

SECOND TRAWLER MISSING

A massive sea and air search is now underway for the crew of the Arbroath registered "Red Lichtie" which failed to return to port on Tuesday. Missing are skipper Iain Swankie (52), his two sons James (31) and Ewan (28) and fellow crewman Sandy Pert (46).

The "Red Lichtie" is the second vessel to disappear in calm weather in recent weeks. The trawler "Margaret" - out of Stonehaven - vanished with all hands four weeks ago. No wreckage was ever found.

Local fishermen are blaming the incidents on the presence of a submarine. Alec Spink of the Arbroath Deep Sea Fishermens Association stated "For a boat with an experienced crew to go down in a flat, calm sea without getting off a distress call is just not natural. The only cause that I can think of is a sub getting caught up in the nets."

Such incidents have happened before - last year two Lossiemouth registered vessels were sunk off North Uist with all hands lost. After considerable pressure was brought to bear by fishermen groups the Royal Navy admitted that the cause was the nuclear submarine Relentless. This time, however, the navy deny the charges, stating that they have no subs on patrol in the area. A RN spokesman said: "We liaise with the coastguard, fisheries protection vessels and local fishing associations to avoid such incidents. Any submarine crew involved in such a collision would immediately report it to the Admiralty and the coastguards."

Local people are, however, not satisfied with this explanation, pointing to the minesweepers HMS Albion and Falklands currently in the area, and the high level of RN helicopter traffic. It is widely believed that a sub may have been included in these exercises. Peggy Swankie (47), wife of the missing skipper, stated: "Iain's been working these waters all his life. He knew every inch of the seafloor, every wreck and bank. Only something totally unexpected like a submarine could have caused the loss of the

Lichtie."

The tragedy is another blow to an industry already hit by falling catches and recession... Continued p3.

DISEASE THREATENS MONTROSE SHOW

The annual Montrose agricultural show, scheduled for the first weekend of April, may have to be cancelled this year, warn organisers. After several cases of bovine tuberculosis were reported on Tayside farms and an outbreak of equine flu at a Montrose stable, farmers are withdrawing from the event for fears that their stock will be contaminated. "We understand and sympathise", said Duncan Soutar, Chairman of the coming show. "People don't want to risk bringing a prize animal to a show and taking a sick one home. We hope the TB situation will be under control by the time the show commences."

Farmers blame the local badger population - now rising again after several years in decline - for the current outbreak of TB. Officials from DAFS are investigating the claims, and a campaign of gassing setts around infected areas is expected to commence soon. The equine flu is also under investigation by DAFS officers, and a spokeswoman said "We believe we have traced the source of the infection to a single animal imported from Ireland."

COURIER PRIZE BINGO

The Winning Numbers for week 8 are:

! 58
! 7
! 49
! 00
! 17
! 568

Phone 01234 - 56789 to claim your prize!

SHEEP KILLERS STRIKE AGAIN

Farmer Donnie Patterson of Carmyllie is the latest to be struck by the "Black Dugs" that are slaughtering sheep across Tayside. The distraught farmer found three ewes dead and two so badly injured that they had to be put down. All had been attacked by a large dog or dogs and one partially eaten. He told the Courier: "A farmer expects the occasional loss, but this is just senseless waste. It'll be lambing season soon, and god help us if these beasts are still loose then." Opinion is mixed on where the dogs came from. Some believe that the animals to be Rotterweilers abandoned by their owner after the Dangerous Dogs Act came in to force; others think the killings may be revenge attacks by Travellers who have been banned from camping on several farmers land. A few claim that the culprit may be an escaped big cat, such as the puma shot near Inverness in 1991. The Police say that they are investigating all possibilities, but refused to comment further. There are calls for the Army to assist in the tracking down of the dogs, as they did several years ago in the - unsuccessful - hunt for the famed Beast of Exmoor.

BID TO SAVE ARBROATH FLAX MILL FAILS

An attempt to find a buyer for the only remaining flax weaving factory in Tayside has failed. The current owners, Franklin Weaver & Sons, are going into receivership, and the only hope of saving the factory and the 200 jobs that it represents was to find a new buyer willing to inject new capital into the venture. Whilst several companies were interested in the site as a focus for new building, none were interested in the factory itself.