



DORNOCH FIRTH PARISH MAGAZINE

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Rev Carol Anne Porter with Christine Mackay, Elder. See page 7

AN TOBAR – THE WELL

The Well, in Highland and Island culture, was a gathering place, a place where needs are met, a source of life even. It was also an invitation to shared responsibility as everybody had a part to play in maintaining and protecting the well.

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Hiroshima and Nagasaki remembered and the sacrifice of those who served.

And much, much more!

Minister's Thoughts

Dear friends

DEAR FRIENDS, people of God, as in worship one day recently, I have something to ask:

*Would you come
not out of habit
or because it's a special occasion?
Would you come
because God invites you
and because there is no one God would rather meet here
than you?*

*Would you come
if you're right way up happy
or you're head's in a spin
or you're quietly falling apart?
Would you come because God invites you
and because God beckons you into the nook of God's arm
knowing already the story you will tell?*

*Would you come with open mind
with open heart?*

*Would you come
ready (needing) to be surprised?
Would you come because God invites you
and because God has a story to tell you too?*



Friends, dear-to-God ones, you are invited. You are invited to bring your whole self to worship, and to the life of Dornoch Firth Church.

The truth is, there is space here, just for you, and it's empty until you come and fill it.

We gather for worship on Sundays at 11am in Dornoch Cathedral. And on second and fourth Sundays, at 1.30pm, at the newly named 'An Tobar', the former Kincardine Church Hall near Gledfield School, we livestream to there on third Sundays too. The worship we share is honest... always. Joyful... at least sometimes, I hope.

It is for those with faith and those who faith is lived in the midst of doubt.

It is for those who are rooted in their being and those who feel a profound sense of disconnection.

It is for those who live hopefully and those who need others to carry hope for them for now. We flit, all of us, between the two, I'm sure.

And between Sundays, there's all sorts going on.

From being a sleeves-rolled-up support in our schools to our own learning circles, reading, asking questions together.

From bringing folk around the table which is always always big enough for everyone to walking the shore and through the woods and across the hills, shoulder to shoulder in every way.

Friends, near-to-God ones, God invites you. God calls your name. And here's the absolute truth: you're not just welcome, you're wanted.

With you, right here with you,

Carol Anne

Who's That!

SOMETIMES I'm asked about the people whose work I quote from in services. Good question! The easiest way to answer is to say, often, listening to podcasts, or reading a book, I 'meet' folk who feel like companions for the road - some are familiar somehow, or their ideas perhaps, others far less so (that's when it really gets interesting!) And sometimes there is opportunity to introduce them to you too.

Fairly recently, I discovered an old podcast called *Evolving Faith* which has introduced me to a plethora of voices, many of whom are speaking or writing from 'the margins'. We know from the Gospels, 'the margins' is where Jesus seems to want to hang out and finds company also. This has led to several book purchases (it's a disease!), some of which I share with you here. Perhaps some might be of interest to you.

I should say, you'll find an American bias to the selection. I think this is because maybe in America even theologians enjoy a certain celebrity and so their work is more easily found; also perhaps because there is a movement 'on the other side of the pond' to try to take scholarly conversation beyond the world of academia. So... here we go...

Rachel Held Evans grew up in a conservative church environment in which questions about the Bible in particular were not encouraged. She spent much of her adult life asking the questions denied her younger self and, with others, making what they called 'a table in the wilderness' at which everyone can pull up a chair and be at ease and eat. She was a founding member of the Evolving Faith team and has written several books including some really beautiful children's ones.

Nadia Bolz-Weber is a Lutheran priest who founded a church called House for All Saints and Sinners which drew an eclectic congregation. She now exercises a ministry in a women's prison. Her work is kind of raw - it is not for those who are offended by strong language - but she has much insight to share via her writing in paper and online.

Jeff Chu is an award-winning journalist, editor and author. He writes about spirituality, belonging, travel, his Chinese roots and much much else. His most recent book which is warm and funny and insightful, tracks his move from journalism and the city to seminary and life on a working farm.

