

Dunscore Digest

Dunscore Church and Community Magazine

Winter 2022

Minister's Musing

Mark Smith

Adventure into Christmas

Greetings from the Manse ...

After the solemn drama of the start of November (All Saints' Day, Bonfire Night, Remembrance) we have two weeks' rest before ... yes, you've guessed it! Advent!

If you're already sick of tinny carol music, jingly bells, corny adverts, and garish displays everywhere ... read on. It might just help you have the best Christmas ever!

If you want to hear the story more clearly; if you want a real sparkle in your decorations; if you want your lights to push back the mid-winter darkness ... read on. It is not just for Christmas either! It has been said that failing to plan is planning to fail. With Christmas, failing to prepare will strip the hope, peace, joy and love from the celebrations and ruin the New Year to come.

So it's time to start getting ready. That's what Advent is about. We are reminded of the truth behind the festival. We are given time to make ourselves ready to receive the Child of Bethlehem. Advent enriches Christmas by allowing us to seek God's Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love in our lives so that they can fill our celebrations as they filled the stable all those years ago.

In our worship and reflections we will be revising what we already know – that Jesus gave up everything to come into this world to show us true Hope, true Peace, true Joy, and true Love. When we grasp this, our celebrations become centred around Jesus. The familiar words of carols and readings become clearer above the jingly bells. The candles outshine the tinsel. The dirty, smelly stable out-sparkles the tinsel. The gifts we give carry more value. The lights push back the darkness like never before!

This Advent join us on the great adventure (see what I did there?) into Christmas ... and beyond!

Whatever form your celebrations take – Carol-singing, mad light displays, Panto, giving gifts, Christingle, overindulging in food and drink, opening presents on the big day, etc. – enjoy them. What we celebrate is AMAZING! AWESOME! LIFE-CHANGING!

Remember – Jesus is not just for Christmas. Why not make Him the centre of your Christmas this year. After all, it is

named after Him. Ask Him to join your celebrations and be with you in the New Year. Why not start the New Year resolved to find Him for yourself?

After all, Love Came Down at Christmas – and never left.

May God Bless you at this Bless-ed time of year,

Mark

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Dunscore Diary Dates

There is more about many of these events in the articles in the Digest.

November

Date	Time	Event
27	10:00 am	Advent with KiKs in the church
27	7:00 pm	Advent Reflection: Hope for the Future in the church

December

Date	Start	Event
2	4:00 pm	Pop-up shop, Low Auldgirth
2	6:30 pm	Family Fun Night at the school
2	8:00 pm	Christmas Quiz in the Flying Pig
3	10:00 am	Pop-up shop, Low Auldgirth
3	3:00 pm	Christmas Market in the Glenriddell Hall and Santa tours the village
	5:00 pm	Chip van in Flying Pig car park
4	10:00 am	Pop-up shop, Low Auldgirth
4	10:00 am	Morning Service in the church
4	2:30 pm	Winter barbecue in Flying Pig car park
4	7:00 pm	Advent Reflection: Peace for Today in the church
8	9:30 am	Litter Pick (meet in the church car park)
11	10:30 am	Messy Christingle in the church
11	7:00 pm	Advent Reflection: Joy to the World in the church
18	10:00 am	Carol Service with the Dunscore Orchestra in the church
18	7:00 pm	Advent Reflection: Love for All In the church
19	7:00 pm	Carol Singing in the Flying Pig Car Park (inside if wet)
24	3:00 pm	Scratch Nativity: Play your Part! In the church
25	10:30 am	Family Worship with KiKs in the church

January

Date	Time	Event
1	10:30 am	Family Worship in St Ninian's, Moniaive

I was thinking back to how I took over as editor of the Dunscore Digest. It was a very wet November in 2006 and Kath and I had only just arrived in the area having taken possession of Auchenage Farm with its very cold and run-down farmhouse. We had decided that we would “try” several of the local churches to see which suited us best but, having started in Dunscore, we didn’t go any further. The welcome, the minister, the style of worship and the people all made it an easy decision.

After a very few weeks, Christine (who was the minister then) announced that the person doing the church newsletter was leaving so there was a need for someone to take this over. I reckoned that, although new, I could give this a go.

The church newsletter developed into a slightly larger magazine and soon started to include both church and community articles. The Dunscore Digest name followed soon afterwards. But, 16 years on, I feel as if I’ve done it for long enough.

I have greatly appreciated all of the contributors over these years. Some have been sending me articles for a very long time and it always makes my job easier when I know that I can rely on particular contributors to provide interesting and informative items. Thank you to everyone who has provided support and articles over the years.

