

ISSUE 60 - SUMMER 2021  
FREE

# Stramash

The Orwell and Portmoak Quarterly Parish Magazine

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# Dear Friends,

**When I last wrote for Stramash, the results of the first effective vaccine had just arrived and they gave us all real hope.** Since then, the vaccine roll-out across the country has been an incredible success story. For that, our government and all involved deserve our deep gratitude. Those of us who believe in the power of prayer may well see a higher hand at work and give thanks where it is ultimately due.

We are now gradually emerging from lockdown and, before long, life should have returned to a good degree of *'normality'*. News headlines yesterday announcing that *'hugging'* of loved ones is permissible again, brought home what a uniquely bizarre year we have all experienced. Let us hope and pray we never have to endure the curtailment of basic liberties in this way again.

Going forward, memories of lockdown will inevitably bear a dark hue. We will recall sad failure to protect the most vulnerable; the loss of many lives to the virus; the deaths of others whose life-threatening conditions were side-lined; the inability of bereaved families to grieve in customary ways; the desperate loneliness of many people unable to enjoy the most basic social interaction with loved ones; the damage done to young people's education and future prospects; the terrible impact on mental health. One could go on ... and on. Whatever view one takes of the prevailing politics - not to speak of the politicization of science - during this period, it is scandalous that no lockdown impact assessment was ever undertaken. If proper enquiries are ever permitted, their results will be most interesting.

The picture, however, is not all negative. I am sure we will recall much that was good and cheering during these lockdown days. There has been the dedication of research scientists, working round the clock to develop vaccines, and those involved in their delivery; the devotion of front-line workers, of carers and volunteers, of refuse collectors, of teachers and school staff, of parents struggling with the competing challenges of home-schooling and their job, of shop workers, delivery drivers and all committed to meeting our basic needs on a daily basis. The list is endless. For all this labour and even, at times, heroism, we should be truly thankful.

What abiding lessons might lockdown leave us with? Among others, I suggest the following. Firstly, the fact that social interaction is of the very essence of living. The compelled incarceration of people, entailing their removal from social and physical interaction with others, especially family and friends, is an undermining of our very humanity. Lockdown should give us a fresh realisation



of our mutual dependence and a sharpened appreciation of the value of human *'togetherness'*.

A second lesson immediately follows – the importance of kindness in our lives. Our individualistic culture has helped make us far too self-centred. Lockdown has taught another way. Without the giving and receiving of kindness during these months, life for many would have become quite intolerable. What a happier and healthier society we would become, if a Kindness pandemic were to succeed the Covid version.

Thirdly, lockdown has shown the effectiveness of *'green therapy'*. Incredibly fortunate as we are to live where we do, many of us have (re)discovered the delights of our countryside. Our eyes have been opened, as never before, to the marvels of nature. On a wider canvas, our planet has had a little break from our notorious unkindness to the environment. Maybe, we will begin to value and look after the world better now?

Jesus taught us that *'one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions'* (Luke 12:15). He urged people to see that *'life in its fullness'* is discovered in those relationships of loving-kindness for which we were made – with one another, with our environment and, above all, with the God of love who made us for himself. As Augustine reminded us long ago, our hearts find no rest until they rest in him. I wish you all a healthy and happy summer.

Angus Morrison  
Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison

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# ATTENTION, ATTENTION!

## Almost There! New Multi-use Community Facility Nearly Ready!

**Hurrah!** The work of renovation, alteration and extension to Orwell Church has finished and reopening of the building is likely to take place soon.

Well, not quite 'finished', as the fitting of secondary glazing to some of the windows is to be delayed until later in the year, to avoid condensation and misting of the glass because of the non-heating of the building over a prolonged period.

Since publication in December of the last progress report, a huge amount of work has taken place. This has included the total replacement of the wooden floor on the ground floor of the church, the introduction of a new 3 phase electricity supply (to power the new sound, heating and lighting systems and the new kitchen appliances, as well as providing hot water for the kitchen and new toilets) and the laying of a new water pipe from the gateway of the church to the new extension at the rear.

The church building has been totally rewired and redecorated, together with the provision of new carpeting and vinyl floor coverings throughout the building and new furnishings (*including lightweight, stackable, upholstered chairs for the sanctuary, and sofas for the family/coffee room*).

Upon the hand-over of the completed building by the main contractor to the congregation, the Kirk Session intends to make available the whole premises, or certain rooms / areas of it, for use by members of the general public (*and not only members of the congregation*) throughout the week, both during daytime and in the evening.

Full details of the booking arrangements and any applicable conditions and charges for use, will be made known shortly, and will be available from the Church Office in South Street, when it reopens to the public.

It has been a long, complex and somewhat difficult journey from the initiation of this exciting project in July 2013 to the present stage, but it is very much hoped and expected that the 'new' Orwell Church will prove to be not only a fitting and beautiful place of worship but also a considerable asset to the local community for many years to come.

A massive 'thank you' to all those Trusts, businesses and individuals who have contributed financially or by their efforts to the successful conclusion of the project – with particular mention of The Arthur and Margaret Thompson Charitable Trust and The Gannochy Trust, without whose generous financial backing, the project would not have been possible.

**RUARY MACLEOD**  
Convener  
Church Improvements  
Working Group



# Walking and Talking with KYTHE

## Offering Activities & Support – and Seeking Help - for the Youth of Kinross-shire

It's incredible to think that 6 months have passed since we've been able to provide you with an update on all that KYTHE has been and is doing for our young people in Kinross-shire.

