



Blackford Cares

for Blackford residents to support each other during COVID-19

It's been a number of months since our last newsletter so there's a chance to catch up on some things you may have missed. That's a mix of things that have happened, what's current in the village and what might happen in the village despite not having the certainty of what legislation will allow as we continue along this "roadmap to recovery."

Here we are again!

Back in March, the green and red thumbs came out just after the Prime Minister's TV message—and here we are again. We're approaching that point of the Furlough Scheme stopping; wage cuts and redundancies are happening. We've travelled this far and now travel on together.

The village carries on caring in practical ways through friends, neighbours and families. Blackford Cares tries to connect those needing support with those who can offer it.



Here's how the Blackford Food Larder looks at the moment; village donations (on the left) are mostly from the last of the Shielding boxes. That's what has filled the 2/3 grab bags that go out each week from the Bell of Hope. On the right what we order from P&K Council; this gets added to village donations and delivered to those we are told need extra help; that's the area that is likely to increase from a quiet summer so here's a window to donate again.

The school and church would normally have joined forces to send boxes of food to a Perth Homeless charity at this Harvest season. This year, our boxes will be back around the Bell of Hope at the church for 2 weeks for anyone who wants to donate to those in Blackford who will need that support over the coming weeks and months. How the food sharing in Blackford develops will be shaped by the responses to our questionnaire.

A chance to say, "thanks."



There was great interest in the Facebook group when mention was made of thanking Zed for all the ways that he filled our kitchen cupboards and garden borders over the past few months.

Mary Little, who organised the April collection for NHS staff and for Kenny the postie will coordinate this too.

If you'd like to make a cash donation this can be put through the letter box of Andrea Campbell (8 Gilmours Avenue) or Moira Hanslip (22 Allanwater gardens) or the black mailbox beside Lorna Davidson's red front door (Cul-na-sithe, Stirling St.)

You can also give via Mary's Paypal account which uses her email address marywlittle1956@gmail.com

Please don't tell Zed. He's getting a different version of the newsletter!

There are almost 650 members of the Blackford Cares Facebook Group. As it says on the tin, it's "for Blackford residents to support each other during COVID-19." We've not accepted membership requests from those with no Blackford connection, and removed comments or members that lacked the support that should characterise the group. We've also welcomed back some of those who have been offended at mud slinging and rants that are better suited to our own individual Facebook pages rather than a group with such a specific purpose. Hopefully all users can see that distinction and self-edit accordingly. **Carolyn Duffin & Gordon Roy (Facebook Group Administrators)**

How does Blackford care?

What do we need as we respond together to COVID-19, and the regular challenges of life? We don't know! So we're asking you!

Within this pack there's a slip to join the discussion by contributing what you might need and what you might offer. Details of how to do that on paper or online are on that other slip.

Don't be limited by the suggestions already offered or treat them as promises that will happen without offers of help. Please also don't be tempted to tick everything that might be useful for other people; we could have done that without the survey but doesn't tell us what is actually wanted.



Go and talk to someone and help them fill in their survey rather than answer on their behalf.

We are now in that funny period of the "roadmap to recovery" when there is both sunshine and showers, but that produces signs of hope as this image from Nikki Sinclair caught. So enjoy your Rainbow Drops and consider how we share hope with each other.





How are your Sunflowers?

We gave out seeds with the first news letter back in April and these are just two of the images that have made it into the Facebook Group.

There was no formal competition but you're a winner if you managed to surprise yourself—or someone else—with how well you did.



Blackford Shares

Did you pick up any ideas and tips at "Blackford Shares" which saw various village gardens open at the end of August. Thanks to those who put themselves up for visitors and shared their wisdom and experience.

Can you do it again please?

If you've been knitting gloves, hats and blankets throughout lockdown, you'll be pleased to hear that Shona Stewart is still running the Christmas Shoebox Appeal. There's a box at the church main door for knitting, toiletries, pens and colouring books, tools, or other gifts for all ages. All items will be sent on loose on Sunday 4th October for Blythswood to box up for families in Easter Europe.



The last maildrop we did around the village, sorry not the farms that time, was the weekend at the end of June when we walked 500 miles and then walked 500 more.