There is a vacancy now for someone to take over the editorial chair. If that could be you, please get in touch and I’ll tell you what I did (although there is an opportunity to take things in a different direction).

Dunscore has had a newsletter or magazine in several forms in recent decades. There was an excellent church newsletter in the 70s and 80s and a little more recently the amazing magazine Score. The Digest took over in the early 2000s. What next? That’s up to you!



Gala Keeps Going Fiona Thompson

The Gala held the Halloween Disco on 29 October after the guising round the village. This was a great success, with lots of children and adults full of sugar (as a result of sweets picked up when guising!). There were lots of great fancy dress costumes, some excellent party games including musical statues and the best-dressed mummy made out of toilet roll! There was a superb parade of all the fancy dress

costumes (both children and adults) including the gala committee who also dressed up for the occasion.

We recently held our AGM though, sadly, this year we did not get any new members. If there is anyone who would like to come onto the committee, please speak to one of the members.

We have already booked our acts for next year and the band is lined up for the gala dance.

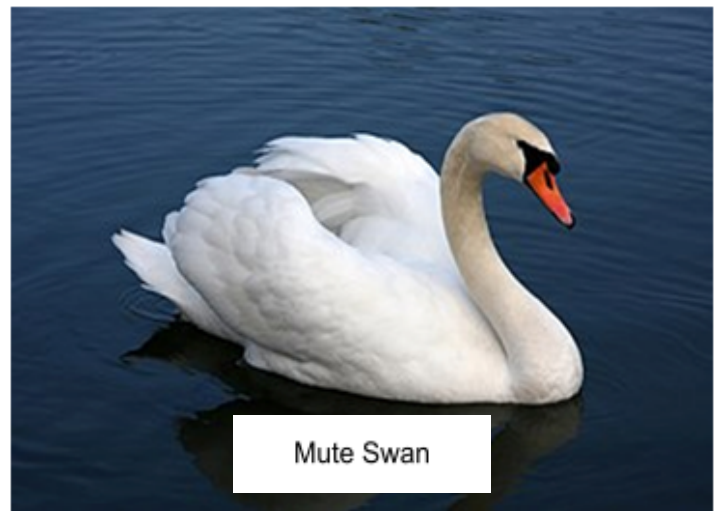
As some of you may know we hire out our marquee, which is a great fund-raiser, but is a lot of hard work. If anyone would be able to help putting the marquee up when we have hires, please speak to Jimmy Anderson.

We will be holding more fundraising events in the New Year.

Bird of the Season Lesley Creamer

Whooper and Mute Swan

What more appropriate way for my swansong writing these bird articles for the Digest than a quick look at the two species of swans we’re likely to see locally! The mute swan is our resident bird while the whooper flies in from Iceland every autumn. The former, as its name suggests, is largely



silent while the latter has a loud whooping or trumpeting call.



The mute has a graceful S-shaped neck and orange bill with a black base; the whooper tends to keep its neck straighter and has a long yellow and black bill, giving it a ‘Roman-nosed’

appearance.

Watching birds in the garden gives many people great enjoyment and I hope these articles might have helped some of you spot a brambling amongst the chaffinches, know the difference between a redwing and a fieldfare, realise the innocuous little dunnock is more than just a 'little brown job'. We're very lucky in D & G to have a great choice of places away from our gardens to broaden our bird-watching and the best for swan-spotting is definitely WWT Caerlaverock, the only WWT reserve in Scotland. There are a number of RSPB reserves, the closest being Mersehead, and both of these have experts on hand to help you find and identify birds.

The SOC (Scottish Ornithologists' Club) has produced a free app for both iPhones and Androids called Where to Watch Birds in Scotland which shows loads of local sites, tells you how to get there, the birds most recently spotted there, the birds you're likely to see there and when, etc., – a mine of information at no cost. Find out more [here](http://the-soc.org.uk) or Birding App (the-soc.org.uk)

Repairs and Litter

June Harmer

At our most recent meeting in September it was, as always, a joy to meet up, catch up with everyone and enjoy lunch together. A big thank you to Susan who hosts the meeting in her house and provides a lovely soup, cheeses and more! It's not all hard work in the Eco Group.



June ready for repairs

At our recent Repair Cafe, organised in conjunction with our friends in the Fairtrade Village team, we brought many items back from the brink of the tip! Our wonderful

enthusiasts with practical skills managed (amongst other things) to rejuvenate a couple of vacuum cleaners that didn't suck, a sewing machine that didn't sew and a tablet that didn't display photos. We are really grateful to the repairers and to everyone who brought items for the team to help with.