Last time, our administrator Julie was newly in post, and since then has found her place within KYTHE and keeps us all organised. There have been other changes with our staff. Initially a volunteer, Katy-Beth is now employed by KYTHE and her art skills are much appreciated, and she is expanding the scope of KYTHE's work by linking with Kinross Wooden Products. Emma is providing sessions to support the young people with their mental health, but more about that later. We thank God that we can increase the hours of those working for KYTHE but pray that the finance is available to meet the needs of the young people in Kinross-shire.

What have KYTHE been doing during this second lockdown? This time has been particularly hard for young people – maybe it's been the winter months, maybe concern about exams and assessments looming, maybe the loss of one of their school mates.

When Walk'N'Talk started in January to connect with young people at a difficult time; places were quickly filled, as often this was the only time they were getting out of their homes with the restrictions. Walking and talking has helped to support them with mental health struggles and isolation and promoted good health and wellbeing. There was a great turn out each week in every weather. KYTHE staff and volunteers have walked 1,681,006 steps with the young people of Kinross-shire in January to March - that's roughly 760 miles – almost the length of Britain!

KYTHE has partnered with Rotary who are working with KYTHE and the Lighthouse Perth, in a new project to provide mental health support to the young people of Kinross. In their first outreach, Lighthouse Perth will provide 1-2-1 crisis support based at the High School, while KYTHE and Rotary will provide drop-in sessions with information and signposting at the KYTHE Hub, thus complementing each other.

As this is written (*at the start of May*), restrictions are easing and there was the opportunity for some



activities during the school Easter holidays, often outside, and some art-classes with restricted numbers within the Hub. While 1-2-1s are continuing with some drop-in sessions, we look forward to when the Hub can be fully opened to allow young people to be together again.

Looking towards the summer (*yes we're hoping that it's nearly here*), KYTHE goes mobile, on tour around the area of Kinross-shire. Keep an eye out for our new gazebo, which will allow young people from other parts of Kinross-shire to experience the welcome and activities that KYTHE offers.

KYTHE is expanding, growing, adapting and meeting the needs of the young people of Kinross-shire, and we can continue to invest in them, but we are limited by our resources – volunteers and finance to name the main ones. If you can help (*large or small*), please contact [office@kythe.org.uk](mailto:office@kythe.org.uk)

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## Portmoak Grows Together

**Kinnesswood in Bloom and Portmoak Primary School have worked collaboratively for a number of years now, but each year the bond grows stronger and the projects that we embark upon get bigger and better.**

This year, we applied to the Scottish Government's Community Climate Asset Fund to purchase a polytunnel and food-growing materials to enable us to create a sustainable 'allotment' which would benefit the school, our learners and the wider community. We were delighted to be successful in our bid, with the majority of funds spent on a 'Polycrub' – a polytunnel designed in Shetland to withstand strong winds. Our location on the side of Bishop Hill has led to greenhouses being damaged in the past, so the Polycrub appeared to be exactly what we needed. The Polycrub is currently under construction, and is being built by Neil Robertson and Stephen Woods, members of the community, who have given up much of their free time.

It has been a very busy few months at the school with the arrival of the polytunnel and material to create eight raised beds. Rory Sillar and John Nicol (*Kinnesswood in Bloom*) worked hard over the Easter holidays to build the magnificent raised beds which have been filled with high quality peat-free compost, fulfilling one of the criteria of the climate fund. Kinnesswood in Bloom are now supporting teachers and pupils to plant a variety of items, including peas, carrots, onions, leeks, beetroot, runner beans, wheat and potatoes. We are very grateful to the group for donating all of the seeds, bulbs and plants to get us started.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions prohibiting Kinnesswood in Bloom from working with children in person, this has not prevented them from working with the children virtually. They managed to teach Portmoak pupils remotely by making short instructional videos for the children to follow - digging, weeding, planting trees, making lavender bags, painting and planting bean cans among other activities. We do not yet know what restrictions will be in place after the summer, but we can be confident that we can continue to work together for the benefit of our pupils and community.



**PAULA WOODS**  
Acting Headteacher  
Portmoak Primary School



## Kinnesswood in Bloom

**A few weeks ago, Kinnesswood in Bloom were invited to take part in the RHS Community Awards, one of five groups in Scotland.** Due to current restrictions, these awards will be judged remotely. The 63 groups from all over Britain will tell their stories digitally through photos, short videos and accompanying stories for consideration by RHS expert panels, with the results announced in September. This certainly gives us a challenge to 'up our game' in challenging times.

There are 5 categories, and we can choose up to three. We will be concentrating on "**Nourishing your Community**" and "**Cultivating your Community**". We are beginning to collect photos, starting to write our stories and taking videos of what goes on in our community.

Look out for art works on the theme of "**Coasts and Waters**". This was a two-year theme for Beautiful Scotland, but last year we chose to diversify by honouring our essential workers during a period when we were grateful for those who looked after us. This year, we have returned to "**coasts and waters**" and we hope you will enjoy the artwork trail around the village. It has been a great chance to celebrate the skills of people who are isolated, are shielding, or have time on their hands to develop their artistic skills.



# The Price of Lead?

What with the use of lead sheeting in the construction of the new addition to Orwell Church, and the ham-fisted, but expensive attempt at the theft of lead from Portmoak Church in recent times, I was reminded of a theft of lead in a different age in a different place from another church.

The year was 1745, the place Dumfries, the building St Michael's Church. After much fund-raising and donations from local tradespeople, the good burghers of Dumfries were looking forward to the consecration of their magnificent new place of worship atop the hill overlooking the River Nith. The year 1745 would always be remembered as the year when the new church was consecrated, or so it was thought, but, unfortunately, national events intervened.

