



Avoch Linked with Fortrose and Rosemarkie Church of Scotland

Quarterly Newsletter Issue 16 May 2023

Brief Encounter (1)

'In what way are lighthouses and churches alike?'

It's just before 7am on a sunny April morning at Chanonry Point. My questioner is a Canadian visitor who has stopped me to ask what the 'castle' is across the water before moving on to asking about the 'ocean' in front of him then on to Rosemarkie, noting the prominence of the church before posing the lighthouse question.

What would your answer have been?

More on third page....

Thank you!

When we launched the first of this run of newsletters in October 2019, we were grateful for the advice of Rev Richard Burkitt and the printing services he provided via his charity, *For The Right Reasons*.

When the charity closed in 2021, we were delighted that Stewart Forbes took over the printing service under the banner, *Lucid Raccoon*. Stewart has provided an excellent service at a competitive cost which has been hugely appreciated.

However, from the 1st of June, *Lucid Raccoon* will merge with *A4 Print and Design* which is why the June Newsletter has come out in May!

From Little Acorns....

Having attended my fair share of meetings and conferences over the years to hear some ground-breaking initiative which just as quickly withered away, I was not overly enthusiastic as I took off to Culbokie Church a few weeks ago to find out more about a new Church of Scotland missional programme entitled ACORN.

However, I was pleasantly surprised and ACORN struck me as something our church could take on, indeed it appeared to be basically an extension of what we're already trying to do. At its essence it's about taking a powerful and practical interest in the people round about us.

ACORN is an acronym for Ask, Call, Obey, Report and Notice. First of all, ASK God each morning to put someone outside the church, who would benefit from a call or a visit, into your mind. If no one springs to mind, keep asking.

When someone is revealed to you, OBEY by getting in touch with the person and ask the question, 'How are you?' then follow up with a genuine interest in how they're doing and, hopefully, starting to build a closer relationship with the person. Simply listening is a key element of ACORN.

The next step is to meet informally with other members of ACORN and to REPORT how things are going and to NOTICE together how God is working in people's lives. We heard from local folk of different ages and backgrounds how powerful this simple process can be and I hope it's something we'll hear more about in the coming weeks.

Douglas Simpson

The minister has been deeply involved in the Presbytery Planning Process over the past four years: he's been responsible (with colleagues) for most of the documents and presentations that the Planning Committee shared with the Presbytery of Ross and is currently Convenor.



Context

In recent months, you will have often heard me refer to the “Presbytery Mission Plan,” so here is a brief article to explain more about it. Basically, the idea is this: the church needs “well equipped spaces in the right places” to function and to proclaim the “good news of the gospel” to our communities; it also needs to share available ministers with existing congregations in a way that is sustainable across Scotland.

The recent Planning process started when the General Assembly (2021) declared that every Presbytery had to review all its congregations, ministers, buildings and activities to assess what would be needed in the future. Simply put, declining congregational numbers mean that the basic functions needed for church life are a struggle in many contexts, and given the shortage of trained ministers, an urgent reassessment of the church’s situation has been necessary across the nation.

As a result, every Presbytery (regional grouping) has had to complete a Mission Plan by the end of 2022. As part of these reviews within the wider Church of Scotland, the Presbytery of Ross Mission Planning Team has been looking at three issues.

Mission

The new Plan puts mission at the heart of the life of the church but recognises that accomplishing this mission needs a new focus and new ways of doing things. It encourages churches to focus on mission through “Building the Church,” “Serving Society” and “Taking Care of Creation” by drawing on the human resources found within congregations as well as ministers and other trained specialists. (This draws on a widely adopted approach called “The Five Marks of Mission”).*

Ministry

With fewer ministers available, the General Assembly gave explicit instructions to reduce **ministry** allocations from sixteen full-time equivalent posts to ten by Dec 2025 in the Presbytery of Ross. This means that our local congregations need to be better equipped and trained to engage in the mission and life of the church – the biblical concept of the “priesthood of all believers” needs to thrive and develop further in our congregations.

To help with this, the Presbytery of Ross has created three new “Facilitator” roles – offering support in leading Worship, engaging in Mission and ministering to Young People. These roles will be part of the workload of three existing ministers but will strengthen our capacity by the end of the decade – these “new ways of doing ministry” will lead us to “new ways of being church.”

*See <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-faith>

Buildings

The Church has also carried out an evaluation of its buildings to ensure their suitability for the challenges of Christian mission in the 21st century and to create a plan for future growth while continuing to support the communities we serve.

The Church owns thousands of properties, far more than required to achieve our mission of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and serving our local communities and many whose age means they may no longer be suitable for the needs of their congregations, or whose continued upkeep and maintenance may no longer be viable in the face of falling membership and a reduction in financial contributions.

Presbytery Mission Plan

The new Mission Plan, which was approved by an overwhelming majority at the recent Presbytery of Ross in February 2023, offers a viable and credible future for the Presbytery of Ross in the coming years, by making important decisions about the allocation of ministers and ministry roles and the choice of church buildings to retain. However, sadly, for some congregations it will mean the loss of their buildings and the need to become part of a new or altered configuration of church members.

These changes are happening across Scotland and we acknowledge that many people, especially where church life has been centred on a particular location, understandably find this difficult to accept. The reality is that unless the Church of Scotland responds to decline and implements change, continuing to sustain the number of congregations we have will not be possible in the future.

We will continue to update the congregation on the impact and implementation of the Presbytery Mission Plan in the coming months - If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Warren



So what would your answer have been to the question 'In what way are lighthouses and churches alike?' In my case, it was only two days after hearing Jack in his prayer note how even a small error in navigation can take you far away from where you want to be. So my Jack-inspired response to my inquisitor was along

the lines of, 'Both help us keep on course.'

'Not bad,' he said, 'not bad. But there's also is a difference in that the lighthouse is for maritime traffic whereas the church is for everyone.' He went on to explain that his church had been renamed as The Lighthouse, to be a light in the community quoting Matthew 5:14 *'You are the light of the world. People (do not) light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.'*

Then someone shouted, 'Dolphin!' and he was gone.....