Our litter picking is a monthly event on the second Thursday of the month. We have noticed over the years that there seems to be less litter along the roads - are we having some impact? It would be good to think that we are! Do come and join us on Thursday 8 December for our grand Christmas Litter Pick! We meet in the church car park at 9:30 am.

Dunscore Heritage Centre Matthew Aitken

The Heritage Centre team met in the autumn to review the year and to agree the way forward. Visitor numbers have not been as high this season perhaps due to some ongoing Covid concerns. We hope that next year will see numbers back to earlier levels.

The team decided that we would reopen on Sunday afternoons again from around Easter 2023 and run through to autumn but, for the winter months, we will open by request. If you know anyone who would like to visit the centre, they can contact us through the website or Facebook page or phone Pam on 820455 or Sheila on 820236 and we'll do our best to open at a suitable time.

Haud the Bus

Geoff Creamer

On one of the most revolting evenings in memory, CVCT still managed to attract more than 20 people to its AGM at the George Hotel in Moniaive on Wednesday 2 December.

Delivering his annual report, Chairman Stephen Sparrow reminded the meeting of the purposes of CVCT and its operational dependence on its management committee and pool of drivers, who are all volunteers. He was able to report that the fortnightly service to Castle Douglas had continued throughout the year, being generally well supported by the community. Fourteen excursions had been planned to destinations in Dumfries and Galloway as well as further afield, though a few had been cancelled due to lack of support. Bookings for the use of the bus had been made by 20 different organisations, ranging from Dunscore Pre-School to the U3A, with a total of 84 trips undertaken. All this despite a number of mechanical issues with the bus which have proved challenging and costly, and are still ongoing.

Treasurer Peter Roberts presented his report, which showed CVCT to be still in good financial shape, although adjustments have had to be made to the mileage element of its hire charges to reflect steeply rising fuel costs. An increased grant of £800 has been received from Glencairn Community Council to enable CVCT to continue to provide free transport to organisations for trips solely within the parish. Trustee Sue Grant formally signed the accounts.

Tributes were paid to the work of retiring Committee members Peter Roberts (Treasurer), Geoff Creamer (Secretary), and Hazel Ford (Passenger Representative). In a lively election process Stephen Sparrow was re-elected Chairman, Alan James became Treasurer, Antoine Lemaire became Secretary, and John Ferguson, Ricky James, Kirsten Griffiths, Kath Bentley, Caroline Richardson, and Madge Irvine were all elected as ordinary members.

Thanks were extended to the George Hotel for hosting the meeting and providing refreshments. Any future enquiries or bookings should be directed to Antoine Lemaire, the new Secretary, on 01848 200775 or antoinelemaire@gmail.com or via CVCT's website www.cvct.org.uk.

Digest Archives

15 Years Ago

Message from Lubuto (following some Dunscore and Moniaive visitors to Zambia) - *In the last Digest Rev. Simon Kasanga wrote some thoughts before the visit from our congregation. I asked him if he would write a few thoughts now they have been! Here they are...*

The annual challenging message for Lubuto congregation is the humility and humbleness displayed by the team from our twinning partners in Scotland. More so, their quick adaptation to our way of life. Eating nshima with their fingers! It was great and exciting. The wee people, you are great.

The Glenriddell Hall

Rona Gunnell

The committee has now secured two more grants totalling over £17,000 to refurbish the toilets and provide a new kitchen. This includes £10,000 from the Lottery - Awards for All, and just over £7,000 from the council-administered Village Halls Improvement Scheme. The work on the kitchen and toilets is due to start in the New Year.

Rock Solid

Christine Sime

Last year we had moments when we thought Rock Solid may have outlived its usefulness when only three and sometimes only two young folk turned up. This year the leaders have had a similar feeling that we may have to wind up Rock Solid because on some evenings we have had 20! Most evenings we get 12 - 15 and they still enjoy all the daft games, the wild games, the discussions...and the food. Thanks again to all who provide for us.

Freecycle

Kath Aitken

Quite a few "Hessian" sacks have found a new home. Please make a point of checking the Eco Board to see if anything is on offer that you might find useful. Also, use the blue cards to jot down anything that you have that might be useful to someone else. One man's meat...

It's amazing to see that Dunscore Freecycle is still going after 15 years! I wonder how many items that we have

saved from disposal? If you would like to join the Freecycle email list, follow this link: <http://eepurl.com/dsOCUn>.

