

ISSUE 58 - AUTUMN 2020
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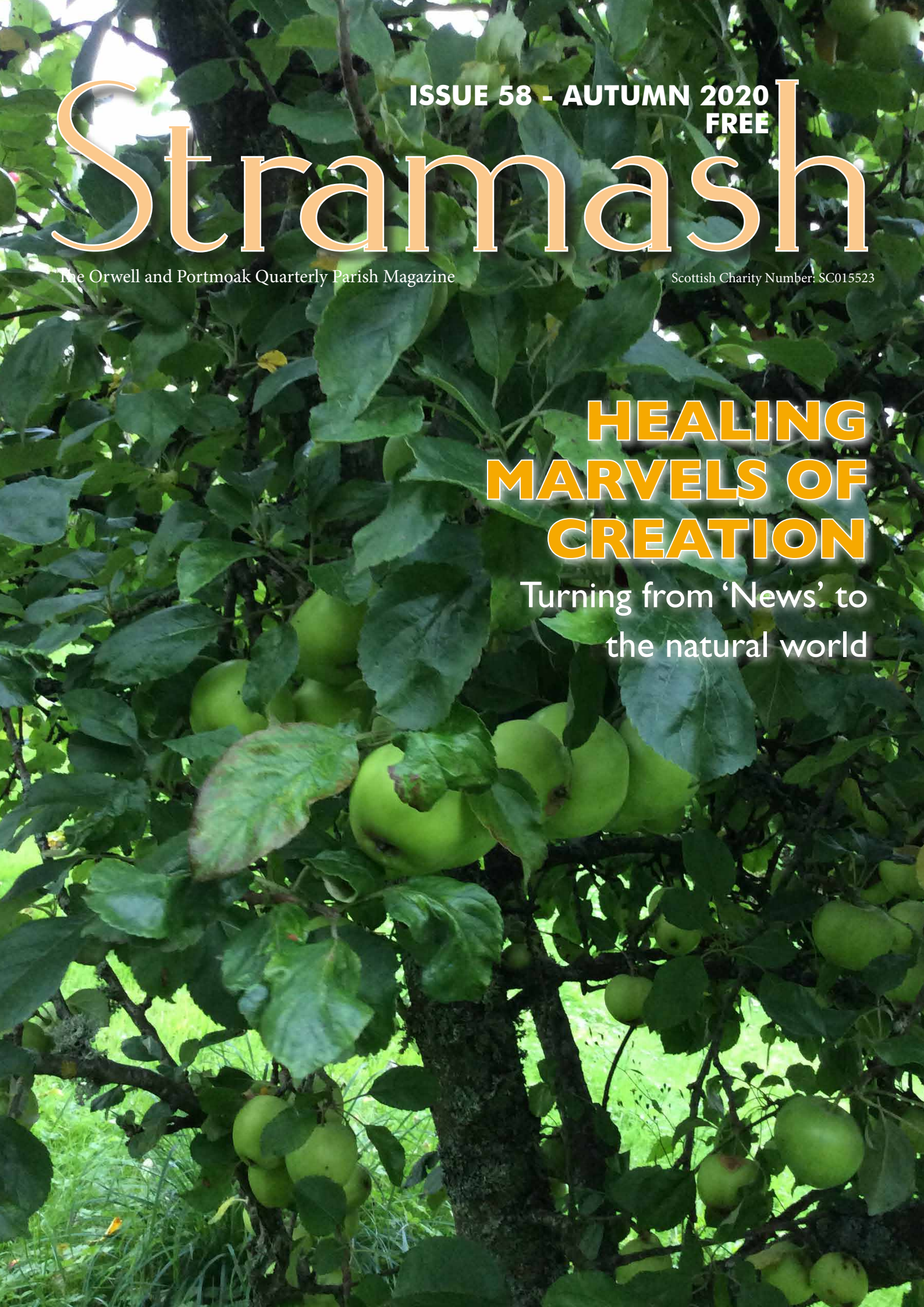
Stramash

The Orwell and Portmoak Quarterly Parish Magazine

Scottish Charity Number: SC015523

HEALING MARVELS OF CREATION

Turning from 'News' to
the natural world





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Dear Friends,

It has been a summer – and a year – like none other we have known! The advice of some scientists, based largely on guesswork, and the ensuing political decision to impose a total Lockdown as the proper response to the pandemic, has had, and will continue for many years to have, consequences far beyond anything that was then envisaged. These consequences are now widely agreed to be vast in their reach. They greatly outweigh the damage caused by the virus itself, significant of course as that is. In time, independent enquiries there will be aplenty, recriminations will be angry, and heads will likely roll.

More importantly, let us hope that vital lessons will be learned. As we were so ill-prepared to encounter Covid-19, despite all the decades-long warnings, let's pray that a future pandemic will find our leaders awake and ready to take well-grounded and statesmanlike, rather than panicked and hasty, decisions on behalf of us all.



The good news is that your favourite magazine, Stramash, remains alive and well! It now has to stretch its stiff and aching limbs after a period of summer-time hibernation. I have just glanced at the last issue before Lockdown (*Spring 2020*) and can scarcely believe my topic: Brexit! Do you remember that word? It seems now to belong to another planet and, although it has not gone away, I suppose in some senses it does. The news media I fear have lost me in recent weeks. For years it was wall to wall 'Brexit' - ad nauseam. But, of course, the show has moved on. Wall to wall 'Covid' now induces the same nausea. 'Stop watching the news!' is about the best advice we could have been given in Lockdown.

Infinitely better for us all is to start watching far more of the undecieving beauties of the face of nature. It is hard to imagine a more blessed place in which to endure the strictures of Lockdown than Kinross-shire, and our own lovely parish. The natural world in all its glory surrounds us. From that lockdown-free glory, we have been too often distracted by the burdens and trivia alike of modern life. And yet our physical, mental and spiritual health can only be enhanced by unhurried, reflective time spent amid the healing marvels of creation.