The historians among you will recall that 1745 was the year of the second Jacobite Rebellion, Bonnie Prince Charlie, and all that. The Jacobites had invaded England and swept all before them till they reached Derby, and then they took cold feet. Their ultimate target, presumably, was London, and unknown to the Jacobite leaders, the seat of government was theirs for the taking, but for various reasons the leaders decided to head back towards Scotland. They re-crossed the borderlands in various detachments, one of which made its way north via Dumfries.

On arrival in the town, they caused great alarm amongst the population



(few people in the south of Scotland supported the Jacobite cause). They proceeded to cause further alarm when they demanded the rolls of lead sheeting which were ready to be fixed to the new church roof. The Provost and magistrates of the burgh were seized and held hostage until the lead was handed over to the Jacobites so that they could make shot for their muskets. (Local legend has it that the common folk of Dumfries were not too concerned about the seizure of their Provost and magistrates as hostages, but as we know, stories improve with the telling).

St Michael's was consecrated a year later, the same year that the Jacobites were defeated on Culloden Moor. There is probably no connection between the shot made from the stolen lead and the slaughter that occurred at Culloden on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1746, although the congregation of St Michael's, Dumfries might claim it was "**divine retribution**".

Perhaps, present-day lead stealers should "**tak tent**".

**DUNCAN STENHOUSE**

(A Gallovidian, not quite a Doonhamer)



## Traidcraft at the Farmers' Market in Kinross

With no stalls allowed in church or in the Orwell and Portmoak Church Office, it would be tremendous to see as many people as possible visiting the Traidcraft stall and continuing to buy Fairtrade goods from Traidcraft and Just Trading Scotland at the Farmers' Market in Kinross.



The markets from June to October are on the fourth Saturday of the month. The June Market is at the Market Park from 11am-3pm, and the other Markets are in the High Street from 10am-2pm.

Please come and #ChooseTheWorldYouWant by buying Fairtrade goods, so that farmers and producers are paid a fair price for their products. We have Kilombero rice from Malawi, curry sauce and chutneys from Eswatini, pasta sauces and jams from Kenya, bamboo socks and Divine chocolate, as well as Fairtrade coffee and tea.

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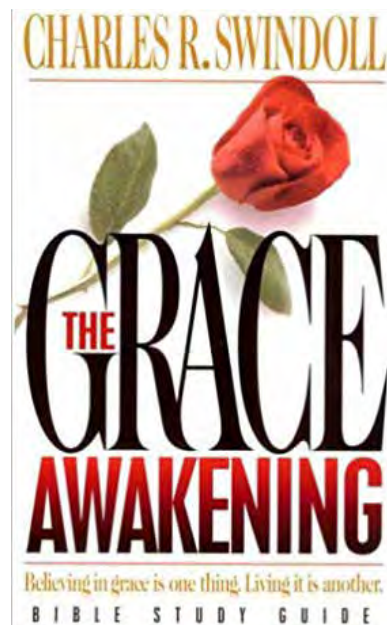
**The Grace Awakening**  
**Author: Charles Swindoll**  
 Word Publishing

Some books can change the way in which we are able to see things. Other books can change the things that we are able to see. The Grace Awakening is a book with the potential to do both.

The 'grace' to which the title refers is a single-word summary of the nature of God as it emerges from the pages of the Bible, and especially as it comes to expression in the person and life of Jesus. Richly illustrating his narrative with biblical characters and stories, Swindoll illuminates God's delight in welcoming, forgiving and fully accepting everyone, without exception, who comes to him in faith through Jesus. The 'awakening' is an invitation to apply the liberating implications of God's grace to the full round of life, rejecting a "moralising and legalising" religiosity for a life lived as "a joyous overflow prompted by love."

This book unfolds as an engaging, well-written and thought-provoking exploration of Christian teaching and its relevance to healthy personal development and human relationships. At times it can sound like a self-help manual: "Write your criticisms in dust, your compliments

in marble," or, "Rudeness is never appropriate. Without exception, kindness is." and similar sentences could have been written by gurus of positive thinking. But this is no self-help manual. The notion that God helps those who help themselves, and that God's approval rests on those who simply try hardest to 'do the right thing' is dismissed as "the most dangerous heresy on earth." For Swindoll, human flourishing starts with the realisation of a personal need for a restored relationship with the living God, made possible through faith in Jesus. Rules do not work: 'Keep Off The Grass' and 'Wet Paint, Don't Touch' feed an instinct within us to do the exact opposite, and our stories can get much worse beyond that. The power that enables personal transformation comes after God's forgiveness not before, argues Swindoll: "All you can do is take it. Once you take it you will be given the power to change," is one memorable statement. His use of biblical quotations and incidents from the lives of Bible characters form the foundations of his argument and are one of the great strengths of his writing. Perceptions of the Bible as esoteric and outdated are refreshingly challenged by the aptness and relevance with which he explains and applies its principles and biographical accounts.



This is not a self-help guide, but neither is it a book of academic theology. Swindoll has separate chapters on living out a grace-centred life in the often-challenging contexts of friendship, marriage, communal life and all aspects of church life, examining both the respective obstacles to the counter-intuitive wisdom of grace and the solutions that it provides, solutions that emerge from growing personal maturity, not from pre-set formulae.