Contributed

Remembering Nan



For many years Nan Geddes was a regular attender at Rosemarkie Church and is fondly remembered by many.

Anna 'Nan' Geddes was born in Conon Bridge on 20th August 1936 and raised in Inverness with her older sister Margaret and younger brother Jack. Sadly, Nan's father died when she was 9 years old.



Nan left school at 15, worked in 'Woolies' and also worked as a bakery assistant. She signed up for the Territorial Army in 1954 when she was 18 years old.

Nan met Malcolm, whose sister Janet was one of Nan's best friends. They were married in 1959 and Malcolm junior came along in 1962 followed by Duncan in 1964. Shortly after, they moved down to Barden, Hampshire for Malcolm's work. He was a farrier/welder by trade.

Along came Nancy in 1966, then a move to Hascombe in Surrey and Ray came along to join the family in 1969. The 60s decade was a very busy year for them! It included a move to Cranleigh which at that time was the largest village in England quite a contrast to the one pub, one wee village shop that was in Hascombe! Nan loved family life, including caring for various dogs and cats over the years. She was fond of jumble sales and upcycling garments that she found.

Nan and Malcolm moved up to Rosemarkie in 1986 alongside young Malcolm and Ray and settled into life at Crawford Avenue. They both enjoyed ballroom dancing and were members of the dancing clubs both of Inverness and Dingwall. They were delighted to have 7 grandchildren, Bronwyn, Finlay, Naomi, Rory, Amanda, Cameron and Iona.

Nan enjoyed baking, especially Christmas, wedding and birthday cakes. She always made sweets at Christmas time and her daughter now uses some of these recipes at Christmas. She was also an avid reader, a keen knitter and was very good with the needle and thread, making all Nancy's dresses when she was young.

Nan's husband Malcolm, passed away in 2009 and afterwards she and young Malcolm moved to a two-bedroomed bungalow where there were no steps, to make it easier on Nan's knees. She enjoyed attending the Pensioner's Club in Cromarty and the mobile library made sure she had a regular supply of books. Shop Mobility took her shopping every week up until 2020.

Nan became a great nana in 2021, a little girl who Naomi named, Rosie Anna, after her granny who was absolutely delighted. In all, Nan was a dear mum, granny, great nana, sister, sister-in-law, mother-in-law, cousin, auntie and a great friend to many. Much missed.

Nan's Family

‘Once Met, Never Forgotten’

Bill Martin was a well kent figure in Fortrose in recent years and there was much sadness at news of his passing in March. Here, Bill's family pay tribute.

Bill was born in 1930 in the West End of Glasgow 93 years ago. He attended Glasgow High School until WW2 broke out when he was evacuated to the home of his aunt and uncle in Kilmacolm. Aged 13, he became a boarder at Glenalmond College where he developed a passion for rugby and cricket and a talent as a drummer in the Cadets.



Bill's enthusiasm for Scottish rugby during the Six Nations remained undiminished for the rest of his life. He had a special place for Glasgow Warriors too. Returning to the city as one of the oldest Clydesider volunteers at the 2014 Commonwealth Games perhaps fulfilled a dream – his passion for sport and Glasgow became entwined. It appealed to Bill's sense of humour that, at the age of 84, he was put in charge of ground control at the Bowling Green!

A period of national service in Northern Ireland was followed by rigorous training on the tannery floor of W&J Martin's where a talent for sales came to the fore. Bill loved to travel – Europe and South Africa became regular stomping grounds. Bill and Brenda enjoyed using their combined creative talents to produce imaginative displays for the spring and autumn leather exhibitions. To cope with the heat, Bill had a special kilt made from lightweight Cameron of Erracht tartan which made him very popular on his visits abroad.

In 1955 he and Brenda married and over the next six years Erica was born in London and Corinne and Carola were born in Malvern. However, Bill and Brenda were determined to bring up their daughters in Scotland, so Bill took up a job in Glasgow and the family moved to Paisley in 1965.

A challenging leather market for the Bridge of Weir tannery in 1979 created a watershed moment for Bill and family. Bill accepted an invitation to work for Herman Lowenstein Leathers in the USA, a journey that took them to upstate New York, and then to Maine, where they embraced all the challenges and opportunities of American life without ever losing their Scottish identity.

In 1993, Bill and Brenda returned from the USA to the Black Isle to offer support to Erica, their oldest daughter. This gave them the opportunity to forge lovely close bonds with their two granddaughters. In addition, Bill was energised to project manage the building of their home at the top of the hill in Avoch. When the hill became too steep to negotiate, they found level ground in Bishop's Wood and flourished in the close-knit village of Fortrose.

From his return to Scotland until he was well into his 90s, Bill always had to have a project on the go – many of which were related to his desire to help others. He was one of the driving forces behind creating New Start in Inverness, a charity set up to tackle homelessness, poverty

and long-time unemployment in the Highlands. An organisation that continues to thrive today. Bill was also passionate about filling shoeboxes for Blythswood. Indeed, he could be seen regularly at the corner of Fortrose Co-op trying to flog his shoeboxes for folk to fill at Christmas. He sometimes wondered why people were not quite as enthusiastic as he was. Well, it was only the middle of June!

In Bill's 90th year, the residents of Fortrose were treated to a wonderful fundraising event at Bishop's Wood. Bill and Brenda created the Truly Terrific Trail in aid of Sistema/The Big Noise, a charity that improves children's lives through music. In just one day they raised £2,500! Bill saved his pennies wherever he could but quite often to give his pounds to charity.

He was a trailblazer for environmental causes – green issues were dear to his heart. In fact, those of you driving an electric car should be grateful to Bill. His assiduous monitoring of charge points never ceased and he was regularly on the line to the Zap Map call centre, finding out when and where new charge points were coming to the Highlands. In fact, Bill was an enthusiastic caller to any company whose products did not quite meet his expectations and it seems very likely that a good many more call centres will miss him too.



For the cycling fraternity of Inverness and the residents of Fortrose, Bill was a legend! In his mid 60's, he cut his teeth on a charity bike ride across Israel, where sadly he had to trade his beloved leather saddle for a gel padded seat and numerous layers of cycling shorts to endure the miles of stony roads.