The point was driven home for me this morning when, with our son James, I spent a few tranquil hours sitting by snug Loch Glow, optimistically wielding a resurrected fishing rod. It was the first time in years I had done such a thing. The leaping rainbow trout giggled at our inadequate tackle (*we failed to use a swivel and the weight should have*

been left untied). More than adequate compensation for our fruitless efforts was the sight of a magnificent osprey patiently hovering high above the loch, then diving into it at breakneck speed, before emerging with the trout (*the one meant for us, of course*) in its talons. A gentleman nearby, clearly a seasoned wild-life photographer, caught the moment on his powerful camera. Modern living has too often closed the door on a thrilling world out there that simply cries out to be rediscovered by us all. It will do us no end of good.

In the perspective of faith, the glory of that world is a sign of the glory of the Being who called it all into existence and who keeps the whole show on the road. The face of the world is a reflection of the face of the Creator who made us humans in his own image. We have foolishly defaced the world in which we live and, as the late Sir Roger Scruton so brilliantly showed, an atheist culture, motivated by a desire to escape from the eye of judgement, finds its escape route by blotting out the face. In the current de-facing masks measure, we find the perfect symbol of that tragic wish from which so many of our human follies spring.

If Lockdown encourages us all to walk the path the ancient psalmist trod, it will not have been in vain: "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me.' (*Psalm 27: 8, 9*) Ultimately, this is where our hope and our happiness lie.

With warmest regards and every best wish,

Angus Morrison
Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison

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'An Open Door'

These three words are found in the message of Christ to the church in Philadelphia, recorded in Revelation chapter 3: Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut (Rev. 3: 8).

For Paul, the symbol of an open door stood for opportunities for ministry (see *1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2: 12 and Colossians 4: 3*). The arrival of Lockdown in March seemed to signal the negation of that. All church doors were firmly shut, with no indication at all as to when they might open again. It was at first an utterly perplexing and disheartening outlook. Maybe, we had too much associated ministry and other aspects of church life with what happens behind closed church doors. For a time, we all felt stunned and unsure how to proceed. Pretty quickly though, across the church, it dawned on us that technology existed to enable us to continue to connect with one another and to forward the mission of the church even in these strange new circumstances. Literal doors had been closed, but many new and exciting metaphorical doors were opening. I recall seeing a cartoon in which Satan, laughing in God's face said with glee, 'I have just

closed down all your churches.' To which God replied, 'Actually, I've just opened one in every home.'

Modern technology has given the church 'an open door' with a difference and the evidence clearly indicates that very many more people have viewed the weekly online 'services' provided by many congregations, than have ever sat on our church pews. This is remarkable. The notion that interest in spirituality and matters of faith is rapidly vanishing in our society has been given the lie by the experience of these Lockdown days. For recent times, arguably that interest has never been greater than it is at present.

We are now, however, at the point of beginning to open the closed church doors again. For a time, this will happen with various restrictions and precautions in place. Masses of regulations and guidelines have to be absorbed and implemented. Like many ministers, I'm sure, I am deeply grateful to the small team in our own congregation looking at and acting on all the paperwork.

Because of the impending renovation work at Orwell Church, we will be using only Portmoak Church until

Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut (Rev. 3: 8)

further notice. Because of the size of the building, and the need for physical distancing, we are meantime restricting numbers at each service to 25. Should more than twenty-five people indicate a wish to attend, we shall hold a second service. Details about how to register your wish to attend a service can be found on the church website. We recognize that many will not be in a position to do so for quite some time and so we are continuing our online provision which, again, can be accessed via our website. No one, I hope, will feel in any way 'left out'.

'An open door.' One of the great challenges before the church in coming days will be for us to go through both the literal and metaphorical doors. From now on, both will be essential in the service of God's kingdom. We can no longer afford to privilege the one over the other. Exciting times ahead!

ANGUS MORRISON

Covid Crackers

Would you like to know how it feels to be in hospitality during this coronavirus pandemic? Remember when the Titanic was sinking and the band continued to play? ... Well, we're the band.

Eventually, everyone will be quarantined in their houses with no sports to watch ... and in nine months from now a boom of babies will be born ... and we will call them 'Coronials'.

Please take your clothes out of your wardrobe regularly, air them and allow them to stand in the sunlight. Recent studies have shown that clothes kept in wardrobes during lockdown will shrink.

Mum, we need haircuts. I'm Dad.

Does anyone know if we should take showers yet, or should we just keep on washing our hands?

Did you know that horse manure can help in the fight against the coronavirus? Take a liberal quantity of fresh horse manure and rub it on your hands. This will have the following effects:

- 1. It will prevent you touching your face.**
- 2. People will stay at least two metres from you.**
- 3. No one will want to shake hands with you.**
- 4. It will make you wash your hands before lunch.**

Can we uninstall 2020 and install it again? This version has a virus.

Orwell and Portmoak Guild

A letter from the Secretary to members of The Guild



Dear Fellow Member,

I trust everyone is keeping safe and well during this pandemic.

It is a while now since last we met, hearing a talk about the Japanese Garden, and I'm afraid it is going to be a while again. Due to the refurbishment of Orwell Church, the hall is currently being used to store items from the church, but, in any event, there wouldn't be enough space to allow for social distancing.

It looks as if the hall will be out of action until the Spring of next year, so I don't know if we will be able to meet together for quite some time.

In the meantime, we have made donations to the two projects we heard about this past year, and to two more of our speakers. There remain two projects to be supported – Crossreach and World Mission Council. If you have any ideas for fund-raising for these while stuck at home, we would be very grateful. Perhaps, if you are having friends for coffee, they might make a small donation.

Finally, the Annual Gathering on Saturday 5th September is going to be streamed 'virtually' at 11am. This will include hymns and music, contributions from various people and will end with communion that people can participate in from home. If you are unable to watch this either on your phone or computer, I have ordered a DVD which we will be able to circulate to those who wish to see it, if you let me know.

If there is any information of interest, I will try to get it to you. Meantime, keep safe and well.