10 Years Ago

Dunscore Walking Group

Pam and Colin Mitchell

We have had a good year walking the local and Lake District Hills. In February we walked the mainly coastal route from Palnackie to Almorness Point and back. It was a dry and windy day although a bit wet underfoot in places. A missing bridge over a creek made for one or two muddy people! Good afternoon tea in Palnackie on our return.

Congregation Comment

For this edition, we asked members of the congregation for a New Year's Resolution for the church.

Maggi Goodwin - To show, by example, that our church welcomes everyone.

Cliff Walker - To adopt an approach that does more to break down barriers.

Charlie Macallan - To find a new minister. There can't be anything more important than that!

Chris Whittle - To find a better assistant organist!

Mary Whittle - For a new minister to appear and for everybody to be supportive and helpful in their "settling in"

School News

Children in Need by Poppy, Struan and Calum: On Friday 16 November, Dunscore Primary School celebrated Children In Need Day and the Pupil Council organised a variety of fun activities for everyone to take part in. It was a non-school uniform day but we had to wear something spotty - there were lots of dotty children about! Mrs Howat kindly baked everyone a special Pudsey bear shaped shortbread biscuit then we had a great time decorating him with coloured icing and sweeties - he tasted delicious.

A Chat With... The Editor

As a Christmas Special, the Assistant Editor decided to turn the spotlight upon the Editor of the Dunscore Digest, Matthew Aitken.

What special qualities does an Editor need? Tact - sometimes a bit lacking! The ability to say "thanks but no thanks". Time! Some computer skills.

Good and bad bits of being Editor? I like the job but it does take up a lot of time. I have never added it up but think it would be about 30 hours an issue (*that is a lot! I can do it in a bit less now!*). My aim is for the Digest to be a magazine that most people would want to read

Remembering Jane

Pam Mitchell

Jane Haining's story continues to keep me busy, giving talks and hosting groups (by arrangement).

Although our Heritage Centre is now closed for the winter we do receive many enquiries about Jane Haining's story, for talks and to visit the heritage centre and we try to accommodate these where possible.

I am part of a project group, based in the central belt and affiliated to the C C J (Council of Christians and Jews). The group has recently recruited Mr William McGair, teacher (now retired) of Modern Studies at Dumfries Academy for 40 years, to assist with collating resources and finding schools to pilot materials which will bring Jane's story to younger audiences throughout Scotland.

Jane's story needs to be told and the 2023 Holocaust Memorial Day (27th January) will remember 'Ordinary People' who did extraordinary things.

We Will Remember Her

Out with the Pre-School Caroline Waugh

In August we started back with our topic of animals and how to care for them. This involved exploring how to look after different animals and making some amazing animal pictures. The children wanted to visit some animals, so we arranged a visit to the FRED donkey sanctuary. Martin and Solomon showed us around and we met lots of different animals - we especially loved meeting the donkeys, the turtles, and the pig. Solomon showed us how to brush the donkeys and helped us to feed the pig. A leopard gecko called Rocky came to visit us with Ashleigh and she taught us a lot about geckos, including how they can detach their tail if they get scared. We had to be very gentle with the gecko and enjoyed feeling the different textures. To learn more about farming, we were loaned a RHET box (Royal Highland Education Trust), which showed us different grains that farmers grow, and also lots of stories about



farming and pictures of the animals on the farm. Most of all, the children enjoyed dressing up as different farm animals and using all of the resources

in our play. Reverend Mark Smith came to visit the preschool and told us the story about the lost sheep. After listening to the story, we played a fun game of hide the sheep.

Being outdoors is something that all of the children engage with, and we try to spend as much time outside as possible. We have enjoyed going to the woods, playing in the park and going for adventure walks – we like to see what we can find when we go for walks. On our woods day, we like to spend the whole day in nature and even have our lunch there! There are also lots of fun activities we do in the woods, for example, we have had a fire, played in a rope spider web and a swing (made by Rachel!). Sometimes we also make crafts using the material we find in the woods – one day we made a 'forest curtain' using string and tying on leaves, pine-cones, sticks etc. and then hanging them up like a curtain.



This term we have also started joining the P1/2 class for fun P.E. lessons, and Mrs Wallace also reads us a book at the end of the session – we love listening to stories.

From the start of the Autumn term, we have extended our session to 4:00 pm, and no longer run on a Friday. This was due to the small numbers on a Friday and parents decided it would be better to have an extra hour at the end of the day rather than have a shorter Friday session. Our running times are now Monday to Thursday 8:30 am - 4:00 pm.