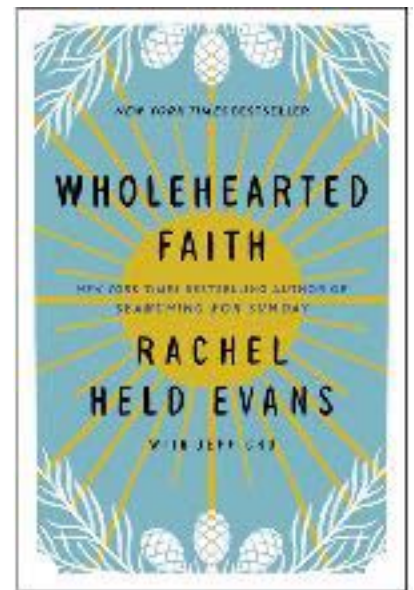
Micha Boyett has a beautiful podcast called *The Slow Way*. *Blessed Are the Rest of Us* is a reflection on the beatitudes (blessed are the poor etc...), written from the perspective of being mum to a son with special needs.

Cole Arthur Riley is just a stunning writer of autobiography and liturgy... deep and profoundly thoughtful. I can't wait for her to write some more, hopefully she is already...

The Bible Tells Me So (next on my reading list after Good Soil) is by **Professor Peter Enns** who hosts, along with **Jared Byas**, a podcast called *The Bible for Normal People*, an excellent resource for those wanting to get in between the lines of Scripture and understand how it came to be.

And, speaking of books, having read *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans over the summer, there is interest in picking up another of her books, a collection of short essays, gathered under the title, *Wholehearted Faith*. Find a copy wherever you can and let me know you're onboard and we'll work out the when and where of it all.

Carol Anne



The Chosen

We are gathering on Wednesday nights to watch *The Chosen*, a drama about the life of Jesus and those who walked with him and listened to his stories. We are in Season 2 now and, at the time of writing, have watched just one episode. It was a powerful powerful first instalment which left every one of us in stunned and, I think, awe-filled silence. Once we could talk again we talked together about what had moved us or moved us to think in another direction even. Do look it up if you haven't discovered the series yet - just type thechosentv into a web browser or download The Chosen app or look on Prime. It's absolutely worth getting lost in.

Carol Anne



Back to School!

AT THE END of August, we marked the passing of the summer holidays and the beginning of a new term by inviting local families to a 'Back to School' service. We listened to stories and thought together about them, we sang and prayed and played outside. And the children were given small gifts, a notebook and pen, each with a message reminding them of God's love and care for them.

I don't know about others experience that day but a highlight for me, Carol Anne, was sitting on the church doorstep in Dornoch after the service, chatting to a mum and watching the children play. Another was the moment, part way through the service in Ardgay when the door opened and two mums together with their seven little ones came in with and to a smile and Tyler, a pupil from Bonar Primary, proved to be the only one listening enough to be able to recount to the newly arrived worshipers the stories we'd been thinking about - God is good! And mischievous!



And now it's church members who are invited back to school! In Dornoch Primary, we are in the classrooms, helping with reading, playing games, doing whatever we can to support children and staff.

Meanwhile in Bonar Primary we will soon be helping on Friday afternoons and have requests for a baking club, a Lego club, a sewing or knitting club and a gardening club - they have terrific gardens and raised beds for growing veg!

We need lots of help to get this going so please speak to Carol Anne if you have time and interest in helping our young folk learn and have fun - that's all it takes, time and interest, the rest will take care of itself.

Carol Anne

Brew in the Pew!

FOR THE SECOND time in recent weeks, we ran out of mugs for coffee after worship - it's a wonderful problem to have (it's okay, more are being purchased!) But, for now, it's time for a second go at 'Brew in the Pew'. Put the kettle on, pull up a chair and come and meet Clare Fyfe who will soon become one of our newest members!