With best wishes,
JEANETTE McLENNAN



Vintage Tractors' Saturday

The Vintage Tractor Run which took place on Saturday 8th August 2020, the day that the Kinross Show 2020 was due to be held, was hailed as a great success.

The procession was led by Andrew Turnbull, the President of Kinross-shire Agricultural Society, with a wagon letting all know that the Show, which would have celebrated its 190th Anniversary this year, would be back in 2021 and was loaded with a cow and calf, and a range of the produce

usually on display at the Show.

Clare Paton had a great trailer, done-up with every kind of rosette and prize given at the Flower Show, and a wonderful array of flowers.

There were twenty tractors on the Run, including the wee grey Fergys, Massey Fergusons and Deutz-Fahr, and their enthusiastic drivers were keen to show them off to an admiring public gathered at the roadside, who cheered them as they passed.

DOROTHY THOMSON



Traidcraft - A Reminder and a Recipe

Many of you will be missing the opportunity to meet together at church and to pop into the Orwell and Portmoak Office to have a chat, and, hopefully, also buy some Traidcraft goods.

Whatever you buy, whether large or small, it all makes a difference to the farmers who grow the food and the producers who make some of the delicious products.

We are very much looking forward to the time that we can once again meet together, but in the meantime, please remember that you can order direct from www.traidcraftshop.co.uk or contact me by email and we can deliver Traidcraft to your door. You can pay by cash, cheque or bank transfer.

Traidcraft is continuing to trade, and we need you to continue to buy as much as possible, to support producers in 29 countries throughout the world by giving them a route to market and paying them a FAIR price.

We have included a recipe for Spicy Taco Bean Soup to inspire you to do some Fairtrade baking or cooking. Please continue to support our stall, we can supply tea, coffee, chocolate, biscuits, dried fruit, rice and curry sauces, as well as washing-up liquid, soap etc. We shall look forward to hearing from you.

KARENA JARVIE
kjarvie@btinternet.com



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- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 tin of haricot beans
- 500ml vegetable stock
- 2 teaspoons of cumin
- Juice of half a lime (1 teaspoon)



Method -

1. Fry the onion for 3-4 minutes until golden, add garlic, cumin, lime juice, passata and cook for 1 minute.
2. Stir in the stock and beans and bring to the boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Garnish with sweet corn, or sliced spring onion, and serve with tortilla chips and some grated cheese.

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KYTHER

Coping with Covid-19

Since the last issue of **Stramash**, a lot has changed for **KYTHER**.

While many groups had to stop operating due to lockdown, KYTHE has continued with both Youth Workers, Barry and Gillian, working full-time. With the initial closure of the KYTHE Hub, instead of being on furlough, they adapted to the changes required of the Covid-19 lockdown and conducted many of their regular activities on-line, via YouTube, Zoom meetings and Instagram.

However, as lockdown eased, Barry, Gillian and other members of the Board of Trustees and Management Committee made plans for the young people to return to the KYTHE Hub, albeit in small numbers.

The Art classes have proved popular as usual, with great feedback, and the

new KYTHE Captures Photography, led by professional photographer Nadin Dunnigan, introduced a small group of young people to many aspects of photography, including stills and portraits.

We have also been delighted to welcome our new Administrator Julie Muncey, who started at the end of June, and already we are appreciating her skills.

Additionally, our website is up and running, and can be accessed at kythe.org.uk

Please pray for Barry and Gillian as they continue to expand the role of KYTHE and the number of young people with whom they have contact; pray for the Trustees and Management Committee as they seek to implement the 5 year strategic plan (*which was developed during*



Portrait photo of Barry Dougall

lockdown); pray for Julie as she continues to settle in her new role and develops this future, and mostly pray for the young people who will be returning to KYTHE after an unusual period of being absent from KYTHE and school. Many thanks!

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SUMMER READING

'The top of a book is the place where every bluebottle prefers to die' (George Orwell). It's an attraction that I, along with some other unusual people, share with these little creatures.

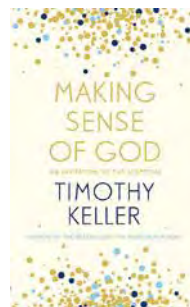
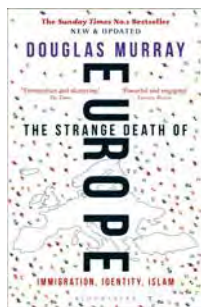
Reading has not only been for me an essential part of work as a jobbing minister over forty years, but one of the main (*probably the main*) means of relaxation. My fondness for books began in my teens. My mother, with a twinkle in her eye, would tell how money sent to me, as a student, to buy a new shirt, invariably and predictably went on books. To this day I am never happier than when ensconced in a quiet corner with a large tome and some free hours. Joy!

One of the positive outcomes of lockdown has been an increase in the number of people discovering this great pleasure. One national survey, reported in the Guardian, reveals that people in the UK have almost doubled the amount of time they spend reading books since lockdown began. That is good news. In recent years many bookshops have been forced to close, so let's hope that this healthy new trend survives the end of lockdown.

If you are looking for recommendations, the following three books are ones (*among others*) I have thoroughly enjoyed reading this summer. Recommendations like these, of course, will vary with each reader and reflect individual interests and tastes. 'Read widely,' a teacher of mine used to counsel us. I have found that to be excellent advice.

Seashaken Houses. A Lighthouse History from Eddystone to Fastnet. Tom Nancollas (Penguin, 2018)

Browsing in Waterstones at Ocean Terminal, I was initially attracted to this book on account of my family's connections with Scotland's Northern Lighthouse Board, in which my father served for many years. I had read a little about the history of lighthouses but it immediately became apparent



that this book was special. Not only is it a carefully researched account of rock lighthouses around the coast of Britain and Ireland, it is the work of a writer who has fallen in love with lighthouses and revels in the story he tells. In nine brilliant, highly personal, chapters, the author tells the story of eight particular lighthouses and the men whose incredible ingenuity and courage helped to save countless lives. Read this book, which has many fine illustrations, and you will never think about lighthouses in the same way again!