A very small sample of those who recorded each of the 1000 miles was around when the final mile was completed. The Bizarre Bazaar saw a number of unwanted items find new homes as we looped past car boots and tables of wares for sale.

Come on dog owners, we need to pick up our act

It's become a feature of the Facebook group to get a picture of dog poo left on pavements by, at best, inconsiderate owners. We'll have to conclude that those owners don't read those posts so we'll mention it here and hope they get the message. If you've missed those posts we'd like to give you a sample but rather than offend you with real poo, here's shampoo.



There may have been no Blackford Highland Games this year but that didn't stop Ailsa Sloan heading to the Games Field that Saturday afternoon. She was rewarded like the winner of the first games with a 10 shilling prize. This was one of the many Blackford stories covered by The Courier or the Perthshire Advertiser.



David Wallace was also flying the flag for Blackford in the local press when he climbed the height of Everest by ascending Kinpauch Hill (across the A9) 60 times in one very long June Saturday.

He was no doubt glad of his day of rest before returning the landscaping business on Monday.



The National Lottery Community Fund are still dining out on our Village BBQ which they funded as part of Blackford's Lockdown Gala Week in June. They used some of these images (with family permissions) in their own promotional press release video last month. Perhaps you fried your sausages for breakfast or BBQ'd in the street like the folks at Newton of Buttergrass (left). Thanks to the crowd of volunteers who delivered supplies around that Saturday morning (right).





Many of us found our way to Carsebreck in the spring thanks to directions, photos and advice from Bob Watkinson. We asked him to tell us more about the other visitors who have been finding their way there for hundreds of years.

“Many of you will have seen the arrival of our feathered winter companions coming in waves from Greenland and Iceland, a journey of 1600 miles. These are, in the main, pink-footed geese with smaller numbers of greylag geese.

They feed in the fields all over the area and at their peak in late October and November there will be many thousands roosting each night at Carsebreck and a few hundred on Whitemuir. It's well worth going out to the old ruin above the Carsebreck loch just before dusk and watching them come in, wave upon wave of them. Carsebreck is of international importance as a roost for wintering pink-footed, greylag geese and other wintering waterfowl so please be careful to keep hidden and quiet as they are very easily disturbed.

After the peak in November many will fly on to wintering grounds further south, mostly in the UK with a few finding their way to mainland Europe. Then, in February the numbers increase at Carsebreck again as the migration happens in reverse. By April, they are all home in their summer breeding grounds.

What many people may not know is that across the A9 from the petrol station is a Pictish standing stone that has possibly been there from as early as the 5th century. If you look carefully at it, you may just see the faint carvings of a goose and wing representation. It seems the arrival of the geese has been a thing here for a long, long time.



The church have been busy throughout the lockdown and reopened the building this month. Planned removal of pews, even if it did lead to unplanned repairs to the floor, has opened up the space that's very useful now and beyond COVID-19—yes there will be something beyond COVID-19.

You'll have to actually come inside to appreciate the changes as we're looking forward to having the doors open a lot more. (We were working out a Macmillan Coffee Morning for this week until “restrictions tightened.”) Our Sunday services are at 10am in the building but also accessible on our website and we deliver a printed programme of what we would have sung along with what was said each week as we work and pray through this challenging time.

Blackford Bowling Club

It's been a short season at the Bowling Club and we will be having the closing day for members

The Sandy McGregor Trophy

on Saturday 3rd October, 2pm for 2.30pm assuming COVID-19 guidelines still allow this to happen

Blackford Gala Week had many new highlights as we adjusted to the special circumstances of 2020

The Scarecrow competition really took off with over 80 homes for our judges from Muthill Gala to get around. The Art Competition was judged by anyone who wanted to vote through the Gala Facebook page. The Senior Citizens' afternoon tea had to be enjoyed in their own home (and very much was) once it had been delivered on a very wet Wednesday by village volunteers. The Gala Concert saw live and recorded musical contributions from across the village, plus several winners' envelopes opened by Gala Queen, Emily Sinclair before we Zoomed into each winner's house to congratulate them. The finale was the video produced by Ben Norris showcasing so much village talent; who knew that so many people could almost clap their hands in time with a beat? If you've still not seen it go to youtube.com and search “Happy—Blackford Lockdown Orchestra” and wish that you had got involved after all.