How did you come to be in Dornoch Firth Church?

In December 2019 I relocated to Skelbo with my husband John, who lived in Dornoch as a child. The church was familiar as I enjoyed attending occasional services during visits to my parents-in-law. After joining the Women's Group at the start of 2024 attending the worship service followed soon after. The welcome I felt after only one or two Sundays touched me deeply and helped me to feel a sense of belonging.

What thing - big or small - has reminded you recently, life is good?!

"It's great to make new friends as one gets older, isn't it?" said a friend from school days recently during a WhatsApp catchup where I'd chatted about life in Dornoch. Her words struck a chord as it can be difficult to make friendships once the days of waiting at school for children or meeting other parents at school events have passed - it's happened though, and it makes me smile (not always on the outside)!

How has faith been for you: slow... evolving... or wham, bang, whallop? What different does it make for you?

Baptised into the Catholic Church and attending Catholic schools, faith was a part of life when I was younger; now I would say it's evolving - it's never left me, I think it's possibly deepening or maybe I'm thinking about it in a different way - who knows?!

Is there something about this following Jesus that surprises you still or that you'd like to know more about?

A surprise for me has been this summer's reading of Inspired with a weekly group discussion and chat. It has been enlightening - showing me a different way of interpreting bible stories. I haven't made all the weekly chats and the book warrants at least one more reading, yet it's lingering in my thoughts; I like that when I've finished a book.

Has there been a person who has particularly helped you in your following? How so?

If it wasn't for my mother's view of God, whom she thought of as a being just like her own father - always pleased to see her, no matter what - I may have walked away from any form of organised worship. As a child I remember asking her what God was like and her reply, without hesitation was, "he's like my Dad." I adored my grandfather so her simple explanation was, for me, perfect.

Books? Music? Podcasts? Films? What is getting you thinking just now or keeping you entertained?

My favourite music ranges from Schubert's achingly beautiful String Quintet to Bruce Springsteen; if I had to choose only one person or band to listen to it'd be Mr Springsteen every time. I compile playlists making an easy background sound when I'm at home. Top Gun (both films) are Fyfe family favourites. Apollo 13, 13 Days, Sully and rom coms provide an escape for an hour or two. And I mustn't forget The Railway Children! It's always been special, more so now as we spent the five years before Dornoch living in a village at the end of the line where it was filmed - dog walks near 'Three Chimneys', the railway line, waving at the steam trains were all part of daily life there.

What is your idea of a perfect day or even a perfect hour?

I bought *When The Going Was Good* by Graydon Carter back in April to read during the summer ... well, that didn't happen, so my perfect day would be spent devouring the remaining 300 pages, not wanting them to end!



Clare Fyfe

Family Fun

AN TOBAR is the place to be for a few Tuesday afternoons. Situated next door to Gledfield Primary School why not drop in and see what is happening and help Carol Anne and Hannah with the children enjoying fun games.

You might have missed the first Tuesday but there is time to join in between 2.30 and 4pm on 30th September and 7th October before the school holidays.

Carol Anne & Hannah



Family Journal

AS SUMMER recedes and we seek a retreat into cosiness, I invite you to join in our Family Journal Project. I am going to send a couple of journals around our parish, asking that you keep them for no more than two or three days and that, in that time, you add to the journal in whatever way you would like to. You might share a favourite family recipe, your best jokes, a picture of your favourite animal, pressed flowers with a note of what they are and where you found them, the words of a song or hymn that mean something to you, a story of something that has brought happiness maybe in a difficult time... or just whatever you think others would enjoy reading about or looking at.