Losing his balance in his 90's, he had to give up riding his two-wheeler electric bike but, not to be defeated, he bought an electric three-wheeler trike – bright red helmet to match! He became well known, even as far as Inverness. He would use it to fetch the milk and Herald every morning from the Co-op. On sunny days, he would ride up Feddon Hill or down to Chanonry Point to watch the dolphins. He loved the freedom it gave him.

His sense of mischief and humour were qualities that Brenda appreciated hugely and made living with Bill for the last 68 years very easy and GREAT fun. Bill touched many lives. He engaged warmly with all generations and inspired family, friends and so many more, even if briefly acquainted. Once met, never forgotten.

The final verse of a poem delivered by his grandsons at the funeral sums up Bill beautifully:

For 93 years he pedalled his unique brand
Leaving a legacy of helping others and lending a hand
Rest in peace, dear Gramps, you were a true inspiration
You paved the way for the next generation.

Love of the Mountains



I've always had a love of mountains. In my earliest days growing up in rural Aberdeenshire, I used to look from my great granny's, out across the green fields of the Garioch to the distinctive outline of Bennachie etched on the distant skyline. It's a landscape feature that dominates the North-east plain, meriting its own warm place in the heart of exiles such as myself, and in the region's poetry. Of course, Bennachie isn't really a mountain in terms of its altitude, but to a wee North-east loon it certainly seemed like one, and anyway its Gaelic-derived name gives it a place alongside Ben Nevis and our own local high point, Ben Wyvis. And it was hills, rather than mountains, that the Psalmist was looking up to and which inspired that short but powerful opening: *I lift up my eyes to the hills...* He takes the opportunity while looking at the prospect of the hills before him to ask a key question about life.

Since those childhood days I've been fortunate to be in many mountain areas across the world and these places hold so many of the richest and most valued memories of times spent with my wife in past days in mountain places, for which we had a shared passion. In fact, our very first holiday together was in a village in the Swiss Alps. I vividly recall the impact the high, snow-capped peaks had on us both but there's one abiding memory of the place that remains most special.

It's the day we climbed up above the flower-studded Alpine meadows towards a summit where gentians grew in abundance. In fact, in some spots so many had opened their funnel-shaped blooms to the sun that there was a ground carpet of azure to match the clear blue sky above. It was a stunning sight. We'd never seen anything like it and from that day on, we had a special love of these special, high-level flowers, no matter in which mountain area, the sights of them the reward for the hours of effort needed to reach them. At home, we always had some gentians growing in the garden – a reminder of happy botanising days in those very special mountain settings.



Four months after Catherine died, I decided to go on a group trek in the high mountain Kingdom of Bhutan in the Himalayas. (By then, I'd passed the marker point of three score years and ten; rather on the high side for Himalayan trekking perhaps, but never mind, it's how you feel, more than what society thinks you should be doing at that advanced stage in life!) Being autumn, the yak herders on the high pastures were already preparing to descend with their livestock into their villages in the valley before winter set in. I'd no high hopes of seeing many mountain plants in flower so late in the season but one day on the trek, like the psalmist of old, I just had to stop for a moment's contemplation.

At the side of the rough, stony track, was a small burn. As it descended on its cheery way, the water flow turned a little wooden prayer wheel before heading down a slope festooned with colourful Buddhist prayer flags flapping endlessly in the breeze. Our little line of pack mules had moved on ahead, taking the sound of their tinkling bells with them and leaving only the gentle gurgling of the burn to break the special silence. For the most part, gentians are spring flowers but there, right in front of me, the damp mossy ground was studded with bright blue specimens of an autumn flowering species. It was a beautiful sight but, more than that, for me at that time in my personal life, it came as a highly unexpected gift. 'Blessings abound...' are the opening words in one of the stanzas of Isaac Watts' ancient hymn. As Christians, we know that the abundant blessings of life are all around us and there for us to appreciate. Sometimes we just need to take time to stop and make our own connections.

Douglas Willis



'Do Good and Good will come your way.'

No, I didn't find this in the bible - it was on a new hand lotion! Hands are so important in our lives as are our hearts. You can cuddle a new born and feel the love in your heart and you can hold the hand of someone dying and feel the love for that person in your heart.

We put our hands together to pray and feel the love of God in our heart. We can see our hands but can we see our heart? Yes we can! Each time we Do Good to help someone we should feel Good in our heart as we see joy in someone's face.

Jesus had nails put through his hands on the cross but love still poured out from his heart for all of us. Perhaps we should take a few minutes in the day to Do Good, Feel Good to help others and please God. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9: v 7 **Anne Fiddes**

The Gospel of Mark at The Fringe



A one-man dramatic recitation of *The Gospel Of Mark* is one of the regular offers among the 3000+ shows at the annual Edinburgh Fringe. A performance from over a decade ago remains vividly in the memory. And dramatic it was too!

Word had got out and the auditorium was packed as the curtains opened to reveal one man, a table and a couple of chairs. Suddenly, we were plunged into darkness as a voice declaimed, *The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in Isaiah the prophet: I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way – a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight the paths for him.'*

As the lights came up we were introduced to a wild man, John the Baptist, preaching and baptising in the desert, dressed in clothing made of camel's hair and eating locusts and wild honey. John's story brought immediate vigour to the performance but the introduction of the recently baptised Jesus shortly afterwards (v9) ramped up the energy even further. In the King James version 'immediately', 'straightaway' and other variations occur 11 times from verse 9 to the end of the chapter. It set the tone for the next two hours of gripping drama.

All of this came flooding back when Douglas Simpson passed on a copy of *The Stature of Waiting* by W H Winstone in which the author discusses the 'vigorous momentum' of Mark's gospel. Winstone points out that in Mark's Gospel, Jesus is never a mere observer. He is portrayed as always being on the move from place to place, from situation to situation, leaving 'transformed scenes and changed situations' in his wake. Fishermen walk away from their boats, the sick and infirm are healed, a young girl is raised from the dead, hunger is alleviated, a storm is quelled, critics are confused. Jesus is never a mere spectator – he is a transforming presence.