The Strange Death of Europe. Immigration, Identity, Islam. Douglas Murray (Bloomsbury, 2017)

This Sunday Times No. 1 Bestseller is easily one of the most important, sobering and compelling books of recent times. It is the account of a continent and culture hell-bent on destroying itself. In a calmly reasoned manner and with meticulous research, Murray probes the malady which afflicts an ailing Europe. He covers a large number of controversial subjects which impinge upon our daily lives: the now vast influx of immigrants, starting with the small post-War numbers, received to deal with labour shortages; the cultural self-flagellation of demoralised Western nations; the birth rate among immigrants; the Black Lives Matter movement; the clash between our liberal societies and the incoming, growing Islamic communities; the massive increase in sexual crime in Europe; terrorism in our midst, etc, etc. Some of these subjects are well-nigh taboo and Murray does a wonderful job in handling them in a factual, balanced and insightful way. It would be difficult to find a more penetrating analysis of the problems that currently beset Europe. Whether one agrees with

every single point Murray makes, or not, I would wish everyone who values our inheritance in Europe to read with care this bracing wake-up call. It could even transform society and save our decaying civilisation.

Making Sense of God. An Invitation to the Sceptical. Timothy Keller

(Hodder, 2016)

Tim Keller is founder of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan and author of many bestselling books. The Reason for God. Belief in an Age of Scepticism was published in 2008 and showed how deeply Keller had studied the spirit of the age and understood the questions people, especially young people, were asking. He provided a set of reasons for belief in God and Christianity. This further book takes as its starting point the recognition that for some people Christianity does not seem relevant enough even to be worth their while exploring. Religious people are perceived as ignorant or naïve, or possibly evil. Secularism is based on objective science which leaves no place for religion, based as it is on blind faith. Case closed.

Keller begins by introducing what will be to many a shocking truth: secularism is based on faith. The binary notion of religion/faith – science/ reason is shown to be the nonsense it is. Keller rightly challenges the idea that the world is becoming more secular and demonstrates the truth to be rather that 'every person embraces his or her worldview for a variety of rational, emotional, cultural and social factors.'

Whether or not one finally agrees with Keller's strong case that 'Christianity makes the most emotional and cultural sense, that it explains these life issues in the most trenchant ways, and that it gives us unsurpassed resources for meeting these inescapable human needs,' all open-minded people, searching for life's meaning and purpose, will find incredibly helpful material in these pages.

ANGUS MORRISON

Lockdown
Peter May

As a fan of Peter May, the author of the Lewis trilogy, the China series and the Enzo series of crime thrillers, I approached his 2020 publication of “Lockdown” with a mixture of anticipation, but also with a little hesitation, if not, trepidation.

“Lockdown” is fiction. It is a crime thriller, but its setting is challenging for any reader in the light of the present Covid-19 pandemic. The draft of the book was written two years ago.

“Lockdown” is set in London in the not-too-distant future, a London which is ravaged by a deadly ‘flu virus. People are dying by the tens of thousands. The Dome (*“At last they have found a use for it” declares one character*) houses large cremators to deal with the seemingly endless supply of corpses. There is a very strict curfew enforced by a trigger-happy military force. Robbery, assault, and burglary are rife. Residents on the Isle of Dogs have barricaded themselves in and are prepared to shoot any intruder on sight to avoid catching the ‘flu. Society has more-or-less broken down.

There, is, however, an antidote to the virus, a medicine called “Flukill”, but it is in such short supply that only the police, other law enforcement agencies, and political leaders have been given supplies: the rest of the population have to take their chances.

It is quite spine-chilling stuff, so much so that Peter May’s publishers would not publish the book at first time of asking in 2018; they thought it was just too far-fetched and alarming at the time. Then along came the Covid-19 pandemic and the book was published.

It is against this horrific background that the skeletal remains, complete with the skull, of a child are found in a shallow grave on the site where an emergency hospital is being hastily built. Detective Jack MacNeil, a burly Scot who is just days from retiring from the Metropolitan Police, is sent to investigate. Forensics are called in and a murder investigation ensues. The story moves on at a rapid pace (*MacNeil is determined to catch the murderer before he retires*). There is the usual mixture of love entanglements, corruption and cruelty along the way, until the story ends in most dramatic fashion on a dark night at the London Eye,



which, of course, had been closed to the public for weeks. I’ll say no more about the plot for fear of spoiling a truly gripping yarn.

I would not recommend the book for bedtime reading, but I would say the background to the story is a very timely warning to us all not to take lightly any viruses which are likely to come our way. Detective MacNeil was fond of a nice malt whisky. Perhaps a wee dram early evening might help cope with “Lockdown”.

DUNCAN STENHOUSE

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Portmoak Primary School

How wonderful it has been to welcome back all our Portmoak families to our lovely wee school. Staff have been working very hard to prepare the classrooms and become familiar with all of the new rules and routines that we need to implement. We felt as ready as we could be, but we hadn't taken account of one thing – a major thunderstorm!

On the first day of the new term, we entered the building to find a number of leaks, and that our phones and internet weren't working. However, by 9am, the storm had completely cleared, leaving a bright, sunny, hot day, just in time for the arrival of our pupils. Seeing their smiling faces as they entered the gates made me feel more than a little bit emotional – five months away from them all was a very long time.

One of our main methods of mitigating risk from the virus is minimising movement of people throughout the school, as well as minimising the number of people that individuals are in contact with each day. So that pupils aren't spending too long within just one room, we have further enhanced our school grounds to provide every class with an outdoor classroom. Thanks to The Friends of Portmoak School (*our parent council*) and Logs in Fife (*CJ Douglas*), we have created seating areas using cut logs. It was great to see them all be put to use on the very first day.

Our next task is to replace our existing outdoor classroom which has, over time, succumbed to weather, and to complete work that was started last year on our 'quiet

area', which is hidden away at the other side of the school.