If one or two folk would like to help keep an eye on the journal's whereabouts as it moves around I'd love to hear from you please and have your help. Thank you,

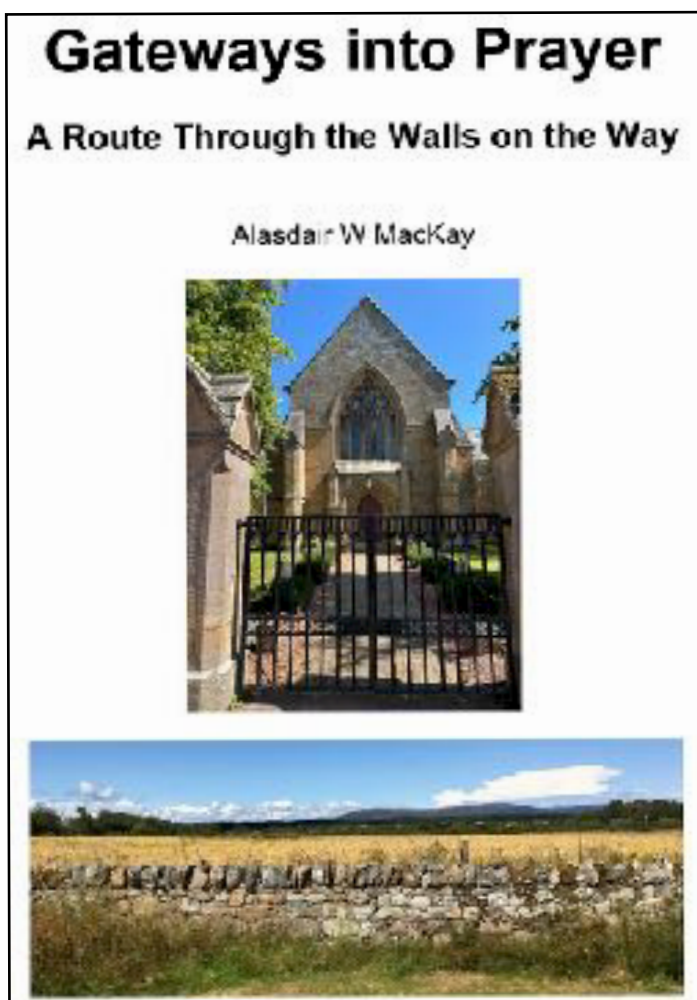
Carol Anne



Prayer Booklet

ALASDAIR MACKAY wrote and produced a prayer booklet, 'Gateways into Prayer,' for sale as his £20 Challenge.

With the Welcome Groups' sales table now finished for the season (a brief opening near Christmas time), copies can be bought for £4 with copies and a honesty box near the Prayer Tree. Or speak to Alasdair.



An Tobar

If you've been around this church, even for a short time, you'll know we only have to whisper the word 'barbecue' and rain clouds and gusts of winds start competing for who's visiting first!

But not even unwanted weather can keep us from celebrating the good we are finding these days. And so on Saturday 30th August, the day we'd earmarked to celebrate having Kincardine Church Hall returned to us, more than a hundred hardy folk - one hundred and twenty maybe - turned out to enjoy a barbecue with entertainment from Dornoch Firth Junior Band. The food was well received - Neil and Valerie and all the team were amazing. And the junior band gave a triumphant performance, retrieving their music whenever the wind took it away or carrying on regardless.

And when the weather settled in, we went inside - most gladly as the hall is newly refurbished, inside and out, and looking magnificent. Here, Elder Christine Mackay who organised and oversaw the hall's changes, thanked Kyle Sutherland and Archie for their excellent work and the Presbytery of the Highlands and Islands (Clèir Eilean Ì) for allowing us to keep the hall after all.



Charlie Millard announcing An Tobar name for the hall



The feeding of the hundreds at the BBQ

Carol Anne thanked Christine and those attending and, with help from the Millward family, revealed a sign with the new name we have given the hall. Charlie Millard was the first to speak it aloud to the listening crowd - 'An Tobar' (with the emphasis on 'To', meaning 'The Well').

We considered a few names as we worshiped and walked around the parish in recent weeks and this one captured our imagination most. The well, in Highland and Island

culture, was a gathering place, a place where needs are met, a source of life even. It was also an invitation to shared responsibility as everybody had a part to play in maintaining and protecting the well.