A few chapters in, Jesus is with the disciples in Caesarea Philippi. Mark records that in just 14 lines 'Jesus asked' (twice), 'rebuked' (twice), 'spoke' (twice), 'went', 'began to teach', 'spoke freely', 'turned', 'saw', 'called' – thus sustaining a sense of constant momentum. Again and again, Mark emphasises the impact Jesus had on the minds and hearts of those who heard him. 'They were amazed at his teaching because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers' (1:22). Even those closest to him, the disciples are 'completely amazed' as Jesus stills the storm (6:51).

In addition, Mark regularly reports scenes and situations through Jesus's eyes. 'As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, *he saw* Simon and his brother Andrew them casting a net...' On other occasions he shows Jesus taking the lead 'Jesus *took* Peter, James and John...(9.2) In the feeding of the 4000, the crowd do not simply depart. 'After they ate, Jesus *told* them to go home.'

Mark adds a further layer by providing glimpses of Jesus's inner thoughts. Jesus doesn't only

see the large crowd waiting to hear him, in Mark's version he has *compassion* for them. When he hears of the people's unbelief, he *wonders* at it. When the Pharisees asked him for a sign from heaven, 'he *sighed deeply* in his spirit'. At other times (3:5), we see Jesus moved to righteous anger, 'He *looked round at them in anger* and (was) *deeply distressed* at their stubborn hearts'.

There are tender moments, too, and the attention to detail, the hallmark of the eyewitness. 'He took a small child and had him stand among them. *Taking him in his arms*, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children...' 9:36-37. Earlier, at 4:38 when the disciples are in fear of their lives when caught in a storm in the Sea of Galilee Mark notes, Jesus was in the stern, *sleeping on a cushion*.' Authenticity of experience is emphasised by a sprinkling of Aramaic words, most memorably, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* 15:33 at the Crucifixion.

By chapter 14, we are in Bethany, hearing (and cheering) Jesus rebuke those who scolded the woman for pouring the alabaster jar of expensive perfume on Jesus, wasting a valuable resource. At the Fringe performance, the audience were now fully and whole-heartedly invested in the confidently authoritative Jesus as we followed him to the Passover Meal in an upper room and then into Gethsemane. Suddenly, everything changed.

From the moment he is handed over, we hear very little from Jesus. Mark no longer tells the story from Jesus's perspective, nor does he tell us how Jesus might be feeling. Jesus is no longer the one who does – now he is 'done to'. The change is dramatic and the audience move from dismay to outrage as we hear the details of the arrest, trial, Crucifixion only for it all to give way as we move into Mark's description of the Resurrection in the final chapter finishing with *Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it*.

As the last words fell, the audience rose as one in a sustained ovation until 'Mark' held out his hands to ask again for silence and his last words, 'Remember I am only the messenger. Go read for yourselves.' The stage went black and he was gone. Unforgettable. **CM**

If you are going to be in Edinburgh in August, this year's production of *I Am Mark* performed by Stefan Smart will be at Charlotte Chapel, Shandwick Place 7th - 12th, 14th-15th and 18th -19th August.



I AM MARK

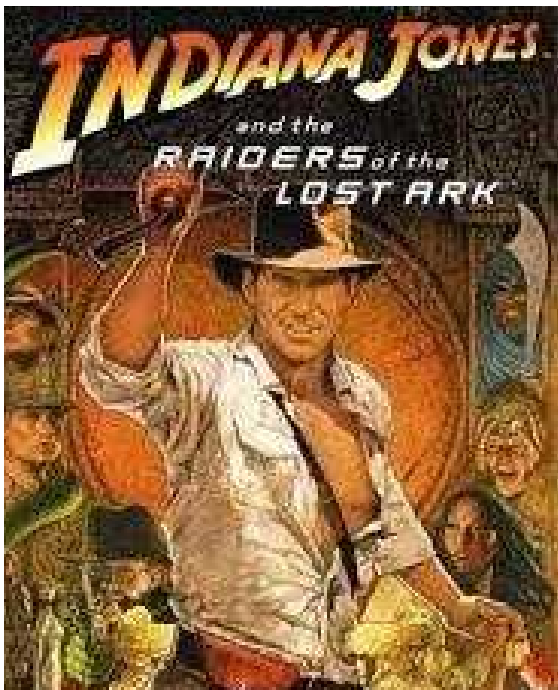
A Daring New Staging of Mark's Gospel
Performed by Stefan Smart

Desert Island Discs with Susan MacLeman

When I was little, I attended Sunday School and I loved everything about it. I even tolerated the scratchy horse hair cushions. The children's hymn *Jesus Bids Us Shine* reminds me of those times I spent learning God's teachings in a happy and fun way. As an adult I'm very traditional when it comes to the hymns I like. My favourites are *Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty* and *It is Well with my Soul*. At Christmas I like to sing *O Come, O Come, Emanuel*.

My choice for a classical piece would be *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Dukas and, yes, because of *Fantasia*. As a kid I remember watching the Disney compilation shows that were aired in the holidays. I didn't see *Fantasia* in its entirety until 2000 when it was released on VHS - out of all the amazing music and animation (who could forget the ballet dancing hippos) *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* was still my favourite.

One of my Dad's favourite bands was The Electric Light Orchestra (ELO) who had many hits in the 70s. I particularly like *Mr Blue Sky* as it is such an upbeat song. It reminds me of Dad and it also became a favourite of our two girls when it was included on the soundtrack for the 2005 movie version of *The Magic Roundabout*.



I love a movie soundtrack. Some of the most memorable are written by John Williams. Everyone knows them from their first few bars, *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters* and numerous other instantly recognisable scores. When I was ten, *Indiana Jones Raiders of The Lost Ark* was released. Its main theme *The Raiders March* is so rousing that whenever I do anything remotely adventurous it is what is ringing in my ears.

My last choice is all about our two girls Rachel and Sarah. They do an amazing lip sync to George Michael's *Careless Whisper*, which makes me laugh. It is also in their words "a banging tune".