Thank you so much to everyone who came and supported the soup and pudding, as well as those who donated towards it. It was very successful, and we made an amazing £500 which will help buy new resources and fund trips for the children.

Lubuto Update

Aly Robertson

News from our friends in Zambia

We haven't had a great deal of direct communication with the congregation in Lubuto but there was a report on Radio 4's ['From Our Own Correspondent'](#) on 27 October explaining that there had been a very poor harvest this year and that they are suffering from a high rate of inflation - cooking oil has doubled in price.

If you can contribute to funds for the church in Lubuto either on a one-off or on a monthly basis, please contact Andy Barr at: andybarrcards@btinternet.com.

Fairtrade Village News Alison Borthwick

The Fairtrade team have been busy with hosting our Climate and Repair Café that took place on Saturday 12 November in the hall. Thank you to everyone who took the time to come along and enjoy lovely homemade soup, cakes and refreshments and lots of repairs were made! Our Fairtrade cotton aprons had one of their first uses and were shown off by many of the team.



We would like to see more people at our events so please come along!

Did you take part in our daily Thoughtful Walks? Each had a theme relating to climate change and there was a photo competition. The winning photo is shown on the right, chosen by everyone at the Climate Cafe. *The editor is too modest to say who took the photo!*



Our next event is the Christmas Market on Saturday 3 December in the Glenriddel Hall from 3:00 - 5:00pm with lots of craft stalls. It's sure to be a good one so come along and do some Christmas shopping before Santa pays a visit to the village at 6:00 pm.

We are delighted to see Dunscore Primary School retaining their Fairtrade School Award and continuing to do super work for Fairtrade which now includes a school uniform. Our team visits the school once a month to work with the children which they all really enjoy. Some of the children have come along to one of our recent meetings and it was so beneficial to have their input and we hope that they will be able to join us again at future meetings.



We meet regularly and so, if you are interested to join our team, please come along. You will be most welcome!

What's Fair in Dunscore? Matthew Aitken

What comes to mind if you are asked to think of some Fairtrade products? I imagine that you would think of tea, coffee and bananas pretty much right away but it might take a bit more thought before you got to Fairtrade cotton. But cotton is an important Fairtrade product making and Fairtrade cotton is used to make many items.

Cotton farmers in lower income countries, including leading producers like India and China, generally live in hardship. As many as 100 million rural households - 90 percent of them in lower income countries - are directly engaged in cotton production, relying on it for their income. An estimated 350 million people work in the cotton sector and, for farmers, the challenges range from the impact of climate change, poor prices for seed cotton, through to competition from highly subsidised producers in rich countries and poor terms of trade. In particular, government subsidies for cotton farmers in rich countries, particularly the US, create a market with artificially low prices that small-scale farmers are unable to match.

By ensuring a Fairtrade Minimum Price, an additional Fairtrade Premium and stronger, more democratic organisations, Fairtrade has sought to provide these farmers with an alternative route to trade and higher, more stable incomes.

That's all good but where can we, in Dunscore, find Fairtrade cotton products? Actually, all around us!

If you have a child or grandchild at Dunscore School, you can buy Fairtrade Dunscore School uniforms. Have a look at Koolskools.co.uk and search for Dunscore Primary School. There is a sample polo shirt and sweatshirt at the school. Just ask to see them and I am sure that you will be impressed by the quality. You can order them directly from Kool Skools.

Secondly, why not buy a top quality, Fairtrade cotton Dunscore tea towel as a perfect Christmas present? Contact Mary on craigeller@hotmail.co.uk and, for the knockdown price of £5, she will supply one from her stock!



A third Dunscore option for buying Fairtrade cotton in Dunscore is Eve at [Black Thistle](#). Right here in the village we have a great wee business that uses cotton products (Fairtrade where it's available) and prints them with a wee bit of Scots.

There are bottle bags:



And makeup bags:



And tote bags:



And more! Do check out the [website](#) for a great range of fun, Fairtrade products.

Time for a KiK?

Tim Harmer

In the summer the church started a new initiative on the fourth Sunday of the month to complement the work of the Messy Church team (Messy Church is on the second Sunday each month).

The initiative is designed to help families to come to church as a family so, during the service, children of primary school age are invited to join the KiKs group in the heritage room where they are led by adults in craft activities, art, drama and songs based on the bible reading of the day.

It is hoped this will help the adults in the family to worship and receive the sermon whilst their youngsters are engaged in age-appropriate bible teaching. Remember the fourth Sunday of the month is Together with KiKs.