Wells in Scripture are also, to quote Rachel Held Evans, 'where God starts something new'. Like the Samaritan woman in John's Gospel who, for the first time in her life perhaps, felt seen and wanted, by Jesus no less, and so began a life of witness to what love can do.

Church member, Alasdair Mackay, shared a poem he had written exploring the theme of the well and we continued to celebrate, all of us, with tea and cake.

The first act of worship in An Tobar, the following day, was led by another church member, Neil Simco, who invited us to contemplate aspects of journeying.

Around thirty folk attended, enjoying worship and, of course, more cake.

We had a free soup lunch on Tuesday 16th September when it was a school in-service day. We were delighted with the number of families and other people that dropped in for a chat. And, on the three Tuesdays after that, we'll have family fun sessions after school, offering a welcome to children and their families, feeding them and offering a space to relax and play. So... more to report in the next issue, we hope.

Carol Anne

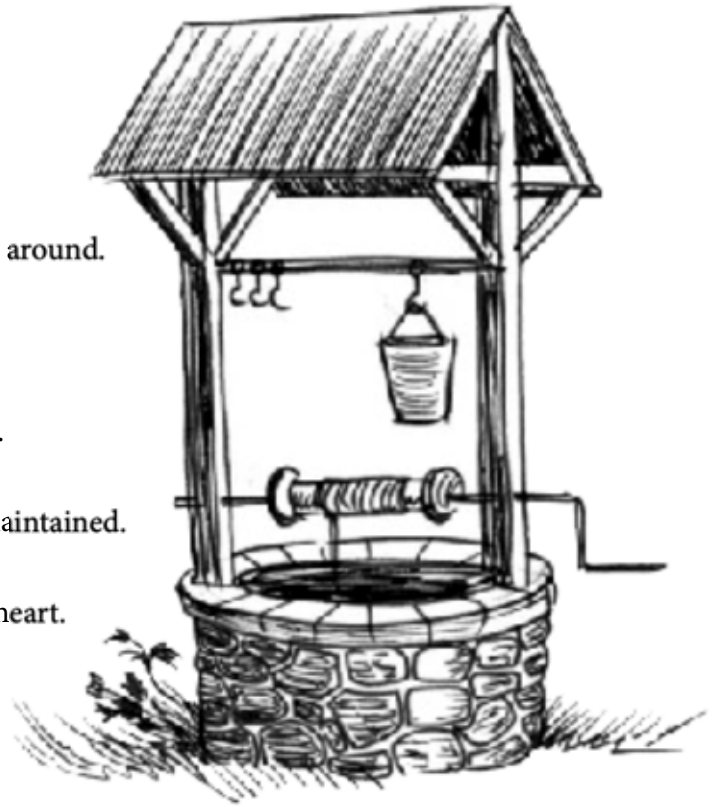


On a school Inservice Day a Soup Lunch was held.

An Tobar (The Well)

A PLACE for folks to gather, a place to quench a thirst,
A place to meet the Living Lord where Christ has met us first.
A place for the community, for purposes untold;
A place to serve the young at heart, a place to serve old.
The Well is a place for all to meet at the community's heart;
The Well is a resource in which we all can play our part.
In the driest of Earth's deserts a watering hole is found,
But all of nature knows to share with each creature from around.
Christ is the Living Water, the cup that overflows.
Ours is the call to action to let that Water flow.
The community is thirsting, the community has needs;
This Well can bring the water that nurtures all and feeds.
A place for all to gather, for all to be sustained;
But for the Well to serve its purpose it must always be maintained.
So, all of us who drink from it, we all should play our part.
Then in this place, this community, the Well will be the heart.
In years past in each community a well stood at the heart.
May this Well from the outset have the community at heart.