My book is *Fairy Art* by Iain Zaczek - an art book all about the romantic painters and illustrators of the early 19th century. The paintings in this book are so detailed, I spot something different every time I look at them.

My luxury item would be factor 50 sunscreen, as I burn easily!



The Pastoral Care Team Easter Bonnet (and Bow Tie) Create Day



.....and on to Church on Easter Sunday



A huge thank you to Graeme and the Pastoral Care team, not forgetting Sylvia for the chocolate Easter eggs.

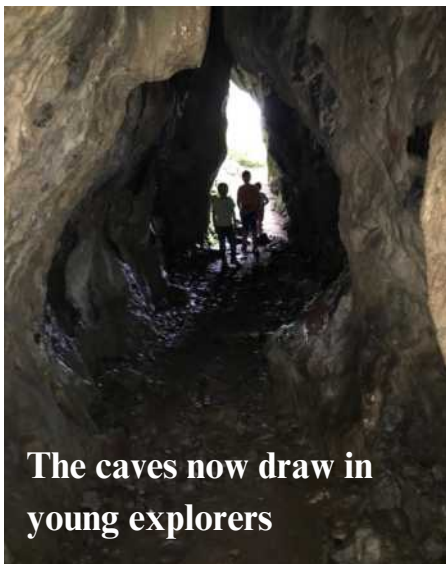


Rosemarkie in 1793

In my short article in Newsletter 13 about the former ministers of Rosemarkie Church I started with a quotation that the names of most ministers fell quickly into oblivion after their departure from this life unless they left something in writing to remind us of their character and preaching. While it is not concentrated on his character and preaching as such, the piece left by the first Rev Alexander Wood, minister from 1775 to 1809 provides much fascinating detail of Rosemarkie around 1793. He wrote the contribution on the village contained in the first Statistical Account of Scotland.

He starts with a suggestion of the source of the village's name which is somewhat different from that given in Keith Lorraine's article in Newsletter 9. Wood, who is of course writing at a time before the present church was built, tells us that in former times there was a steeple "in an elevated and conspicuous station" annexed to the church and that this was one of the first objects sighted by mariners coming up the Moray Firth. They would say to each other "Mark ye Ross!" which was turned into Rossmarkie. It does sound somewhat farfetched! I think that Keith's suggestion is much more likely.

The area is described as for the most part arable, producing rich and early crops, notably barley, potatoes and peas, as well as oats which made excellent meal in other parts where the land lay on a deep clay bottom. The country benefitted from fine sea breezes with pure and salubrious air so that few contagious distempers made their appearance. Smallpox had formerly made great ravages but by 1793 this had been alleviated by inoculation, to which even the lower ranks of the people had begun to be reconciled. Very few children had died of smallpox in the previous twenty years.



The caves now draw in young explorers

Hawks and wild pigeons nested in the 'frightful cliffs' between Rosemarkie and Cromarty. Crabs and lobsters were dragged from holes among the rocks by the women, using old corn hooks, while seals and otters were occasionally seen. Some of the caves were used by fishermen as temporary lodgings when herring was plentiful and others used by smugglers for concealing their prohibited articles.

Much of the wood which had covered the parish had been harvested in recent years but there had been considerable planting of fir trees which were anticipated to give a useful fund of fuel in due time. Salmon were caught at Chanonry

Point. The links of Fortrose were described as being as smooth as a carpet and a fine ground for golf which was often played there by the gentlemen of the town and country. So no change there in the last 230 years! At the Point there was the ferry to Fort George, which Wood described as "so safe a passage that there is not an instance of any being lost on it in memory of man". (This record came to an end on 15 November 1811 when the boat overturned 600 yards out of Fort George in a strong gale. Only two passengers survived

out of the four boatmen and nine passengers on board. The one pony on board also survived.)

Around sixty ploughs were employed in the area, usually drawn by six or sometimes eight middle sized or small oxen. Small horses gathered manure, yoked in a sort of light sledge rolling on wooden wheels.

Wood described a recent improvement which he had made to a small lake of between three and four acres near the manse on the side of the road to Fortrose which was at least 4ft deep in winter. A small boat was in use by those who were seeking the wild ducks on the lake. This lake was an intolerable nuisance due to the stagnation in summer producing a most disagreeable and unwholesome smell. The minister cut a very deep drain across the road so that the water drained into his glebe and thence into a gravel bank on the glebe. In the course of a month this drained the lake and further drains were dug to ensure that the work was permanent. Although this incurred considerable cost it was amply repaid by the fertility of the resultant soil. Something to think about as we travel between Fortrose and Rosemarkie!

The registers of births and deaths had not been maintained accurately.

In 1792 the population of Chanonry was 445, Rosemarkie 296 and the country area of the parish 521, a total of 1,262, an increase of 122 from a previous census in 1755. All the inhabitants were of 'the Established Church' except one or two families in the town of Chanonry who were of the Episcopal persuasion.



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The occupations are of interest: Merchants 7, shoemakers 32, weavers 35, tailors 4, masons 2, butchers 2, teachers 4, squarewrights 4, millwrights 2, smith 1, writer 1, and of course minister 1. At that time the greater part of the inhabitants, of the lower class, in Chanonry had been shoemakers, and in Rosemarkie weavers. Every week the shoemakers carried a parcel of shoes for sale in Inverness. The linen produced by the weavers was mainly sold at the two annual fairs.

Within the last twenty years 10 people in the parish had died aged 90 and above. One vigorous old man of 87 had put off his wig in the previous year revealing "a set of venerable grey locks". This gentleman's claim to fame was that he was in Edinburgh, then aged 30, on 7 September 1736 at the hanging of the notorious Captain Porteous, which he said was well deserved, as a sweetheart of his had been wounded in the firing into the crowd which Porteous had commanded.