A final note for this issue is to say a huge 'thank you' to Kinnesswood in Bloom, particularly John and Pat Nicol, for keeping our school grounds looking immaculate throughout lockdown and over the summer. It cheered me up no end on my visits to the school to see the flower beds bursting with colour. Staff also commented on how pretty the school grounds looked on their return.

Although at this time, pupils will be unable to work in close contact with the Kinnesswood in Bloom group, we are currently exploring other ways of doing so, as well as maintaining our strong links with the community.

PAULA WOODS
Acting Headteacher



So Far, So Good - at Mombwe

At the time of writing, it has been a relief to learn from Rev Bonet Kamwela that the congregation of Mombwe and all other people within their community in the northern region of Malawi have remained free of infection from Covid-19, although this is not the case elsewhere throughout that country, where the number of confirmed cases of infection has been increasing rapidly.

As there is no hospital within a 30 mile radius of Mombwe and no intensive care facility anywhere in the northern region, it is a matter of grave concern to Rev Bonet that the infection should not be found to have reached any member of his congregation or parish.

Government restrictions have been imposed throughout Malawi, and the advice and guidelines to which we have become accustomed also largely apply there, including the need for frequent handwashing with soap and water – which is far from easy when both are in short supply.

The three Primary Schools in the parish remain closed meantime and gatherings have been restricted to a maximum of ten people, which means that church services will not take place.

This year, the food shortage is more serious than last year. It is just a few months since the harvest and yet many people have little food, and some have nothing. Heavy rain and floods earlier in the year had destroyed many of the crops.

On a more positive note, the new maize mill at Emanyaleni (purchased with money donated last year by members of the Orwell and Portmoak congregation) is now functioning well, following upon the long delayed installation by the Malawi Electricity Company of a new transformer and meter.

The Mombwe congregation has also recently completed the construction of new vestry rooms, linked to the

vestries (small churches) at Njakwa and Kapilimuhoto, with the help of money donated by this parish. These new brick-built extensions have replaced the previous temporary, grass structures.

Please remember the congregation and people of Mombwe parish in your prayers.

RUARY MACLEOD
Twinning Co-ordinator



*Above: Admiring the new maize mill in operation;
Below: Njakwa's new vestry room under construction*



Kapilimuhoto vestry room completed



Rev Bonet and elders in Njakwa's grass vestry room



Orwell Church Improvements Gather Pace

At long last, after many frustrating delays in the approval process, added to by the onset of Covid-19 and the necessary lockdown of works of building construction, work is now underway on the long planned and eagerly anticipated alterations and extension to Orwell Church, Milnathort.



Above and Right: Carpets lifted first, then pews and pulpit to follow



The main contractor was due to commence work on 7th September and one of the early steps to be undertaken by the contractor will be the removal of all the pews, together with the pulpit, staircase and raised dais, on the ground floor of the church. Before the church was handed over to the main contractor, a work-party of volunteers kindly undertook the removal from the church of many years' worth of accumulated items, which were no longer needed or suitable for future use and a quantity of carpeting, all of which is to be replaced. You may have noticed the heavily laden skip sitting in front of the church a few weeks ago.

The work involved will take about six months, and over that period both the church itself and the church hall will be closed for use by the congregation and other organisations. This is unfortunate but cannot be helped as the hall is required for the temporary storage of some of the larger items of church furniture which are to be retained.

It is intended to keep the congregation and community informed of the progress of the alterations to the church, as they take place, and so do look out for further updates in Stramash and on the website.

RUARY MACLEOD
Convener
Church Improvements
Working Group



Site of new extension to replace lean-to north entrance to Church

日本教会の現状と未来

Lorna's Update

The last time I wrote for Stramash, I spoke of the torch relay for the Olympic Games which were due to take place in Tokyo this year.

How long ago that feels! I returned to Japan in mid-March, just before lockdown in the UK and the State of Emergency which Japan declared in early April.

It has been interesting to observe the differences in approach between the two countries. In Japan, the Government is not allowed to enforce a lockdown. Instead they “strongly requested” certain businesses to close, and people to work from home and reduce in-person contact by 80%. Because Japan is a group-oriented society with a strong value of consideration of others, these requests were followed by most people and companies. As a result, we saw the virus numbers reduce significantly (*though they are now rising again*).

The State of Emergency was lifted at the end of May and we have been slowly adjusting to what is being called a “new lifestyle”. This includes physical distancing and wearing masks, which most people do. We are also asked to avoid the “three C’s” of gathering in crowded places, close-contact settings, and closed spaces.

During the State of Emergency, my church here moved to online services. Now we have been able to resume socially-distanced in-person services. The minister worked hard at working out how to seat everyone a sufficient distance apart. We now have two services on a Sunday morning and use the sanctuary and a room upstairs where the service is shown on a screen. Services are shorter than usual, with only a short amount of quiet singing and everyone wearing masks, and people leave as soon as the service has finished. We also continue to offer an online option. It is lovely to be able to connect with church members, even for a short time each week.

When I was in Scotland earlier this year, I said that I would like to get more involved in my local church once I came back to Japan. The ideas I had

