

S.O.S ... S.O.S Save Our Shops

The older generation is often accused of being too nostalgic. No doubt many of us do hanker for 'the old days'. Too often we start conversations with "Do you remember when?"

No apologies for starting this piece as "Do you remember when every street had its wee corner shop when we had our local butchers and bakers ... cafés and fish & chip shops where they knew you?"

We must keep these wee local shops going where they exist. Supermarkets are all very well, but in most cases are situated on the periphery of towns. Think about what you are buying - it **doesn't all need to be at the Supermarket. Shop local where you can.**

The under-noted verse is from Glasgow teacher Adam McNaughton's "Where is the Glasgow I used to know". It sums up my thoughts rather well



Oh where is the wee shop where we used tae buy ...

A quarter of totties, a tuppenny pie

A bag o' broken biscuits an' 3 tattie scones

And the woman aye asked ... How's your Maw gettin' on?

Does yer big supermarket gie service like that?



Have we reached the END OF THE HIGH STREET yet?

Over recent weeks we've looked on - helpless - as well-known High St shops pulled down their shutters. Names we have grown up with and stores we've used for years are leaving huge gaps in town centres all across the UK. There's a sense that this the end of High Street shopping as we have known it

So where does that leave us?

Our not over-large town centre has no shortage of Banks (4), Building Societies and Bookies (7). Add Charity shops (8), takeaways/sandwich shops (10+) and you've a picture that's replicated across Scotland and the rest of the UK.

3 of our clothing shops - Debenhams Bon Marche and New look are closing in the not too distant, leaving a sole department store (long-standing family owned)

On the flip side, we've 3 small bakers (2 the same firm) - 2 butchers - 3 small convenience stores - no fish shop - one greengrocer's - a small delicatessen and not much else!

Oops! I forgot we've got at least twenty boarded-up shops all crying out for

someone to care for them and a flourishing colony of Turkish Barbers (5 opened recently).

Full credit to our Council and others such as Scottish Enterprise. They've tried every dodge and more to breath life back into the town.

Shopkeepers - many now closed or closing say the town centre rents are too high. **Shop owners** say the rents have to be high because the business rates are too high. The downward spiral has to be stopped before it's too late. In the meantime, the **Property Speculators** are laughing all the way to the bank ...

The main problem seems to be the rating system Our two Governments (Holyrood & Westminster) have to get their acts together.

.... can someone sort this it out before it's too late?

DON'T BE DAFT TAKE THE VACCINE

We presume most Scottish RM News readers will be offered the Vaccine early in 2021. Pay no heed to 'scare stories' in the media aimed at persuading people to refuse it.

When you're offered it, take it. This is for everyone's good - yours and everyone you come in contact with. It will only work if we all cooperate.

Is this THE NEW NORMAL - the way it's got to be?

Light has appeared at the end of the tunnel as the COVID vaccine will be rolled out across the UK in the immediate future and there's hope for the future.

There's few doubt that everyone who is offered the vaccine should take it. However, the message from the health experts is that there will have to a great deal of caution before we can say that the virus has been beaten.

We've been through a lot in the last year but we can now to look forward to the new normal. But what will be the normal? Have we come to 'accept' things differently from what was 'expected' before the pandemic? When last did you actually see a doctor? Are the "Dr Finlay" days a thing of the past?

Getting a doctor's, dentist's or optician's appointment now is a 'high security effort'. You get shunted from receptionist to receptionist - then to nurse and nurse!

Did we ever imagine the day when we need to phone to get an appointment to get in to the Council Dump? Will the new normal mean the loss many local businesses (especially the wee pubs) that we've used for years.

Will the public tolerate having to queue for shops? It's been suggested that 'mask wearing' will be the recognised thing.

When will we see such as Libraries, Sports Centres - and more importantly public toilets - open again?

When will we begin to think about foreign holidays again? Are these a thing of the past for many of us?