Written with wit and wisdom born of personal experience and many years in pastoral ministry The Grace Awakening is an important and mind-opening book. Highly recommended.  
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**A Hebridean Trilogy**

**Love of Country. A Hebridean Journey** Madeleine Bunting  
(Granta, 2016)

**St Kilda. A People's History**  
Roger Hutchinson (Birlinn, 2014)

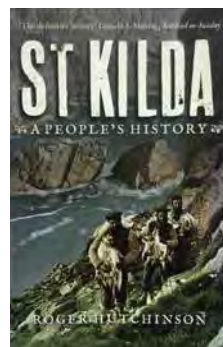
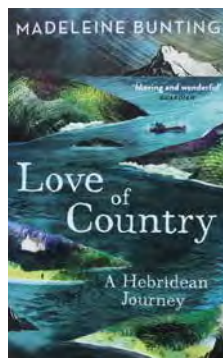
**As the Women Lay Dreaming. A Novel of the Iolaire Disaster**  
Donald S. Murray (Saraband, 2018)

As we emerge from lockdown, and foreign holidays remain under question, many are turning their thoughts to the benefits of a Scottish summer 'staycation'. It is, of course, enriching to visit other countries and experience other cultures. And guaranteed sunshine is an undoubted attraction for us Scots. Sometimes, however, we are inclined to overlook the diverse richness and beauty of landscape and seascape, of fauna and flora, of culture and language which our own small country has to offer. In these areas, as in others, we punch well above our weight. The Hebrides represent one of the most untouched and scenic parts of the country. Each of these paperbacks is set in that context.

Bunting has given us one of the best written, perceptive and fascinating books of recent times about the Western Isles. Based in London, she recounts several 'pilgrimages' in the Hebrides, taking in Jura, Iona, Staffa, Rum, Eriskay, Lewis, St Kilda and finally the Flannan Isles. Writing against the background of the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, Bunting has a particular interest in exploring the complex

idea of home, belonging and identity. She looks closely and empathetically at the separate 'Hebridean', as distinct from 'Scottish', identity of the people of these islands. Her interest in geography, politics, history, religion and storytelling are brilliantly and often movingly interwoven throughout. Penetrating insights abound on the politics of religion, the appropriation and idealisation of the Hebrides and Gaelic culture by more dominant cultures, the Gaelic language, and much more. The book has a meditative quality and deserves to be read slowly and reflectively. It helps us see how closely the stories of every part of the British Isles are tied together and so brings badly needed perspective to current fraught debates.

Bunting describes a visit to St Kilda, the 'most romanticised group of islands in Europe', and situated one hundred miles out into the North Atlantic from the Scottish mainland. Hutchinson, in turn, gives us arguably the best researched and written account of their history. The journey takes us from earliest times to 1930, when the remaining 36 islanders were evacuated to the Scottish mainland. It's a story of 'an unusually hardy, proud and articulate' people who were able to adapt to the rigours of their environment and



not only survive but thrive in community. Hutchinson moves beyond the often idealised portrayal of St Kildan life in many previous works. Rejecting the 'sublime St Kilda' myth, his gripping chronicle of self-sufficiency, faith and tenacity, shows the truth to have been far more interesting. It's an account hard to put down.

In her book, Bunting refers movingly to the tragic loss of the Iolaire, as she carried servicemen home to Lewis and Harris at the end of the First World War. The loss of some 200 men, within sight of Stornoway's harbour lights, traumatised these islands for a century. Only recently have islanders begun to speak about it. Murray's powerful and evocative novel of family and community trauma and grief, extending over three generations, skilfully combines fact and fiction in conveying the

lasting impact of the disaster. It is a moving, beautiful and, ultimately, life-affirming read, which provides rich insights into the culture, language and way of life of Gaeldom.

Reading any one, or preferably all, of these superb books will whet your appetite for a Hebridean get-away-from-it-all staycation. That will do you more good than a fortnight on Mustique.

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# From Generation to Generation...

## Further journeys of interest, adventure and enjoyment in the company of Douglas Nicol

**I started writing this article for 'Stramash' in the town of Wick in the North of Scotland – and those of you who read my last article will not be surprised to learn that I arrived in the town by train!**

On every visit, I feel strangely at home in Wick, especially as I walk by the harbour where my great grandfather unloaded the catch from his fishing boat at the height of the herring fishing industry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. One of his sons, James Oag, travelled South to Edinburgh as the herring fishing failed – he married my gran, and my mother was born. The dream of a happy family life was marred, however, by the First World War, and James Oag died in France in September 1914 as a member of the British Expeditionary Force, when my mother was only a year old. Research of his short – though sacrificial – life, beckons me to Wick, and to a strand of my family that I have come to treasure.

Then, I attribute my enjoyment of travel to my father, who greatly enjoyed the Mystery Coach Tours that in the 1950's would leave our home town of Burntisland – each one taking a circuitous route from the Fife coast to towns such as Crieff, Aberfeldy, and Blairgowrie. These tours taught me about the fun of travel – a journey is to be enjoyed rather than endured!

Fast forward to 2021, and serious limitations to travel abroad. With the rail routes of the world closed off, this seemed the time of life to journey on the railways of Scotland.

Just as I was daydreaming, I learnt of a new guidebook – **'Scotland from the Rails – a window gazer's guide'** by Benedict Le Vay (Bradt: February 2021). With it in hand, I had set off two weeks ago [at time of writing] on what I estimated would be five 'adventures' to see my native land by rail, and the first of those was a few days based in Inverness, to take the Inverness/Kyle of Lochalsh and the Inverness/Wick routes – rail routes built at minimal cost to serve isolated communities and to transport sheep and fish to market.

There was no cash to dig tunnels or construct major bridges and so these lines take the route of least resistance, both to the geography and to the desires of local landowners. We have inherited amazing routes – along river and loch banks, and sometimes going up challenging inclines, such as climbing Raven Rock outside Dingwall, on the Skye line.

As I planned the trips, I wondered how I could help grandsons capture the enjoyment and decided to give them each a map of the rail routes of Scotland, with the promise of postcards from each far-flung destination. Hopefully, that will give them a further understanding of map reading and an appreciation of the wonders of Scotland –and maybe even kindle in them a sense of enjoyment in the journey, as well as of the destination.