Alasdair W. MacKay



Natter & Nosh

This Lunch Club meets on a Monday every two weeks and is open to everyone to come and enjoy a two course meal for £5 in a fun and friendly space. We started again after the summer break on Monday 22nd September.

The dates are: **Mondays: 6th & 20th October; 3rd & 17th November; 1st & 15th December.**

Do you know of anyone living alone who would enjoy meeting new people and have lunch? Please bring them along, a warm welcome awaits. If transport is required let us know and we shall try and help.

Trish Geddes

Life Events

Weddings

2nd August	Sophie Houston and Tom Perritt
9th August	Alysia Ackerman and James Bains
16th August	Brogan Furey and Harry Collins
30th August	Daisy MacKenzie and Steven Munro

Funerals

19th August	Kathleen Bremner
28th August	Isabel Wilton
3rd September	Mary Skinner

*The Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations” -
Psalm 100.5*

Prayer Group

What does prayer look like?

At a recent service Carol-Anne introduced us to a child who was asked at Sunday School to draw a picture of prayer. Some of the children drew a family saying grace round the table, others a child with an adult saying prayers together before bed, but this child drew two chairs sitting together, with Jesus in one and them in the other.

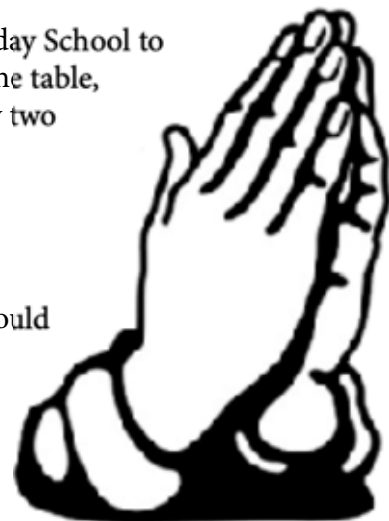
“Hi Jesus, I love you” said the child.

“Hi, I love you too” said Jesus,
and back and forth they went.

The idea is of prayer like a conversation with Jesus, as if with a friend. What would you say?

So, when you’ve got a minute, grab a coffee and find yourself somewhere comfortable to sit. Imagine Jesus sitting right there with you, waiting and wanting to talk. What do you want to say?

“Hi Jesus...



Summer Walks

IN TOTAL there were six walks, one a week, organised for the summer period. The length and breadth of our Parish was covered with walks at Amat, Littleferry, Loch Migdale, the south side of the River Carron and Edderton Hill.

Patricia Hannah planned the Edderton route for a leisurely walk to the Tin Cottage. Janey Clarke who had joined us explained about the crofts and older monuments on the hill, and about the work done by her father. We were intrigued to find empty honeycombs and a nest dug out by badgers in search of the honey.



Lemon drizzle cake and refreshments

Gladys McCulloch who lives at Amat laid out an interesting route with a gentle trek before having to clear the way (see photo) with some making it to the Glen Cassley Falls for a rest before returning to enjoy the £20 Challenge afternoon tea that Gladys with support from Sarah Shaw had prepared.



Sarah Shaw clearing the way for walkers at River Carron

Watch this space as Alan and Sandra Deeth kept out feet moving last week with a walk at Aldie Burn, Tain, with others being planned for October and November. Dates and routes to be on the Order of Service.



Walkers examining the coracle at the Tin Cottage

Prayer Tree

THE CORNER where The Prayer Tree stands has been busy throughout the summer and many visitors have spent time there and have hung a prayer or memory from its branches.

The prayer tree is also a quiet corner where visitors may use the prayers already hung there as a source of reflection.

Over the next few weeks, there will be a copy of 'Gateways into Prayer', a booklet of prayers and reflections compiled by Cathedral member Alasdair Mackay on the table.

Alasdair produced this booklet as part of the recent fundraising 'talents' effort.

Please feel welcome to have a quiet, thought provoking read.