Rev Alexander Ross' stipend was 6 chalders and 8 bolls (a total of 22,000 litres) of barley and 3 chalders (7,000 litres) of meal. He had ten children, four sons and six daughters. From his

salary he was expected to pay a proportion of the expenses of the church and the manse plus the choirmaster's salary. He considered this a hardship. His manse had been built in 1756 on the location of the present old manse and was just about to be repaired in 1793. The surrounding glebe ran to about four Scotch acres. The church building, the predecessor of our present building, was uncommonly long and narrow, which was very disagreeable to the preacher. It was hoped that when the roof failed it would be rebuilt in a more proper and commodious form. Sadly, Rev Alexander Wood died in 1809 so did not live to see the building in which we now worship.

The poor of the parish, numbering above sixty, were assisted by the Church from weekly collections which totalled between £8 and £9 in the year plus some interest from a capital bequest of £200 and some seat rents. In addition there was the Seaforth Mortification, established by the Countess of Seaforth in 1680 and still in operation today (see the last page of Newsletter 15). In those days the income for distribution was "17 bolls and 2 firlots land rent".

Rev Wood considered it somewhat remarkable that in Rosemarkie, as well as the neighbouring parishes of Cromarty and Avoch, the ministers preached only in English, which was the common language of the people. No Gaelic was spoken in the parish, any domestic servants coming from the Highlands soon acquiring English. There was a scarcity of farm labourers as most young men left the area, either to join the army or attracted by better prospects in the south. The minister had "every reason to complain" of the number of ale-houses or "tippling houses" in Rosemarkie and adjacent parishes. His words are worth quoting. "These have the most baneful effects in injuring the health, wasting the substance and debauching the morals of the people. Many, by haunting them too often, bring ruin on themselves and their families. It is much to be wished that some effectual course were devised and put in execution to crush them".

He concludes by saying that "the inhabitants of the parish, in general, especially those of the better sort, are sober and industrious, moderate in their principles and decent in their conduct and free from those contrasted notions and religious prejudices which are so prevalent in more northern parishes and some other parts of Scotland".

I wonder what the folk of Rosemarkie in 2253 will think about us!

Jack Kernahan

Thank you!

To all who supported the Malawi Cyclone Appeal which resulted in £500 being sent to the Scotland Malawi Partnership. Our prayers continue for those affected.

To Linda Simpson for all her hard work and commitment to Traidcraft and all who supported her and led to £200 donations being sent from the profits to Tearfund, Christian Aid and Blythswood Care. Much appreciated.

Music in the Valleys

Mary Naismith has been our local church member for over 30 years and was, for many years, a church organist fondly remembered for the gusto with which she played Welsh hymn tunes on Sundays after the Wales rugby team had won - particularly against Scotland! It was a real joy to sit down and share a coffee with Mary and hear something of her life. **Margaret MacSween**

Where were you brought up, Mary?

I was born at home in Wattsville, South Wales, a small mining village in the Sirhowy Valley near Newport. My older sister Ann and I both had diphtheria as children. Mine was less severe than Ann's but by the time she was admitted to hospital for isolation it was too late and she sadly died. My other sister Ruth is sixteen months younger than me and I have a brother seven years younger. Unfortunately, mum had multiple sclerosis and after my brother was born, she seemed to deteriorate.



But even though my mum had MS we had a great life. My mum loved music, and dad played piano and organ. I had piano lessons and my sister had singing lessons. She had such a lovely voice. We wondered what my brother was going to do but later on he bought a set of drums! There was always singing in our house. Mum wasn't a singer but loved music and made me practice my piano lessons, insisting that they were not going to waste money if I didn't practice and the lessons would be stopped. That kept me going!

One Christmas my dad bought me a piano accordion. What a lovely surprise! I had lessons on the bass as I already knew the treble. For the lessons I had to lug this heavy accordion on two different buses for a half hour lesson and then two buses back. It was lovely though, as we used it at the church and at the Sunday School. When we went carol singing with the accordion, people used to come out thinking we were the Salvation Army! My sister Ruth and I used to sing together as she had a lovely soprano voice and I sang the alto part. We used to sing duets all over South Wales valleys.



Mary and Ruth who became the singing sisters

That would be good for confidence then, Mary?

Yes indeed, especially from the Welsh chapels, where we were taken to when we were babes in arms. We grew up in the church. We went to the Pentecostal Church – some described it as the 'happy clappy' church! It was a happy church, a huge church with a small chapel downstairs and a big chapel upstairs which was packed. It was lovely. We went three times on a Sunday which included Sunday School in the afternoon. There were ten Sunday Classes and teachers and classes were up to the age of 15.

At the Whit Convention, there were speakers and missionaries from all over the world and children from all the different churches, Congregational, Methodist and Baptist Church too, wore their best clothes and we all marched in the street. A new choir would be formed from these churches and we would perform. And, of course there were the wonderful teas afterwards - the churches would take it in turn to do the big tea party. A strong memory is if you didn't arrive at church early for these services, you didn't get a seat!

Such wonderful memories to have, Mary. Is it still alive and active these days?

Yes, it's still going to this day. It has changed a lot, though. They are singing modern hymns and churches have joined up. My brother and his wife now go to a church in Newport, a multi-denominational evangelical church. Expressing your faith through music has been a long standing tradition in South Wales. We had a choir of about 25 young people and an even bigger choir on a Friday night further up the valley, when people came from different churches to create a massive multi-choir. Great memories!

Coming back to your mum, was MS common in South Wales?

No, not at all. Growing up I only knew of three people who had MS. Mum had iron supports for her legs but it became clear that she needed a wheelchair. It was about that time I had to come out of school to look after her and the younger children. In the 50s there was very little support or social care available. It was a struggle to get her a wheelchair but my aunt wrote to everyone she knew of, asking for help. She even wrote to Gilbert Harding (right) of *What's My Line?* television panel game. He was a grumpy old



man but within a week, we had two wheelchairs. Isn't that amazing! There was a big padded one and a small foldup one which could go into our little van. My mum loved him after that.

It was only when mum was very poorly that she got a home help and that was my Auntie Flo. As well as helping with mum, I did other little jobs to bring in money – like Avon Lady and I also did night classes for shorthand and typing. I remained at home until I was 22.