May you have safety and satisfaction in the journeys you feel able to take this year!

**DOUGLAS NICOL**

Arrival in Kyle of Lochalsh



Fun with grandsons at Alton Towers



Dornoch Firth from the Wick train



*Postscript: Sadly, my train journeying will not bring me through Milnathort—though there are several excellent 'YouTube' videos of the tunnels and viaducts of Glenfarg - compared to the simplicity of the Highland lines, no cost was spared in achieving a direct route from Perth to Edinburgh!*

Lochcarron from the Kyle of Lochalsh train





# Motorbiking, Sewing and Football - it's all happening in Mombwe!

**Helping to meet the immediate needs of both young and old people who are less fortunate than ourselves is one important part of the Congregation of Orwell & Portmoak's twinning partnership with Mombwe Congregation, in Northern Malawi.**

Earlier this year, following upon extensive flooding, after heavy rainfall, of many fields close to the Kasito River, resulting in the loss of newly sown maize seed and fertiliser, some of which had been provided by the Malawi Government, and an appeal by the Minister of Mombwe, Rev Bonet Kamwela for money to buy replacement fertiliser, the Kirk Session of O & P agreed to send £800 from the Mombwe Fund of the congregation, via the World Mission Dept of the Church of Scotland, to Mombwe for that purpose.

Unfortunately, due to delay on the part of the WMD in forwarding that money, it arrived in Mombwe too late to be used for its intended purpose. Instead, at the suggestion of Rev Kamwela, and with the agreement of the Kirk Session of O & P, the money was used to buy maize to feed those people whose own crops had failed through flooding and who were consequently at risk of starvation.

Further help given more recently to Mombwe by Friends in O & P parish has taken the form of gifts of money for the purchase of -

1. a congregational motorbike - for use by the Minister when visiting any of the six vestries (small churches) across the parish or when travelling to neighbouring towns and congregations
2. three sewing machines (*the foot-treadle variety familiar to more 'mature' readers*) for use in sewing classes, and
3. A small supply of footballs - both (2) and (3) primarily for the benefit of the youth of Mombwe community.

As previously stated, if YOU would like to become a Friend of Mombwe Congregation and to offer some financial assistance to meet their ongoing needs, then please contact our *Congregational Treasurer, Linda Stewart (07925 321 932)*, who will be happy to offer you advice as to the most appropriate way of giving, including giving by way of Gift Aid donation – if you are a UK taxpayer.

In any event, please remember our friends in Mombwe in your prayers. Thank you!

**RUARY MACLEOD**  
**Twinning Co-ordinator**



Distribution of Maize



Bonet on new motorcycle



Dedication of motorcycle for Ministers' use at Emanvaleni



Sewing machines arrival at Emanvaleni



Sewing machines in use

New footballs



**Smart Flowers**

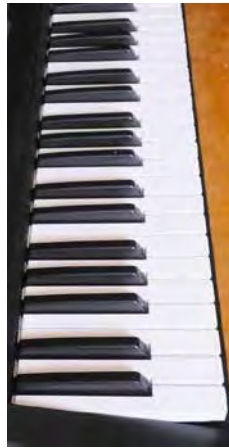
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**Lesley McLaughlin**  
Florist

smart-flowers@outlook.com  
**07596713962**

# Who or What? Raking up colourful musical memories

1. In a technical sense, black and white are not colours, they are shades. However, let's ignore that for the sake of this first question. This piece of music, written by George Botsford in 1908, introduced the TV snooker tournament Pot Black. The series ran on the BBC from 1969 to 2007. The honky-tonk music was frequently played by Winifred Atwell and was the piece of music that propelled her to stardom. What was it called?



2. There is only one in this picture; there were more. Name the title of the popular, traditional counting song for children. Among the troops during World War II, there were several versions of this song, some of which are certainly not suitable for children or this publication!

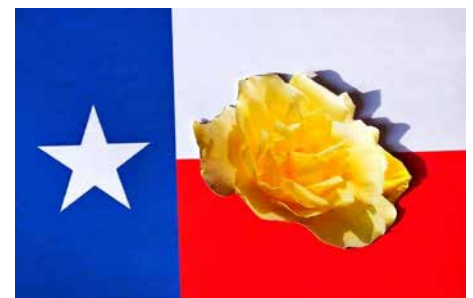


3. The fruit is a big clue here, but it's the flower that gives its name to the fiddle tune. Named after a train, the score looks quite scary to any inexperienced fiddler, but it has been, and is still played and recorded, by players of Country Music. What is this piece called?



5. It's too easy to name the title of this song. It was written and first recorded by Carl Perkins in 1955. Recordings were made by Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran, among many others. After recording this song in 1956, who was the singer whose version of it probably became the most famous?

4. The woman in the title of this song is reputed to be Emily D. West or Morgan, an African-American woman who was **"the sweetest little rosebud ....."** The earliest version of this folk song was found in a plantation songbook of 1853. It has been recorded by, among others, Bing Crosby, Pat Boone, Elvis Presley, Willie Nelson and Mitch Miller. It became popular among Confederate soldiers in the Texas Brigade during the American Civil War. What is the song's title?



6. At the end of the One Love Manchester concert on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2017, Ariana Grande gave an emotional solo performance of a song which brought her and the huge audience to tears. Written for the film The Wizard of Oz, this song has taken on significance greater than the moment in the film for which it was written. The Oscar-winning song was composed by Harold Arlan with lyrics by Yip Harburg, both of whom had known hard times themselves. Who sang this song in the film of 1939?