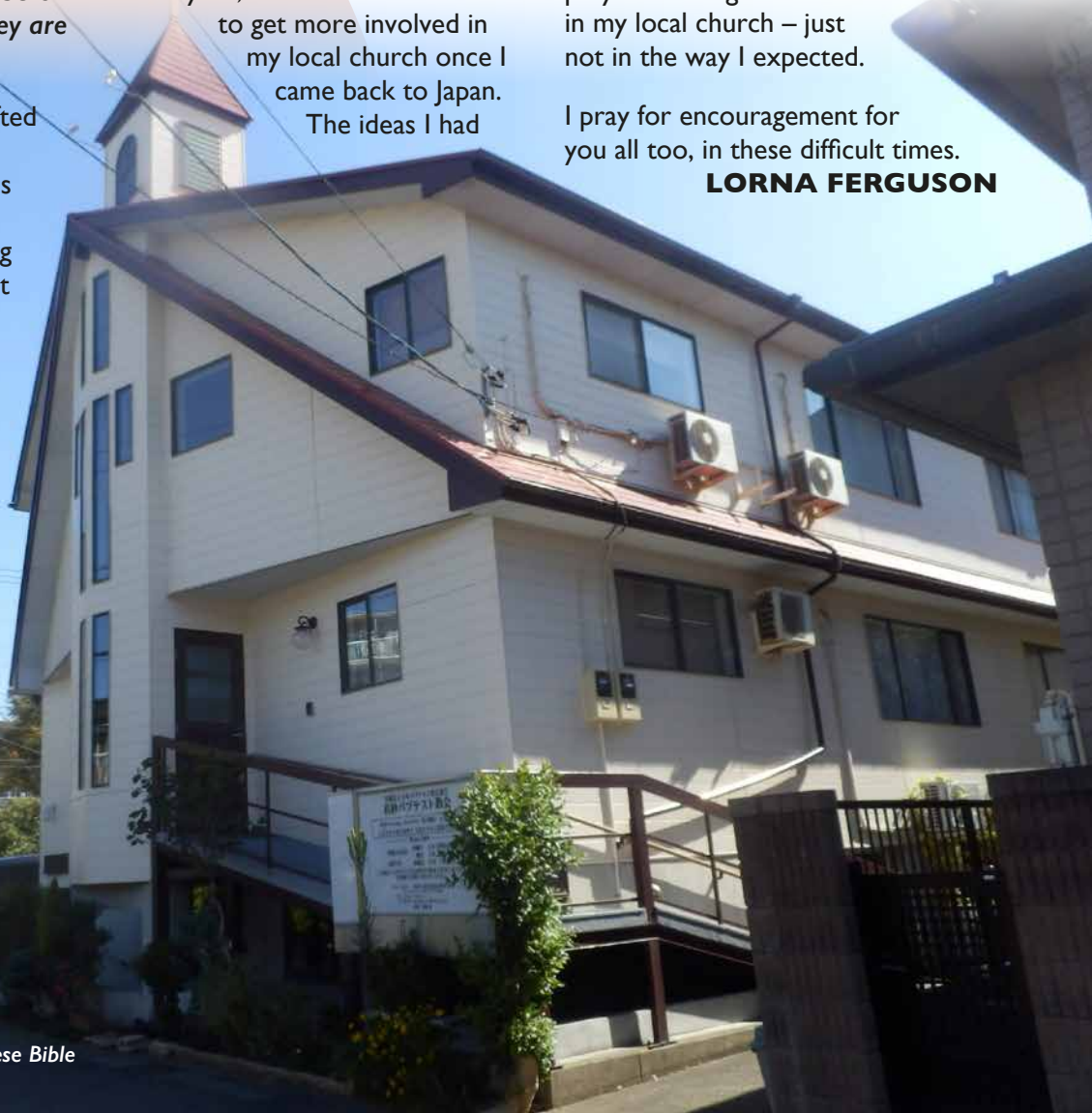


were a children’s club or English classes – things which I enjoy doing and could help the church have more contact with the local community. But by the time I got back, church meetings were being stopped, rather than anything new being started.

In April, the minister decided to start emailing daily Bible devotions to church members for their encouragement. I was asked to write one each week – in Japanese, which is a challenge even after 22 years here. At the end of Sunday services, quite a few church members have come up and thanked me for the devotions we are doing. They are genuinely grateful for the encouragement they are receiving from God’s Word each day. I realised that God has answered my prayer of being involved more in my local church – just not in the way I expected.

I pray for encouragement for you all too, in these difficult times.

LORNA FERGUSON



Learning through Travel

[A 'guest' article by Rev. Douglas Nicol, a good friend of Orwell and Portmoak congregation – Ed.]

Throughout my life I have listed 'travel' as one of my hobbies, and without doubt my favourite form of travel is the train – an environmentally friendly method which gives the chance of meeting fellow travellers as well as viewing scenery. Sometimes I've taken with me books to read only to find that I've spent the journey soaking in the everchanging views, with the truth dawning afresh of William Henry Davies' poem learnt at school: 'What is this life, if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?'

Travel has for everyone been restricted over much of 2020, and while I haven't actually been on a train since March, I have been enjoying many a train journey from the comfort of home – both through books and DVDs I've been given over the years, and through the remarkable number of excellent train journeys recorded on 'You Tube'. My appetite is whetted for the time that safe travel returns, when the thrill will come again of arriving by train in the beating heart of a new city that is just waiting to be explored.

If asked for a favourite European train journey, I would invariably say 'Paris to Milan', for on this seven hour journey the high speed TGV train travelling through the French countryside at 180 mph becomes a leisurely train meandering through attractive villages in the foothills of the French Alps before crossing the border into Italy. It is a great pleasure to enjoy some French bread, cheese and wine while soaking in the beautiful scenery on the latter part of this journey!

Arrival in Milan gives the opportunity of exploring a fascinating city with wonderful artwork, and for me the highlights are two-fold:

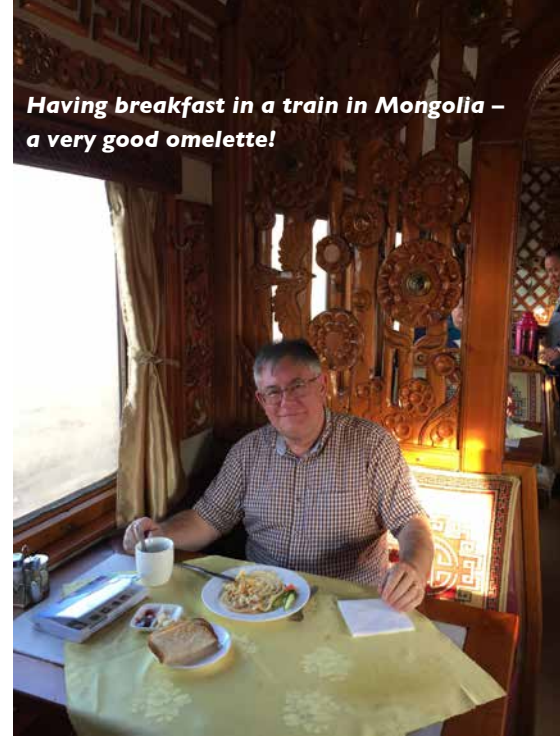
Firstly, there is the original of Leonardo da Vinci's late 15th century masterpiece, 'The Last Supper', in the refectory of the former Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie. Learning the history of the setting of this work of art we treasure today is an education in itself ... monks once cut away part of Leonardo's work to make a new door into their kitchen, and Napoleon based soldiers and horses in the building!