Mum died that year of bronchial pneumonia aged 47. Our own daughter Rhiannon is now 47 and I often think how young mum was when she passed away. But mum never lost her faith and, despite her debilitating illness, she fought it hard, remaining strong to the end.

And your dad was a miner?

Yes, he was despite his mum not wanting him to go down the mine as his father was killed in a pit accident. When he was 14, lots of boys from the valleys were given a suit and shoes and sent off to London to learn a trade. But, after six months, dad was homesick and came back home to work down the mines. He had a few nasty accidents but that was just the nature of the work. My mum had died before dad stopped working down the mine and became employed making stainless steel tops for farm tanks. For him it was a total contrast working in a factory wearing a white coat. He always took 'jammy pieces' down the mine in his little box and continued to do so in the factory, even although the factory had a restaurant.

Was there a good social life growing up?

Yes, it was mainly through the huge youth fellowship group at the church and with family. We knew family friends with motor bikes. Five of us would get in ours, dad at the front, me on the back and mum and the other two in the sidecar. It was at that time that I got my first pair of trousers as girls didn't wear them back then but I had to wear them on the back of a bike.

One day my dad was going up the hill, locally known as Little Switzerland, as there were beautiful views. He changed gear suddenly and I fell off the back but he didn't notice that I had gone. Mum was banging on the side of the sidecar, shouting, 'Mary, Mary.' It finally dawned on him I wasn't there. Fortunately, I only had a sore bottom where I landed!

And what did you do after your mum passed away?

Well, my first thought was I need to earn some money! But I was only 6 stone 13 by the time mum died and so I went to visit a friend in Bordeaux. It was lovely. When I came back, I got a job in the Post Office. Then dad remarried and that was a time of adjustment for me as I'd been running the house for years. I worked for a couple of years, saved up money and bought my first car, a second hand Mini. I rang my pal from Bordeaux who was now living in Edinburgh and she persuaded me to move north. On Bonfire Night 1967 I drove to Edinburgh and I never went back home other than to visit.

After a while, I moved to a bedsit in Dublin Street in Edinburgh. I joined the Edinburgh Welsh Society and got a job with MacKenzie and Moncur, Heating Engineers, a job I loved and worked there for a few years. I met Ken my husband at a friend's party upstairs from my flat. The party was eventful in that I met my future husband but my friend got thrown out of her bedsit for holding a party! We are still in touch.

Ken was working in advertising with The Scotsman and he travelled to the Highlands and Western Isles and he soon developed a love for the north. I moved to work with the Scottish Ambulance Service at the city hospital in Edinburgh. I really enjoyed that and in dealing with 999 calls and organising where ambulances had to go. It helped my knowledge of city names and pronunciations, but it was a demanding and exciting job as I learned all that goes on in city life.



We got married in 1972 and our first home was in Dalgety Bay when Dalgety Bay only had only two streets.

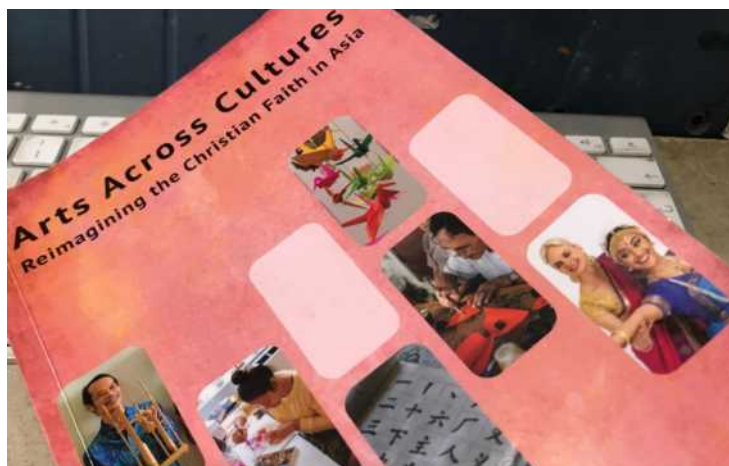
Ken joined a building society and when he was offered a manager's job in Inverness, it felt right to move further north, first to Inverness, then North Kessock, Fortrose and now Rosemarkie where we live happily in retirement with plenty to keep us busy and the joy of grandchildren nearby.

Making Church Real in Our Culture

A review of Warren Beattie's new book, 'Arts Across Cultures' by William Mather

There has been a quiet encouragement of the arts in our churches over the past 2-3 years.

This has touched music, imagery and sound in our worship. As part of this we have seen a very creative use of Powerpoint in services to bring alive the gospel stories with relevant words and images. We have also seen the Gaelic, Doric and Scots encouraged as expressions of our culture.



How is this happening? Well, I think it is because our minister, Warren Beattie is very keen to make 'church' real in our culture! And, if you want to understand the thinking behind this, there is no better place to start than Warren's new edited book.

This comes out of his overseas work for many years in Asia, based in South Korea. Yet despite the Asia focus, it is just as relevant to us on the Black Isle. He refers to this as 'cross-cultural mission' and 'missional education'. So the book is called 'Arts Across Cultures' with the sub-title 'Reimagining the Christian Faith in Asia.'

Theologians will love it but even if theology isn't quite your cup of tea, just have a look at some of the ideas. Basically it's all about creating a biblically-based church that welcomes images, colour, sounds, stories and words that fit in with where we are. Very simply: context is important. So also is culture.

Out of this come rather grand sounding phrases like 'the importance of cultural contextualisation'. Yes, I know a good bit of theological wording there! And I'm the first to admit there is quite a bit of hard study to be done. But think the ideas behind some of the chapters written by a variety of experts. For instance two chapters by Warren:

- **Arts in Mission: Enhancing Worship and Witness and Transformation of the Wider World, or**
- **Becoming Missional Artists Across Cultures**

There is also a section by other writers in Asia about putting it all into practice, such as:

- **Digital Media and Urban Youth Culture**
- **Intercultural Worship: A Contemporary Understanding**

In addition, there is a fascinating illustrated section showing how art was used very positively in mission work with a very remote tribe in China, called the 'Wa People'.

