voucher for their favourite, independent, local shop.

Rules:

- Words must appear in the Oxford English Dictionary.
- Board members & staff (& their families) are excluded from entry.
- Entries must be received by 5:00PM, 31.12.2020 –
admin@befriendershighland.org.uk
- The judges' decision is final.
- Voucher issued only for independent, local shops (excluding betting shops & off-licences) – Sorry folks!

Prize donated by someone who wishes to remain anonymous.

Caithness Befrienders get-together via Zoom

The Corona Virus has thrown up many challenges for everyone, including engaging with our Volunteer Befrienders. So, in an effort to keep up spirits, Catherine – our Co-ordinator in Caithness - has set up volunteer drop-in evening sessions via Zoom.

This is an informal opportunity for the Caithness volunteers to meet the other volunteers socially and share ideas. It is a mixture of volunteer networking/training and fun activities to enable the volunteers to feel connected and part of our Befrienders Highland team.

Two drop-in sessions have been scheduled so far, but these will be a regular calendar slot in the future. If you are interested in joining a similar group in your area, please let your Co-ordinator know and we will be happy to facilitate this.

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

Neighbourhood Watch Scotland



Alison recently had a chat with our local Crime Prevention Officer, who emailed her a booklet packed with practical tips on how to keep you, your family and community safe – from protecting your home and possessions to helping you enjoy the benefits of the internet safely.

To help save postage costs (not to mention trees), Malcolm has uploaded the booklet to our website. Do, please, take a look. It can be found here:

<https://www.befriendershighland.org.uk/news/2020/nov/24/safer-communities-safer-scotland-booklet>

Please email us with any **Inspirational Quotes and Uplifting Photos**, which you come across.

We want to become more active on social media and need a good stockpile, ready to launch a social media campaign early next year.

What do I mean? I hear you ask. Well, stuff like ...



“Your presence is a present to the world”

“Celebrate your difference from the crowd; take pride in yourself”

So, please put your thinking caps on and email your Co-ordinator with your photos and quotes for us to share on Befrienders Highland social media.

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

One of our Friends – Joan - has shared some lovely photos with us. The first one is Joan's sunflowers that she has managed to grow from the seeds received in her Befrienders Highland Sunshine Pack over the Summer.

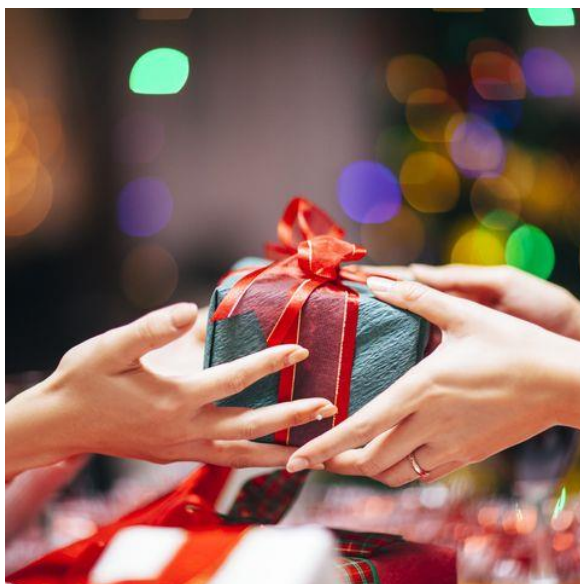
The handmade cards were lovingly put together from the Craft Kit Befrienders Highland commissioned from Creativity in Care. The kits were a great success and very well received by everyone who got them. Something to keep us all busy during the darker evenings.

I think you'll agree that Joan's sunflowers and cards are beautiful and I'd like to thank Joan for sharing her creations with us all!



Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

A Wee Reminder on Gifts



Some of our friends and volunteers like to exchange gifts at Christmas – and some mark birthdays too.

We are delighted to act as a forwarding office, but do ask you to remember these few guidelines;

- The value of your gift should not exceed £5.00
- Try to send a gift which is light in weight and small in size, to help keep BHL's postage costs down. Remember, small is beautiful! ☺

Dates for your diary

Virtual Mince Pie & Cuppa dates:

Thursday, 10th December, 6:30 - 7:30PM, hosted by Catherine;

Monday, 14th December, 10:00 - 11:00AM, hosted by Susan;

Tuesday, 15th December, 2:00 - 3:00PM, hosted by Ruth.

The third Monday in January is **Blue Monday** - so called because some think it is the most depressing day of the year. Our Christmas spirit has evaporated; the weather is cold and miserable; and for many, the credit card bills start to arrive.

So, please, spread a smile on Monday, 18th January 2021



Maybe give someone a call, or send a letter/postcard to arrive on the day?

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

Calendars and Photos

Not having received any snowy entries for 2021, we've decided to make the call for photos for our 2022 calendar mega early this year; yes, we are already on the lookout for your seasonal photos!

We want you to be "snap-happy" with the theme of Historic Highland. Buildings, landscapes, monuments, trees – are just some of the features we want from you. As an incentive, we will give away additional 2022 calendar copies to the successful photographers, for them to send to family or friends.