Secondly, the traveller can visit Michelangelo's 16th Century Rondanini Pieta in Sforza Castle. Whether the sculptor died before it was complete or whether it was his intention to leave it this way is unknown, but the result is amazing. Looked on from one angle, we see Jesus' mother, Mary, supporting the body of Jesus as she lifts him down from the Cross ... walk round the Pieta, and the view is transformed, with Jesus supporting Mary on her way in life.

A lesson for life discovered during a train journey to Italy! Jesus invites us to share in His work of serving others, while at the same time He offers to support us each step of our life's way. May you find joy in His unconditional love as you travel through the years!

DOUGLAS NICOL

Having breakfast in a train in Mongolia – a very good omelette!



The Rondanini Pieta in Milan

With Lee, the Chinese conductor on a Trans-Mongolian train



The Scottish Lavender Oils Company

Dorothy Thomson meets the local producers of this beautiful, sweet smelling delight

The beautiful blue fields at Tarhill are quite outstanding.

They are three acres of lavender grown for high grade oils, and used in the fragrance industry, aromatherapy and cosmetic trade.

Graham and Sarah Irwin moved from Northumberland twenty years ago and lived at Waroch for many years, before buying Tarhill Farm, which was derelict. They built a period house which looks like an old tower house from the north, and a modern house with sunny, big windows to the south. They rebuilt the steading with stone, with stables behind. A big undertaking beautifully done.

In the steading, there is a copper still, where sons Rory and Toby help with producing the oil. The lavender is cut by hand and laid out to dry on a sheet in the sun, outside the building with the still. The still has a

fire burning, which heats up the still and the lavender inside, and gives off a liquid from which the oil rises to the top and can be separated.

The lavender is weeded by hand and cultivated in rows, with grass avenues between the rows of plants. The plants are in black plastic to control weeds. They have rows of experimental varieties, some being hardier than others. Munstead, Imperial Jem and Hidcote are best; Grosto, a five year hybrid, has more oil but is not so hardy and wet rots roots, and it is more brittle. Little Lady and Little Tottie (Pink) are being trialled. Seven varieties are grown, to extend the harvest.

The plants are two to three years old before harvesting, and, if looked after, will last for twenty years. Chemicals are not used, and mechanical harvesting would damage

the plants and the mass of bees working on the lavender.

The family have this year had open days, as open air places are opened up to the public, by appointment, with two hundred people coming each open day. The oils and soap produced are very popular with the public.

Plans have been made to extend the lavender from the well drained banking where it is presently grown, to include the potato field next door, where it should grow well too.

Romania is the largest country in the world growing lavender, but this beautiful, sweet smelling crop of lavender is grown on the only lavender farm in Scotland, and we are privileged to have it in our parish. Their web site is www.scottishlavendaroils.com

DOROTHY THOMSON

Harvested Lavender



Lavender drying



Lavender Still



Lavender in field



“Inexhaustible Quarries of Limestone”

Lockdown brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic was an ideal opportunity to head off on foot from Kinnesswood in search of assorted quarries to be found high up on the Bishop Hill. Here David Munro looks at three of these quarries which were for centuries a valuable source of limestone.

Of all the different types of rock to be found in the Lomond Hills, limestone is the most interesting. Laid down over 300 million years ago, limestone was deposited when a tropical sea flooded low lying areas. Look closely and you will find traces of ancient marine life in the form of fossil lamp shells, coral, sponges and sea lilies known as crinoids. You don't need to climb to the top of the Bishop Hill to see these – just visit the Michael Bruce Cottage Museum where you will find fossils galore in the stone steps leading up to the entrance to the poet's birthplace.

The fact that limestone is principally made of calcium carbonate has made it of particular value to local builders, farmers and industrialists. The landscape of the Bishop Hill features not only three large limestone quarries but also dozens of small lime

kilns used to heat the stone in order to create a substance known as quick lime. This was used in the production of mortar for building, as a flux in iron furnaces and in agriculture to reduce the acidity of soil. Another highly specialised local use was in the Kinnesswood manufacture of vellum and parchment where animal skins were soaked in quick lime to ease the removal of hair.



Detail from the 1796 plan of the Eastside Lands of Kinnesswood showing the Fairy Doors Quarry and the route down which stone was hurled to lime kilns below. (Courtesy of Kinross (Marshall) Museum)

One of the earliest references to the quarrying of limestone is to be found in a 1587 charter of the Barony of the Bishopshire in favour



Fossils in limestone steps at the Michael Bruce Cottage Museum.

of William Douglas of Lochleven. Just over a century later, in March 1697, a much smaller document grants to Robert Arnott, a shoemaker in Kinnesswood, the lease of part of the village lime house.

Another century on, in his 1793 Statistical Account of the Parish of Portmoak, Andrew Grant noted that *“In the Bishop’s-hill there are inexhaustible quarries of limestone,”* and went on to describe how farmers and others during part of the summer would *“quarry and burn limestone to answer the demand of the county.”* Forty six years later in 1839 the Rev. Hugh Laird in the New Statistical Account of the parish recorded that *“about 4,000 tons of limestone are annually sold at 1s. 8d per ton”* - hard work for very little financial return.

The disused Clatteringwell Quarry with stone cut out ready for transport.