Appy Days

Matthew Aitken

What3Words



Here is the next in the series sharing some of my favourite apps. This is one to stop you getting lost or to help you if you are lost.

Have you, like me, ever needed to explain to a delivery driver precisely how to find your house? Or have you been planning to meet friends on a country lane and want to agree exactly where? Have you ever broken down and need to tell the rescue service how to find you when you have little idea where you are? In these scenarios (and plenty of others) What3words is ideal. The app divides the whole of the earth's surface into squares that are three metres by three metres and has allocated three random words to each. You can tell someone the three words (or send them a link) and, from these, they can locate that square on a map on their phone or, if they prefer, receive directions to the location using Google Maps or another navigation app.

Give it a try - it's very good! But, a wee tip... in the countryside, use the satellite map option to find a location, it's a lot easier. And, here's your test: What will you find at: [violinist.ballooned.shower?](#)

Dunscore's Year of Birds **Colin Mitchell**

I have been looking back at some of the birdlife seen and heard in and around Dunscore throughout the seasons of the past 12 months.

Winter: At this time of the year, we are the home to our resident birds and winter visitors. The robin makes our gardens and woodland its home throughout the year and sings its wistful, winter song in all weathers.

Many birds are territorial in spring and summer but in winter we can see flocks of seed-eating finches feeding in the fields and woodland edges. These flocks can contain over a hundred, including chaffinches, goldfinches, greenfinches and, occasionally, the winter visiting brambling which can be identified by its white rump as it flies.

Our resident tits also move in small flocks with blue tits, coal tits and great tits feeding communally. We also frequently enjoy small flocks of long tailed tits calling as they fly in search of insect food. Fortunately, many of us feed the birds and this source of food can be vital for their survival during harsh weather.

The berries of our hedgerows are visited by flocks of thrushes seeking out those still remaining. These thrush flocks are increased by fieldfares, redwings and blackbirds coming from Scandinavia to avoid the harsh winters. The sounds of these flocks are wonderful with the "chack" of fieldfares and the "seep" of the redwings.

Geese spend the winter here, also, to avoid severe winter conditions further north. Usually we hear pinkfeet giving their “wink wink” call and barnacle geese with their call reminiscent of a yapping dog. Our resident greylag population is increased by many from the continent. The number of ducks increases with goldeneye, wigeon and tufted duck arriving.

Many of the kingfishers on the Cairn move to the coast to avoid freezing weather although the dipper often remains and sings its beautiful song through the cold weather.

Many birds of prey feed on carrion and buzzards and red kites seem to do well in the area in the winter. Our sparrowhawks also find hunting easier as many trees no longer are in leaf and spotting and chasing prey is not as difficult.

Spring: Spring is the season of many changes in the bird life in the area. Winter visitors leave and summer migrants arrive.

The first to arrive is the chiffchaff calling “chiffchaff” from bushes. Sand martins start to swoop over local rivers and ponds and swallows feed in the sky. Sadly, swifts are rarely seen above Dunscore these days. Soon we are woken by the dawn chorus as resident birds sing from just before dawn joined by an orchestra of songs from willow warblers, blackcaps, whitethroats, garden warblers, sedge warblers and occasionally a grasshopper warbler as they protect territories and seek to attract a mate. We also can play host to rare birds such as the spotted flycatcher.

Soon we see parent birds working hard to feed young in nests and nest boxes closely followed by baby birds begging for food.

Sadly, some birds which used to be common such as skylarks, lapwings, curlew, partridge and corncrake are increasingly rare or absent due modern farming practices that can destroy habitats, kill insect food supplies and kill nestlings living in grassland. It is possible to have profitable farming and protect and increase biodiversity.

Summer: This is generally a much quieter time. July and August are the quietest bird months of the year. Birds have attracted a mate, raised young and now are feeding their offspring. They do not wish to advertise their presence although some birds will go on to raise two or more broods of young if the food supply is plentiful.

By the end of summer migrant birds start to leave. Swifts are the first to go followed by flycatchers and warblers.

You may have noticed that lots of dead insects that you used to see on your car windscreen are not as plentiful now. Where did all the insects go? Sadly, many insect eating bird species that we see in Dunscore and the surrounding area are in severe decline.

Autumn: All of a sudden we notice that the swallows have gone. One day they are gathering and twittering on overhead wires and the next the skies are empty. Autumn is another season of change but not as marked as spring.

Our summer visitors have all left (although some blackcaps and chiffchaffs have started to stay all year round) and winter migrants start to arrive. The most obvious are the geese that winter in this area. Often in Dunscore we can hear their calls at night as they fly in from Scandinavia, Iceland and Svalbard.