Please make sure the images are at least 5MP resolution - somewhere in the region of 3,000 x 2,000 pixels - and the file size needs to be at least 2MB. On top of this, the image must be landscape.



Please submit your photos as and when you take them, but no later than the end of August 2021, by email to Sarah at admin@befriendershighland.org.uk

Think about how these names sound when backwards:

1. The name of someone you love.
2. The name of your old maths teacher.
3. The name of your favourite actor or actress.

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

Malcolm writes ...

In the last Wee Blether I told you about my irrational decision to enter the Loch Ness Ultra Marathon, an 80-mile race around the world famous Highland loch. Here's an update as to what has been happening in the past few months.

My plan was to build my running fitness base over the first few months by doing a short run every weekday morning and a long run at the weekend.

I would increase my long runs by 10% every week, so my body would adapt to the increasing workload as the weeks went on.

That was the plan, however, things don't always go according to plan! I was getting on well, increasing my mileage every week but I naively never factored in how changes in run elevation would impact things. I was so focussed on increasing my mileage by 10% that I ignored the affect that large changes of elevation would have on my running time which, in turn, would impact my body.

I had built up my mileage to over 20 miles for the long runs but I also added thousands of feet in elevation to some of my runs; this resulted in some runs taking about 3 hours and other runs taking over 5 hours.

This large jump in running time was too much for my body to handle (I'm getting old and my body doesn't recover like it used to) and I ended up getting tendinitis (an overuse injury) in the front of my ankle.

I still followed my plan and persevered with a few more runs until it got to a point where it was painful just walking. I finally acknowledged that this was not going to get me where I wanted to go so, I had to re-evaluate and take some decisive action.

I stopped running for a few weeks (which was stressful as I have my first ultra-marathon to run in a few months), went to a sports therapist (thank you Lorna at Inverness Therapy Clinic), and took some time to come up with an alternative plan - one that considers run time).

It has been a bit of a setback, but I am a few weeks into this new plan and things seem to be going well so far (fingers crossed).

Looking back at this experience, I have learned a few things:

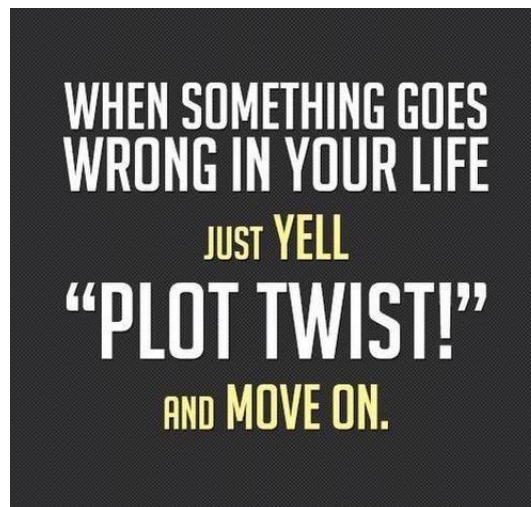
- It's always a challenge when things don't go according to plan.
- If something isn't working, change it.
- Setbacks feel rubbish at the time.
- Failure is just a stage of learning (so they say).

I do love a good motivational quote and I saw this recently, which I thought suited my situation at the time. It helped me to stop feeling sorry for myself and to take control of the situation again 😊

If anyone wants to support my run for Befrienders Highland you can visit my fundraising page on;

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/macsweenfitness-myfirstultra>

Many thanks, Malcolm.



We would normally ask you to help us save money on postage, by collecting your calendar and Winter Wee Blether from our offices, if you are able to do so.



This year, of course, we are posting them to all of you – but fear not, we have been lucky enough to receive a couple of donations to help us cover the costs. Thank Heavens for donations, which make such a huge difference to small charities like ours!

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or Call us on 01463 712 791

And the award goes to ...

Which of your friends and family would win the award for being:

1. Most likely to eat a bucket of custard for charity.
2. Most likely to make a million.
3. Most likely to get locked in a loo.
4. Most likely to break into song whilst in a check-out queue.
5. Most likely to have a famous internet pet.



And Finally ...

That bit on page two about you being our favourite is absolutely true.

It is nothing I thought up myself, however. I actually read it somewhere and thought it was great so borrowed it! Oh, you say, that's not very original. Can't you come up with your own front page? Well, true artists steal with pride; I am just an honest person, unafraid to admit my own shortcomings. I may not be perfect, but who is?

With best wishes always,
Sarah

Answers to the word-search

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

Both Befrienders Highland offices will be closed over the festive holidays; from 5PM, Wednesday, 23rd December 2020 and will reopen on Monday, 4th January 2021.

If you do need to contact us during this time, please leave a message on the answer machine and one of the team will get back to you. Messages will be checked every weekday, at around mid-day (except Christmas Day & New Year's Day).

Inverness Office telephone number **01463 712 791**

Wick Office To give Catherine - our only team member based in Wick – a chance to recharge her batteries, if any of you in Caithness should need to get in touch with her urgently please contact our Inverness office and leave a message there. Whichever of the team picks up the message will make sure Catherine is contacted to get back in touch with you.



**All the Staff and Directors would like to wish everyone
involved with Befrienders Highland
a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year!**