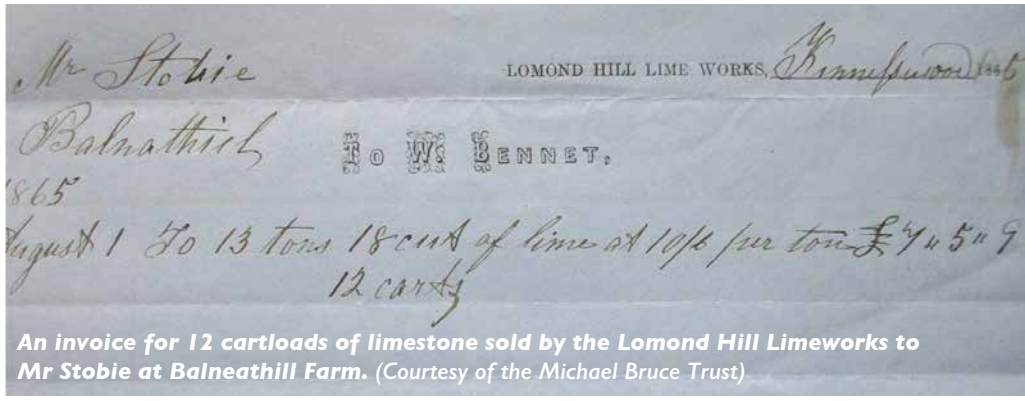


We know of two commercial enterprises operating limestone quarries on the Bishop Hill in the 19th century. The Kinnesswood Lime Rock Company extracted “very excellent lime rock” from the Clatteringwell Quarry until 1842 and two decades later in 1865 there is evidence from an invoice of a W. Bennet supplying limestone to Balneathill Farm under the trade name “Lomond Hills Limeworks, Kinnesswood.” While Bennet supplied Mr Stobie with 12 carts of limestone, the stone was often delivered to kilns at the foot of the Bishop Hill simply by rolling it down the hill face. A track from the Clatteringwell Quarry via the smaller Sheethiehead Quarry comes to a dead end at the edge of the Pinnels where stone was once tossed down the Kinnesswood Row to kilns below. This process was witnessed by Michael Bruce in the mid-18th century when limestone was hurled downhill from the Fairy Doors Quarry with fatal consequences. In his poem Lochleven Bruce describes how “A weighty stone, resistless, rapid came” bounding down the slope towards a kiln worker “And fell’d him to the ground.”

Marked as ‘Old Quarry’ or ‘disused’ on an 1894 Ordnance Survey second edition map, the Clatteringwell, Sheethiehead and Fairy Doors limestone quarries on the Bishop Hill had by then all fallen silent.

DAVID MUNRO

Below: Detail from an 1856 Ordnance Survey Map showing the Clatteringwell and Sheethiehead limestone quarries on the Back Brae of the Bishop Hill. A track leads to the edge of the Fore Brae.



An invoice for 12 cartloads of limestone sold by the Lomond Hill Limeworks to Mr Stobie at Balneathill Farm. (Courtesy of the Michael Bruce Trust)



Left: An open ‘clamp’ kiln near the Fairy Doors Quarry on the Bishop Hill

Above: The Kinnesswood Row where limestone rocks were ‘rolled’ down the hill to lime kilns at the foot of the hill. The end of the track from Clatteringwell Quarry can be seen top left.



All our Yesterdays when will we see their like again?

Retired coach-driver Dick Crighton ‘revisits’ some lens-captured memories of happier, Covid-free days.

During the recent long months of travel restriction, I reflected on where I would like to go to revisit some places. Here are a few that bring back pleasant memories.

1. The first is a picture of a quiet backwater of the River Shannon. This peaceful scene was captured one autumn near the small town of Scarriff about 40 km north of Limerick.
2. While strolling through St Hellier on the island of Jersey, camera at the ready, I saw this street sign that one of the “three pigeons” had already “spotted”!
3. It was a delight to visit the Gnome Sanctuary in Devon. There are many hundreds of gnomes there. Their ages range from a couple of centuries old to much younger individuals. We were greatly entertained by this little group of musicians who welcomed us.
4. As soon as a coach party arrives at Llanfair . . . gogogoch on Anglesey a tour guide appears from nowhere and comes aboard the coach. The holidaymakers are then given tuition in how to say this famous place name. They are told that they are not allowed to leave the coach until they get the name right!
5. Much closer to home, near Crail, is a reminder of the Cold War period. It is hidden under a fairly ordinary-looking house. Once inside, you can see what very few knew was there for many years. It is well named as ‘Scotland’s Secret Bunker’ and is a fascinating insight, a mere glimpse, of what was happening during some tense times in our recent history.

DICK CRIGHTON



1



2



3



4



5

Famous Sayings

Famous quotes to bear in mind at a time of uncertainty and distraction

Your life is your message to the world. Make it inspiring

Loren L. Lee

Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.

Confucius


Wheresoever you go, go with all your heart

The secret to happiness is not in doing what one likes to do, but in liking what one has to do.

Anonymous

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.

Eleanor Roosevelt

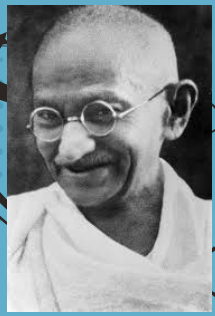


You can never cross the ocean unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.

Christopher Columbus

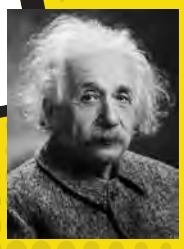
We must become the change we wish to see.

Ghandi



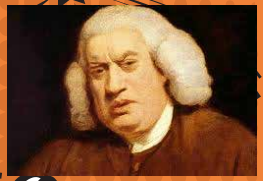
Try not to become a man of success but a man of value.

Albert Einstein



When making your choice in life, do not neglect to live.

Samuel Johnson



Don't let what you can't do stop you from doing what you can.

John Wooden

If you can imagine it, you can create it. If you dream it, you can become it.

William Arthur Wood

Never look down on anybody unless you are helping them up.

Rev Jesse James

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