**DICK CRIGHTON**

*PS if you find yourself flummoxed, the answers are on Page 13*



# What a 'Mighty Thunder' in the Ayr!

## Triumph for Trainer Lucinda Russell at The Coral Scottish Grand National 2021

**This year, The Scottish Grand National at Ayr was postponed from its normal fixture on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April in respect for the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh.** It was held instead on Sunday April 18<sup>th</sup>. Due to the coronavirus restrictions, no crowds were there, but some easing let owners into a limited run of the racecourse.

The race had 22 runners and was run at a good pace over 22 fences in four miles. Twelve horses finished the course, nine pulled up when their chance was gone, and one unseated his jockey at the fourth fence.

The winner was Mighty Thunder trained at Milnathort by Lucinda Russell and owned by a St Andrews couple, under their company name **'Allson Sparkle Ltd'**. It was especially personal with no crowd, and only other trainers congratulating them, and it was the first Scots trained horse to win the race in a long time, although Lucinda's horses have been placed previously in the race. With no crowd, it was very different from her 2017 Grand National win at Aintree with **'One For Arthur'**.

Blair Campbell, the horse's usual jockey, broke his thumb only days before the big race, and had to stand down. He was replaced by the very able Tom Scudamore, up from David

Pipe's Somerset yard for the meeting. He held Mighty Thunder up until the twelfth fence, was a bit outpaced four out, but rallied and went second before the last, led in the run-in and was driven out the final hundred yards to hold off **'Dingo Dollar'** by three quarter of a length. It was an exciting race, with Mighty Thunder well ridden and trained, and a horse who wanted to win.

Mighty Thunder was bred by the Wilson family, who usually breed flat and all-weather horses. He is by a German stallion **'Malinas'** who won a Group 2 race and was second in the Deutsche Derby, out of a mare by **'Generous'** (UK Derby winner) who gave stamina to stock. Lucinda bought him as a three-year-old for £15,000, and **"broke him in"** bringing him along in his education.

Mighty Thunder won his introductory National Hunt flat race at his second attempt, then won three hurdle races and was placed in eight more. When he was six, he was schooled to go chasing, but he just did not take to the bigger fences, so had another season hurdling. The next year, he was schooled over the chase fences again and had two races at Hexham at two and a half, then three miles. On a demanding track, with a stiff uphill finish, he won and so gained confidence. As he seemed to find the staying races easy, it was decided to try him in the Highland National

over four miles at Musselburgh, a flat, sharp track. Again, he won, and so on to the Midlands National, where he ran a great race to come second.

Normally, there is a limit to how often these long-distance races can be run in a season, but Mighty Thunder was so fresh after the Midlands National that the Scottish National looked on the cards. The rest is history!

Colin and Nicola Drysdale who own Mighty Thunder, running in their company name **'Allson Sparkle Ltd.'** distribute soft drinks and spirits to restaurants, bars and clubs, and with the coronavirus lockdown over the past year, they have had a thin time in their business, and the staff as well as the Drysdales themselves had reason to cheer when Mighty Thunder was running so successfully.

With Lucinda Russell, a Grand National winning trainer, and the Drysdale's Mighty Thunder only eight years old, might another National win be on the cards?

May they have many more triumphs, not being afraid to travel the UK in search of wins, and may they bring even more success home to Kinross-shire for everybody's pleasure.

**DOROTHY THOMSON**

*Image credit:  
The Scotsman newspaper*

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# Loch Leven's Rescued Treasure

In early May, we enjoyed a smaller than planned family wedding, with the reception held at the lovely Dalmahoy Hotel and Country Club, near Edinburgh. A magnificent building, Dalmahoy House was constructed in 1720 and came into the possession of the Douglas family around 1760. It is still owned by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Morton, a direct descendant of the Douglas family, who lives on the extensive estate.

This information was conveyed to us by the hotel's friendly and entertaining restaurant manager, as we queued (*on account of restrictions*) for breakfast the following morning. On hearing where our home was, he proceeded to relate enthusiastically the story of the Earl's 'special keys'. With great kindness, he later gave us a photograph of the keys when they were recently displayed for the first time in public.

The story in its general features will be familiar to many readers. Mary Queen of Scots spent some time in 'the dour castle of Sir William Douglas' (*Antonia Fraser*) on an island of Loch Leven. A prisoner of the confederate lords, Mary would have remembered happier times in the castle when she had used it as a base for hunting adventures in Kinross-shire. Here too she engaged in debate with John Knox in the spring of 1563.

During her ten and a half months of imprisonment, Mary attracted the sympathy and romantic affection of the gallant George Douglas, brother

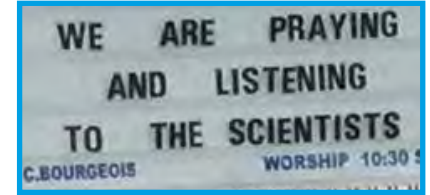


of the hostile laird of Loch Leven. With the assistance of George and a young, orphaned cousin, Willy Douglas, the disguised prisoner made her escape by rowing boat, lying beneath the boatman's seat, on the evening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 1568. Willy had somehow managed to remove the laird's keys while giving him his supper-time drink. The keys were dropped over the boat's side into the dark waters of Loch Leven, where they lay on the loch bed for over two centuries.

Mary is believed to have visited Dalmahoy House, following her escape from Loch Leven's island castle. The keys would follow her there at a later date. Remarkably, they were discovered in 1791 when the loch's water levels were lowered. They were taken to the Dalmahoy Estate. At the time of the refurbishment of the House, in 2019, the historic keys were displayed in public for the first time in centuries. They are in the secure possession of the current Earl, who is proud of the part played by his ancestors, George and Willy Douglas, in the great Loch Leven escape of one of the most fascinating and romantic figures of our nation's history. It's remarkable what you can learn while waiting for breakfast!