The Blackford Inn re-opened with great excitement across the village.

Whether in the beer garden or indoors they are a 1m physical distancing venue under hospitality guidance. There has been a really warm welcome for the new meals and takeaway menu on Friday, Saturday and Sunday with booking particularly recommended (682336) on Saturday night and Sunday lunch.

Here a sample of what's been on the menu recently:

- Haggis fritters; Goats cheese tart;
- Baked Macaroni cheese with garlic bread;
- Chargrilled sirloin steak; pea and asparagus ravioli;
- Vegetable pakora; Big beastie meatballs with tagliatelle;
- Fishcake with salad;
- Chicken curry, rice and naan bread;
- various pizzas; Sunday roasts;
- Sticky Toffee Pudding; cheesecake; breakfasts and much more.

Plus some of the usual features such as Curry Night and Malt of the Month.

Remember closing time is by 10pm.



The Post office van parks outside Blackford Stores on Tuesdays from 9am to 10am and on Thursdays from 12noon to 1pm.



The mobile library service is currently suspended as they are unable to fulfil physical distancing guidelines on the vans. P&K Council will be extending their Click & Collect Service and are also offering a delivery service for customers who are housebound, recovering from illness, have mobility difficulties, visual impairment, or are a carer at home – please see further details on culturepk.org.uk/libraries or call 01738 444949.



The Blackford Community Garden has really got established over the summer. The free Thursday morning harvests have often been augmented by other village producers of jam, baking and cheese selling their wares.

The Garden Group have plans to grow and develop so was among a number of village groups able to make an application to the pending meeting of the Blackford Community Fund.

In the meantime we asked them for a few tips on what to do in our own gardens at this time of year.

- Plant spring flowering bulbs
- Sow seeds for winter veg such as turnip
- Trim back branches once the fruit comes off.
- Cut back hostas because the slugs will head there.
- Consider if what you're cutting back could form a garden corner for wildlife to benefit from over winter.
- Start to reduce the frequency of houseplant watering

Looking for more information? Try the Royal Horticultural Society's web page for what to do each month, e.g.

rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/september

Blackford Village Stores

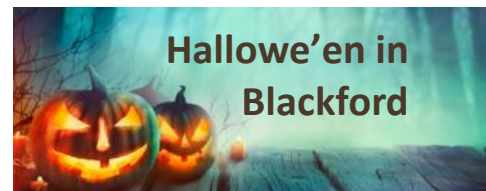
Our village shop has been back at its normal opening hours for some time.

**Sundays
8am to 6pm**

**Monday to Saturday
6am to 9pm**

Zed and his staff have been helping some of our more vulnerable residents with home deliveries and will add others as required. Hot take away food is available during the day.

01764 682245



Have you ever wondered why nobody calls or everybody calls on that evening? It's all to do with a lantern on your door step apparently. It could be turnip or pumpkin but it says you're ready to welcome visits from younger families and older children—normally!

This year? Who knows? There's mention of a witch hunt in the Blackford Cares Facebook Group. If you can shed some light on how to mark Hallowe'en this year, speak up in the Facebook Group or to other parents for example. And you can help make something happen and join the debate as to whether it's "Guising" or "Trick or Treat."

Then it would be onto the Fireworks put on by the Blackford Events Group. Follow their Facebook Page or other communication to see what's actually possible in November.



Remembrance Sunday would be next on November 8th. The church service (10am) would be limited to c30 people for physical distancing. The two minute silence observed at the War Memorial at 11am should be accessible to many more.

The Blackford is Brighter Group are planting up around the War Memorial as the council have not done any planting this year.

Blackford normally does Christmas rather well! Lights go up along Moray Street and a "sugar-fest" at the "switch-on." The school carol concert is packed and there are carols singers in the street. Christmas Eve has a candlelit service.



The sleigh ride round the village that evening may be as late as the 8th of January. It depends which country Santa flies in from and whether he has to quarantine.