We can also watch in wonder as the rooks and jackdaws collect in their hundreds and display in the sky before roosting in the woods at Dalgonar and nearby. We often wonder why the powerlines do not snap under the weight of these birds before they take off.

At night it is possible to hear the high pitched “seep” of the redwings as they arrive at night. Tawny owls can be heard calling as they start to defend a territory. These calls are often loudest and most frequent near Halloween!

The bushes and trees begin to lose their leaves and produce seed and berries to help fatten up the birds to prepare them for winter.

We are very fortunate to enjoy such a wide range of wild birds in the area. You can encourage birdlife by feeding, providing water, providing nest boxes and planting berry bearing trees and shrubs.

We are hoping to re-start the Dunscore Bird Group in the new year. Watch out for more information.

Church Bicentenary

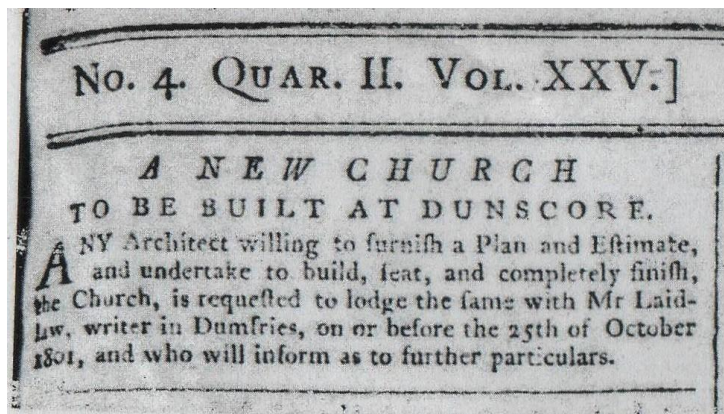
Roy Spence

Roy has been carrying out some investigations into the details around the bicentenary of the church building. This is something of a challenge as it requires him to decipher two hundred year old handwritten minutes, thus one or queries in the article below. Roy is working on the second part of this story which will be in the next edition of the Digest (if we have a new editor - if not, I'll circulate it round the Dunscore email list).

Next year, 2023, is the bicentenary of Dunscore Kirk. It is the second to be built on this site, the first having been built in 1649.

In the early 1800s a new kirk was proposed and the Dumfries Presbytery sent a representative to inspect the building and he recommended that a new kirk should be built as the old one could not be improved or extended. The capacity was calculated to accommodate 392 people but the population of the parish was 1179. In October 1801 an advert was put in the Dumfries Weekly Journal for an architect “willing to furnish a plan and estimate to build,

seat, and completely finish a church". An estimate amounting to £606-17-2 was received.



At a subsequent meeting of the heritors to set the levy on each heritor, (stent) Mr Coupland of Collieston, Mr Moffat of Sundaywell and Mr Grierson of Dalgonar protested against all further procedure of Presbytery as being unnecessary and took Instruments [a legal procedure].

There was no further mention in the Presbytery minutes of a new kirk until 1822.

In the early 19th century the heritors, or property owners, ruled the countryside. They were responsible for justice, law and order in their district and for keeping the roads in good repair. They were also responsible for the kirk, manse and schoolhouse and paying the Minister and Schoolmaster. Also, they had to provide for the poor of the parish. To pay for all this they levied a rate on all the heritors in the parish.

In October 1822 the new minister, Rev. Robert Brydon asked a meeting of the Presbytery to inspect the Manse, Offices, Church, and Churchyard dyke to advise on what repairs or rebuilding were necessary. Mr Brydon was to give notice to the Heritors. The next meeting was favoured by the attendance of Messrs Mac[?], Thomson and Newall, architects from Dumfries to assist the Presbytery with their skill and advice. Representing the Heritors at the meeting were the following: Robert Anderson of Stroquhan, George Whigham of Hallidayhill, James Grierson of Dalgonar, Rev. John Gentow of Craigenvey, Alexander Hurley of Portrack, James McKinnell of McMurdoston, William Burgess of Lochenlea, John Waugh of Longbank and Mr Creigland of Dabton representing the Duke of Buccleuch. The architects reported that the Church was in a ruinous condition and must be rebuilt. Some of the Heritors were against the proposal and James Grierson of Dalgonar protested in his own name and others that agreed with him and took legal action. On the 17th of October they presented their reasons to the Presbytery. The reasons being:

"That the present kirk is of a most convenient form and, although built 170 years ago the walls are straight and look as good as new but, from standing in such a bad situation exposed to storms, some of the slates are wanting, and through neglect in repairing these some of the plaster has fallen, yet all may be repaired at no great expense and, if

the walls are unfashionably low, these were once several feet higher when our ancestors chose to lower them that the Kirk might be warmer and less exposed to the weather.