**ANGUS MORRISON**

## Some church signs during the pandemic:



**"Having trouble sleeping? Try one of our sermons."**



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Answers to Who or What? 1: Black and White Rag; 2: Ten Green Bottles; 3: Orange Blossom Special; 4: The Yellow Rose of Texas; 5: Elvis Presley; 6: Judy Garland as 'Dorothy'

# Taking Pride in our Produce

**As I write this article, another election has been completed that has been different from all past elections, with no canvassing at the doorstep or in the streets, just leaflets through the letterbox.** Since the nation and world went into lockdown 15 months ago (or more) we have only seen politicians on the television or heard them on the radio. Love them or loathe them, they are there to act on our (*the public's*) behalf. They will promise you this and that to get elected. But one issue none of the politicians has ever raised during the campaigning is food security.

I have written in past articles, how we farmers take pride in maintaining our wonderful countryside. We are also very proud of the produce we grow and rear on our farms - beef, milk, lamb, pork, eggs, barley, wheat, oats, oilseed rape, potatoes, carrots, lettuce, broccoli, kale, turnips, etc. One thing that has come out of the pandemic is that people are once again looking to purchase local produce - something reared or grown locally. Our wee county of Kinross-shire can provide many of

the items I mentioned above and can be found at various outlets; the monthly Farmers Market in Kinross, Loch Leven's Larder, Lochend Farm, Hunters Butcher, various farmers selling boxed lamb, beef and pork, the list goes on. The livestock, cereal and vegetables are grown to the highest standards through assurance schemes, as well as having environmental benefits for the local communities; low food miles, quality assured produce, local employment and maintaining the countryside.

I do not advocate abandoning supermarkets; they still have a place in our society. In the mid 1980's, the UK was approximately 75% self sufficient in our food needs, today that figure is 64%. As a country, we used to import food to make up the shortfall we could not grow ourselves. But supermarkets looked to cater for shopper appetites for cheaper foods, which lead to intense price competition amongst the multinationals and squeezed grower's profits in the process. Look around the aisles and ask yourself **"Where has this come from? Is it as good quality? Is it grown to the same standard as home grown**



**produce?"** Although we have some of the best food products on these shelves, they may not always be the cheapest, but they are of good quality. Good quality produce will do more for a healthy diet than most cheap products that could be of a lesser quality to the assured British products. Can you guarantee the food imported is of the same standard as we have grown in the UK? The environmental impact (*food miles*) of imported products will be far higher than home produced. To quote from the bible, *Isaiah 55:2* **"Why spend your money on what does not satisfy? Why spend your wages and still be hungry? Listen to me and do as I say, and you will enjoy the best food of all!"**. Have a look locally for quality meat, vegetables, fruit and cereals. Buy British, Buy Local!

**MARK THOMSON**



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# Walking through thick grass and flowers

**Flowers and their fragrances have marked each phase of my life.** My first memory, as a 3-year-old, is of the magnificent banks of red and mauve rhododendrons which clothed the steep Himalayan foothills where we then lived. Dahlias followed them, splashing the slopes with their rainbow colours. We found large beetles, all gold and black, feasting on their leaves, and there was a myriad of butterflies too, fussing over their blooms.

It was wartime, and my parents, both medically qualified, had reached the safety of northern India, after risky evacuations from China, and then Burma – Burma being where I was born.

In 1946, our family – I had 3 siblings – eventually sailed for England, but we only stayed there long enough to enjoy our doting grandparents, before we sailed for Malta, where my father took charge of a merchant seamen's hospital in Valetta. There were no tourists in Malta then, and I remember many unspoilt areas and particularly the fun of roaming the cliffs high above the so-blue Mediterranean, gathering the sweetly scented jonquils which grew there in drifts every springtime.

When my father's Malta contract ended, there was another brief return to Britain before we flew – so exciting - to Kenya on a BOAC flight which stopped several times and took 24 hours. My father joined a GP practice in the attractive Rift Valley town of Nakuru, soon to become famous for the millions of scarlet



flamingos which thronged the shores of Lake Nakuru. Jacaranda blooms, exquisitely blue, are what I remember most, and the many jacaranda trees in our garden were also a delight to climb. Jacarandas will always spell Africa to me!

But carefree childhood days in Kenya came to an unwelcome end when my sister and I began at boarding school back in England. Far from familiar tropical surroundings, I looked again for flowers and, in springtime, discovered carpets of pale-yellow primroses with their delicate fragrance. What a delight! Each March, I picked a posy, packed it in a box with moss, and posted it to my godmother.

A few years later, when training as a nurse and midwife in London's bustling East End – it was *'Call the Midwife'* days then – I could find only a few brave wildflowers cowering in pavement cracks or clinging to old walls. But subsequent travels, now as the wife of a Mission Aviation Fellowship pilot, brought me back (*oh joy!*) to Kenya, and later to up-country Ethiopia. In Kenya, we were blessed with arum lilies which unfolded their large, pristine blooms in a ditch close to our house. What rare treasure! The flower ladies at church greatly prized them.

In Ethiopia, it was lilies again, this time stately, creamy-white Madonna lilies, rising high above deep, roadside grass, far from the noisy capital where we lived. Eventually, the Communist take-over of Ethiopia intervened, and we returned to settle in Scotland, my husband's homeland.

And what of the many Scottish flowers which have grown since along the pathway of my life – first in rural Aberdeenshire and now in Pitlochry? You too will know, and love, and look for them, just as I do.