Xmas Bonuses

The Scottish Government has announced that all NHS and other essential services workers will get a special 'thank you' bonus of £500 at Xmas - in recognition of the great job they have done throughout the COVID emergency.

Great - but it's not clear just who well get it. They say part-time workers will get it 'pro rata' - but what about Care Workers in private Care Homes - dust bin men - food shop workers - school meals education admin staff - all of who played a huge part in the COVID effort by keeping the wheels turning during the crisis? Maybe I'm just being awkward - but they worked over and above their contracts - and they need it more than highly paid Consultants, Doctors and Health specialists.

Wouldn't it be nice to think that some of them will donate it to charities such as local Food Banks

Always Look on the Bright Side of Life...

Okay, it was a crap year but you must admit there's been the odd thing to buck you up - to raise the wee grin.

I couldn't stop myself raising a glass to the result of the US Presidential election and smiling as we watched Captain Tom as he trundled up and down his garden to support the NHS workers. There were some brighter moments

What made you smile or laugh? Was it the times when you could mix with your family and grandchildren? Maybe you managed to squeeze in a holiday break before they clamped down.

We aim to do an item on these brighter moments in the News in the next week or so. Let us know your special moments. C'mon gie us all something to laugh at - or at least a wee smile!



Lockdown free time'love it' or 'hate it'

I had two different responses when I asked friends how they are coping with pandemic and lockdown. Lockdown is like so many other things in life black pudding tripe or Brussels Sprouts - some just "LOVE IT" and the rest absolutely "HATE IT. The reactions were

I'm "bored and lonely" ... was the general reply. Echoing Sandy Shaw's 60's hit song "I just don't know what to do with myself".

Some were content to while the time away - reading, writing or gardening while others say they'd not enough time in the day to do everything they want to do. Those friends are active - going to the gym, swimming - walking or cycling ever day. They're naturally 'gregarious' and enjoy the company that these pursuits bring, but as the darker

nights came in things changed.

Groups which brought them together were unable to function under lockdown.

Home Alone - One friend told me "at least you have your wife to talk to". My sister who stays alone said the same.

Much has been written about the effects of the pandemic on children. Will someone seriously assess the harm this "social isolation" has had on the older generation?

LONELY? Little things that may help

- **Develop routines** to give your day a structure and make you feel in control.
- **Listen** to music that you like. It may trigger happy memories of different parts of your life.
- **Tidy** something or do those long-outstanding household chores. Even simple tasks when completed can feel like a major achievement.
- **Watch** a variety of films on TV or listen to the radio.
- **Keep moving** throughout your day. A short programme of light exercise can work wonders.
- **Stay in touch** with other people. Plan the times of the week when you can call family and friends.

Warm Homes Discount Scheme

Do you know about the Government's Warm Home Discount Scheme (WHDS). It offers a one-off payment of £140 (inclusive of VAT) towards the energy bills of those who need it most in England, Scotland & Wales.

The scheme was introduced by the Government in April 2011 and managed by energy suppliers. The money isn't paid directly to you - it's a one-off discount that's credited to your energy account, prepayment card or key, during the winter - providing you qualify for the payment.

The discount will not affect your Cold Weather Payment or Winter Fuel Payment.

To find out more about the eligibility criteria, please visit this page:

www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme or

www.britishgas.co.uk/energy/energy-saving/warm-home-discount.html



The Fyfes ... Broughty Ferry beach ... egg and sand pieces ... and Chippers chips.

Did you ever go on the Dundee Fyfie Boats when you were a kid? One of my uncles who was 'real sailor' during the war was Captain of one of 'The Fyfes. These boats were a regular Sunday jaunt from Dundee to Fife (a whole 30 minutes away).

I remember my mother clinging on to us like a limpet in case we climbed up on the rail to look at the water. She'd let us go up to the rails but her orders were "Hing on tight now, wir no wantin' any o' yeh vanishin' intae the Tehy!" (That's the River Tay if you're a toff!)