Important to the whole thinking of the book is the biblical emphasis that everyone is different and special and how the God-given arts can affirm this at intuitive and emotional levels. The central focus of this extremely well-researched book is that such thinking needs to be respected and encouraged for the sake of effective mission and ministry.

William Mather

'It is because you are a Palestinian'

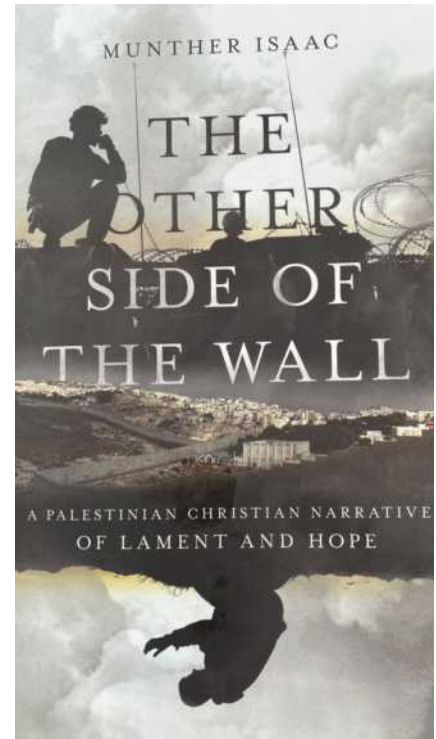
The words above, the opening lines of Rev Munther Isaac's book, *The Other Side Of the Wall*, are the rationale used by organisers of a Christian mission conference in Ireland to explain why they were considering withdrawing an invitation to speak at the conference. Such slights and frequent, 'When did you convert to Christianity?' questions betraying a common ignorance that Arab Christianity predates Islam and had a seat at the first ecumenical council in Nicea in 325 CE.

Rev Munther is assistant pastor at the Christmas Evangelical Lutheran Church and Dean at Bethlehem Bible College. He is an engaging and challenging speaker so it's no surprise that his book is a thought-provoking, compelling read on what it is to be 'ignored, discredited and dehumanised'.

As someone born and brought up in Bethlehem and now living and working there, Munther Isaac has daily experience of living behind a fortified wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. He has no truck with visiting Christians who describe the current situation as 'unfortunate', he debunks any suggestion that The Wall is for security and is dismayed by those who justify the oppression of Palestinians and the current apartheid as the fulfilment of prophecy.

The subtitle of the book is *A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope* and there is much to lament. However, the final chapters of the book are infused with hope based on an understanding of the Sermon on the Mount requiring engagement with the humanity of the occupier and walking the extra mile. There is a heartfelt plea for the wider church to engage with the Palestinian Christian community and their struggles. He ends as follows:

This book was written from behind the wall. It is about experiencing God's liberating and affirming presence in the least expected places. It reflects my people's sorrow and lament, our faith in the living God, our commitment to the dignity of all human beings, and our commitment to love all our neighbours. It is at the same time a statement of defiance, resilience, and hope. With Paul, and from behind the wall, we declare, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies..... Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day." 2 Cor4:8-10 16



From Jerusalem to Jericho.....

We join Douglas Simpson on the second leg of his travels in the Holy Land.....

We're leaving Jerusalem behind today but not before we experience the grand privilege of standing with Women in Black, a group of Israeli ladies, part of a worldwide network of women committed to peace with justice and actively opposed to injustice, war and violence. So, for about an hour, we stand in silent solidarity in Paris Square with these brave and determined ladies accepting the obvious disapproval and casual taunts from passing Israeli citizens.

The Women in Black quietly and determinedly make the point that not all Israelis support the apartheid policies of their extremist government.



It's downhill all the way after this, literally! If you can imagine a highway running from the top of Ben Nevis to Mallaig, the journey from Jerusalem at 2,500 feet above sea level to the Dead Sea at about 1400 below sea level, follows a similar trajectory.

Most of the time you're travelling through a dramatic desert landscape following the route which would have been taken by the Good Samaritan. It's hot, arid and inhospitable. We stop off enroute to visit remarkable folk who for millennia have eked out a living in this unpromising environment. They are Bedouins who offer us coffee and a warm welcome amidst their ramshackle jumble of tents and huts. We hear stories of how their traditional nomadic way of life is now under threat from constant Israeli intimidation. Their spokesman is young, intelligent and amazingly clued up on international affairs.



On the valley floor we fork off to the right and arrive shortly at the Dead Sea. Once the scene of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, this is now a thriving tourist resort with bars, shops and cafes but we head straight to the water, now a fair distance from the amenities as the lake diminishes, its sources under increasing pressure from Jordanian and Israeli agriculture and industry.

Trying to keep your balance in the soft mud is a challenge as you navigate your route to deeper water, big chunks of salt crystals presenting regular trip hazards but soon the Dead Sea has you in it's salty embrace. With 10 times the amount of salt as seawater sinking is not an option as you bob around like a cork but don't roll over, a face full of Dead Sea is not to be recommended.

A brief stop at the Jordan River to watch devoted pilgrims in their white smocks experiencing baptism in the muddy water is next on our list. Think Rosemarkie Burn rather than Ness River, as you imagine the scene. Much of the water of the Jordan now diverted for many other less spiritual uses.



Snacks at Jericho with a quick stop at the 'Zacchaeus Tree' are followed by a cable car trip to a dramatic monastery (left) set into the top of imposing cliffs. This is the Mount of Temptation where Jesus resisted the Devil's devious alternative leadership options. The views from here across the Jordan Valley are breath-taking. From here it's a couple of hours journey north following the course the Jordan River to Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee but..... that's for chapter 3!



Ask
Call
Obey
Report
Notice



Lord,
today,
is there someone
You
want me
to connect with
outside
the church?

'How are you?'

May God bless you with holy anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish so that so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you really can make a difference in this world so that you are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

Old Franciscan Prayer quoted by Munther Isaac in *The Other Side of the Wall*

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As with all previous newsletters, huge thanks to all who contributed articles or gave permission to share personal memoirs and tributes. Thanks also to all who read the newsletter and suggest articles for future editions.

It really is very much appreciated.

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