Two of them have recent, valued connections with Milnathort. The first – don't laugh! – are dandelions, particularly their jostling merriment



alongside the core path. During the spring of 2019, I spent many weeks with my son and daughter-in-law in the village and daily walks often took me past that spread of flamboyant *'dandies'*. Being with them was a great help, as I needed to spend much time with my terminally ill husband at Ninewells Hospital. He had always loved dandelions, though not in his garden, and so one day I chose a single bloom, the brightest and best, and carefully carried it in my basket down the long hospital corridors to his room. But alas! By then its glorious crown of golden petals had drooped and completely closed. The dandelion ended up in the bin.

Not long afterwards, I spied one of the greatest spring treasures of all – pheasant eye narcissi. A single cluster of these paper-white flowers with their scarlet centres, was trembling in the breeze beside a farmer's field. What a joy! And how much those exquisite flowers cheered me at a sad time. Of course, they are definitely NOT for picking, but now I try to time my Milnathort visits with their delightful, fragrant appearance.

Yes, there have been flowers to bring me joy down the many years of my life. All have beautifully reflected the glory of our great Creator, assuring me of His ongoing faithfulness for all the seasons yet to come. As someone has expressed it well: ***'The Lord's goodness surrounds us at every moment. I walk through it almost with difficulty, as through thick grass and flowers.'***

(R.W. Barbour. From *'An Anthology of Hope'* compiled by Campbell R. Steven.)

**ELAINE BROWN**

# Like nae'ther cart on earth

**In 2020, a two-wheeled cart, adorned with flowers, was positioned by Kinnesswood in Bloom on the grassy verge by Gamekeepers Road in Kinnesswood.** To provide some background to the role of different types of cart in the landscape, David Munro was invited to prepare an information board in collaboration with designer David Mackenzie. Erected this Spring, it is now one of three such boards in the village. Here, David Munro invites readers to imagine the everchanging scene over the past 300 years and how the cart has played an important part in the lives of local people.

Where the cart is now situated on the edge of a modern housing

estate, you would have found yourself in the early 1700s at the centre of a medieval open field system known as runrig. Prior to the onset of agricultural improvement in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, people in farm-town settlements like Kinnesswood were reliant on living off the land. Roads, if they existed at all, were mostly in poor condition and where the ground was soft and peaty or steep and rugged, the easiest forms of transport for local produce, such as firewood and peat, were straw or willow creels carried on the back or on pack ponies and small carts or wheelbarrows known as hurlies. These forms of transport carried lighter loads, while heavier goods, including turf or later stone for building houses, might be carried on

a slipe, a type of sledge used as far back as the Bronze Age. Drawn by manpower or by oxen or horses, this was the precursor to the wheeled cart.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, road improvements, paid for by the collection of tolls, allowed more robust wheeled vehicles to transport heavier loads a greater distance. Manure and lime could be taken to the enclosed fields of newly created farms and at harvest time grain could be transported to the local corn mill at Powmill and hay or straw brought to the farm stackyard. The two-wheeled cart and wain drawn by a horse became the every-day vehicles of choice with bigger four-wheeled waggons being used on larger estates.



*A two-wheeled former working cart now serves as an ornamental feature in Kinnesswood.*



Portmoak Sabbath School Picnic 1910.



Preparing the Soil

The new style of wheeled, horse-drawn farm carts to be seen about the parish from the 18<sup>th</sup> century were nearly all made locally. Anyone wanting a cart made or repaired would head for the cart and wheelwright's shop run by the Law family in Wester Balgedie, and if metal was needed for wheel rims or axles, the smithy run by the Reid family at Broadwells was close at hand.

The harness of a horse includes a padded horse collar used to distribute the load around the horse's neck and shoulders when pulling a cart. The collar supports a pair of curved metal or wooden pieces called hames, to which the traces or straps of the harness are attached. The two-wheeled cart positioned here by Gamkeepers Road has been adapted for more modern times to be pulled on hard metalled roads, not by a horse, but by a tractor or other motorised vehicle. Its wheels, which have tyres, are not made of wood.

There were several annual events in the parish at which farm carts provided fun and a sense of occasion during the summer months. A presence at the Kinross-shire Agricultural Society's show offered an opportunity to see well-groomed horses with decorated harnesses pulling immaculate carts, and, in the Parish of Portmoak, farmers would



decorate horse-drawn carts for a fun day out with children and families taking part in the annual Sunday School Picnic.

In his poem Kinnesswood Market, the ploughman poet James Beath

of Glenvale described the various characters who came from far and wide to sell their wares at Kinnesswood's annual fair. One of these - Robbie Salmond, a confectioner from Kirkcaldy – always attracted a crowd of children as he entered the village on his horse-drawn cart, scattering sweets to left and right:

*He's comin' at the Kirk I think,  
The bairnies held their breath,  
For Robbie's axle has a clink,  
Like nae'ther cart on earth;*

*His harness glitterin' in the sun,  
Frae the Nappix was descried,  
And Robbie wi' his face o' fun  
On his cart head did ride.*

**Bottom left: The new information board compiled and designed by David Munro and David Mackenzie; Centre: A barrow or hurlie used for transporting peat cut in Portmoak Moss; Top left: A Sunday School picnic cavalcade sets off from Portmoak Parish Church in the summer of 1910. The open-sided, two-wheeled**

**carts taking part would normally have been used for carrying hay and straw during harvest time; Preparing the soil with manure spread from a two-wheeled cart c.1910**

**"Like nae'ther cart on earth"**

Imagine yourself standing here 100 years ago. How different would the Kinnesswood scene be? Just like the two-wheeled cart positioned here in 1910, the landscape before you has adapted many times to respond to a changing environment, economy and people.

**The rural landscape**

**Carts, wares and wagons**

**The cart and wheelwright's shop**

**Preparing the soil**

**Other photos**

**Microscopic view**

**For more information visit Kinross-shire Agricultural Society's website**

**Kinross-shire Agricultural Society Newsletter**

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