If we went too near the rails she'd yell over the noise of the boats engines - only about 3ft away - "Bide awa fae they rails. Stey back nearer the inside o' the boat - an if yeh fa' ye'll only hit the wa' o' the boat". I smile at this. It was okay to wallop into one of the boat's steel walls, as long as you didn't vanish overboard!

Broughty Ferry beach We survived our sea trek and landed in Fife! Rain hail or shine we headed for the beachy bits at Newport, and jumped about (turned blue on a real Dundee Summer day), ate our 'pieces' went 'fir a dander' to get an ice cream cone. Later on another 'dander' to get a bag of chips as we wandered along the road to get the boat back home. It was just like a day to the Ferry, but you got on a boat first!

Holidays when I was a kid were always 'days out'. No one in my neck of the woods went to a hotel. Some who could afford it hired a caravan for a week down at the hinterlands of Arbroath!

As the years went by, I could afford to go on holidays abroad and I've had great times and memories from trips to far off places. However, I look back with fondness on my childhood holiday adventures. I recall them when with friends who can recall the exact same day-trips on the Fyfes - eating egg and sand pieces at Broughty Ferry beach. Only a short distance away, but was a great adventure to my siblings and me!

Remember the knitted 'cossie' that went into the water as a swimming costume and came out as

an evening dress walloping around your ankles? You just yanked it back up and went back into the water. I was lucky that when it came to eat our 'pieces' I had a dry costume that was kept for running about the beach.

Most day trips had the same format - sweets for eating until done - 'pieces' and lemonade when hunger drove you back to where your folks sat - chips for eating while waiting on the bus/boat to take you home.

Happy memories! Happy Days!

Thanks to old friend Mae Stewart (Dundee Branch) for this bit of 'nostalgia'. Mae has published a couple of great wee books about growing up in the "City of Discovery" - "Dae Yeh Mind Thon Time?" - and the wonderfully-titled " 'O' is fir Inglin"



Mother's remedies are the best ...

My friend was visiting his mother-in-law and when he asked how she keeping

"I wasn't too well yesterday" she replied. "I'm okay today I just took a couple of Paramedics and had an early night in bed!"

Thanks Dave

Thanks to Dave Moss for his piece on Electric Cycles in the last News.

If there anyone out there who can string very few words (less than 400) together for an article, I'd be happy to get them. It doesn't have to be a 'finished article'. Feed me the 'gist of a story' and I'll knock it into shape for a future issue.

JASON'S CALL FOR HELP found the true meaning of Christmas

Young Jason Bassett sparked off a train of events using Facebook last week. Jason who works for the Dumfries firm of Jardine's Funeral Directors goes to Birmingham every Christmas to visit his dad's grave. It wasn't possible this year because of COVID restrictions - so he posted a request on a Solihull Facebook page - asking if anyone was willing to tidy his dad's plot and place a holly wreath for him."

He had lots of positive responses. One woman said she'd happily tidy the plot and place the wreath. She's also willing to maintain the area for the coming year. Others will visit the cemetery and say they'd take time to visit Jason's Dad! It was touching that so many people will visit someone they don't know!

Things took another twist when another lady contacted Jason to say she going to go to visit his dad and spend time with him as she's in a similar situation. Her mother's buried in Scotland and she thought "visiting Jason's dad will give to her some quiet time to think of her mother".



Jason thanked her and asked where in Scotland her mother is resting. When she replied Moffat (20 miles from Dumfries), Jason said that as she'll be visiting his dad, he'd be happy to do the same for her - to tidy up the plot and lay a wreath for her at Moffat.

Jason realised there's many families in the same position. He raised it with colleagues at Jardine's who are eager to help. They've offered comfort to families who are unable to travel and will help in their own time in the Dumfries by visiting memorials at their Roucan Loch Crematorium or local cemeteries. They'll spend a few moments and possibly take a photograph for the relatives."

Christmas will be different this year - but it doesn't have to be any less special. Perhaps Jason's incredible story is the true meaning of Christmas?

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