Though the population of the parish has increased there is sufficient room for all that attend except on the [Fast?] days when the kirkyard is little enough for all that congregate there and it is quite needless to build a larger house till there is some reason for its need especially as there is such extreme distress at the present when many who lately enjoyed a [?] are now reduced after defraying the public and private burdens that are unavoidable to have little or nothing to subsist on. Further, a proposal for a new Kirk in 1801 was resisted.

A Relief meeting house was being built a few hundred yards from the kirk, the people could go there instead. In the few summer months that the minister has occupied the pulpit the seats have rarely been filled."



At a meeting on the 29th of November the Heritors were asked to produce specifications and estimates for the Presbytery to approve. On the 15th January 1823 the Heritors signed contracts with Messrs Thomson and Watt to build a new kirk for £1072-10-0. They are to be assessed on that figure.

The last service in the old kirk was probably on the 2nd of March 1823, when a collection in aid of missionaries produced donations of £10. A local laird offered a psalm book to any scholar who could recite the 119th psalm. (£10 is around £940 in today's money!).

Things are back to normal at the Flying Pig after the pandemic and we now have something happening in the pub every weekday and most weekends. On a Monday evening the pub is usually open for drinks after 8:00 pm. On Tuesday evenings the slimming group is in the pub from 6:00 pm and they are followed by the Craft and Chat group at 7:30 pm. On Wednesdays DADS (Dunscore Amateur Dramatic Society) uses the pub as a rehearsal space from 7:30 pm onwards. Thursday is a normal pub night, opening after 7:30pm. The quiz is on the first Friday of the month and games night is on the third Friday of the month. Unless there is a special event, the pub is usually closed on the other weeks. We are not usually open on Saturdays unless there is a special event, but we do try to open for the monthly visit of the chip van so that people can eat their chips in the bar whilst they're still hot. Sunday afternoon is proving a popular time to come to the pub. We are officially open from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm but if it's busy, we'll stay open until 6:00 pm. Families are very welcome.



Becky needed a rest after her sterling effort producing a quiz week after week in the pandemic and then monthly when the pub reopened so, after a break for the summer, we have started up again with a guest volunteer host each month. This is proving a successful format and we are looking forward to John's Christmas Quiz on 2 December. If you plan to join us, get there early to get a table! We aim to start at 8:00 pm.

We've hosted a number of music events in the past months and have enjoyed

performances by Old Friends, Diva Dynamic and The Riverside Ramblers. All of these groups recognised our status as a community pub and generously performed free of charge. This didn't stop them from providing an excellent standard of entertainment in their



own variety of styles and we look forward to welcoming them all back at some point in the future.



The highlights of the past few months have been the crowds during Gala week and the Youz and Yours evening held a few weeks ago. This was a great evening with a few unintentionally

hilarious moments – you had to be there! Thanks to all the couples who took part and made it such a fun evening.

We've played host to quite a few visitors to the area including the group of UK cyclists who stopped off on their tour of Scotland, several groups from the Netherlands on tour on their motorbikes and several other groups and families from the UK and Europe who dropped in for a drink when they discovered that we were open. A couple from London needed to sit down when they discovered that the price of two pints in the Flying Pig cost the same as they would have been paying for one when they were at home. We don't realise how lucky we are! This is a great resource for the community, and we'd love to see it being used more regularly by everyone in and around the village.

We have a number of upcoming events in the lead up to Christmas and Hogmanay. These events, and our opening times over the holiday period, will be advertised through the usual channels as soon as we have firmed up our plans. We are looking forward to welcoming you all over the coming months

Park Life!

Jade Crichton

Work to transform the Dunscore playpark is progressing well. The tender for the path has been awarded to Donald Peacock. Eve and I met Donald and members of the council recently to discuss the job and ensure he knew exactly where the path was to be.

He hopes to complete the job before Christmas but if weather does not permit then it will be as soon as possible after the Christmas break. It will be a messy job and the park will be closed to the public for at least two weeks. We did ask nicely if there was any extra tar that it could be used to fill the pot holes along the school road!

We hope you are as excited as us for the path to be installed! I know my children can't wait to take their bikes and roller skates!

Our movie nights have been very popular for fundraising for the park and we are planning to hold further events in January. Thanks to everyone who has supported these.