Gillian Gordon



Sundays @ 7

WE HAD a variety of interesting evenings this summer as we enjoyed a short relaxing service after what was often a busy Sunday. Starting with the Invergordon Singers and Golspie Choral and finishing with our own choir with the energetic choirmaster, Roddy Maclean, presenting a varied evening enjoyed by all as part of the choir's £20 Challenge.

The services were led by the Worship Team, the Guild, Youth Organisations, Natter & Nosh, Carol Anne, Hannah and children, Prayer Group, Welcome Table, Evelyn Dickson, Session Clerk's Team, Womens' Group, Pastoral Care and Sandy & Ken's team.

Thanks to everyone.

Mhairi Mackay

Food & Hygiene

We are grateful to one of our congregation, Susan Messem, who delivered a Food & Hygiene Course that is necessary for the volunteers who give their time to Natter & Nosh lunches and also other times when catering happens at social events.

Fay Wilkinson



Social Committee

THANK YOU to the VJ Day Committee who asked us to run a coffee morning and of course your continued support enabling us to raise over £400.00 for Dornoch Firth Parish.

Coffee Morning Dates for your Diaries:

Friday 17th October

Friday 21st November

Friday 12th December

Why not bring a friend with you?

Christmas Gift Parcels will be on sale after Sunday Services on Sunday 14th and 21st December. This is an ideal gift for those living on their own.

Una Reid, Convenor



Cathedral Welcome Team

AS I WRITE, the Welcome & Sales Summer Season is drawing to a successful close. We and our loyal team of volunteers have enjoyed watching literally thousands of visitors pass through the Cathedral doors. We have smiled at the look of surprise and astonishment passing over their faces as they take in the beauty of the building, which - for most - is completely unexpected.

It is equally lovely for us to hear comments such as "I've been told that a visit here is well worth while and I'm so glad I came in"; "Such a beautiful place"; "We always have to come back in here each year"; or maybe - "I'll be telling all my friends about this - you are so lucky to live here and have this beautiful place as your local church". Wonderful words to hear ... and yes, we all know how fortunate we are!

As well as the joy we take from welcoming folk, we are also grateful for the purchases they make from our sales tables. This year, as at the end of August, through sales and donations, we achieved a profit in excess of £7,000, already exceeding last year's profit. This provides funds for Dornoch Firth Parish, including building maintenance and running costs.

In addition to the monetary aspect, it is a happy thought that many tangible reminders of so many visits are heading back to locations all over the UK and throughout the world. So many Cathedral Mice, many of them christened with a good Scottish name!! So many ... hand sewn Crosses in Pockets, individually chosen with care for loved ones. And so many Bags of Cheer, exclaimed and often bought in quantity to cheer up a friend. Along with the many other many items on sale, each one will become a happy memory of Dornoch, our cathedral and a warm welcome received.

As I write, we still have another two weeks before the summer season closes on 20th September, but this year we are also going to re-open at the end of October, as part of the Autumn Highland Festival Fortnight. We will also open at the beginning of December after morning worship, to provide an opportunity for some Christmas shopping.

A huge THANK YOU to all our Volunteers - none of this could be happening without YOU.

Sue Boyce (07833 698040), Anne Chambers (01862 811520), Lisa Dickenson (07709 587098)



Croick Church

ON SATURDAY 30th August, Historic Churches Scotland (HCS), held an Open Day at Croick Church.

Mandy Wrenn, Croick Church HCS volunteer co-ordinator wrote,

'The Open Day was a real reminder that the church building is not only a place of historic and architectural importance but also somewhere that continues to be special to many people today. It was wonderful to see members of the local community and others interested in the future of the church come together with such enthusiasm. We very much enjoyed talking to everyone and hearing about family connections to Croick, along with many stories and memories.'

'Thank you once again for your support and interest – it means a great deal as we work to ensure Croick Church remains a cherished part of your local community and Scotland's rich heritage.'

HCS hope to have the Church open to the public soon.

A brief History. Croick Church is 12 miles from Ardgay in the magnificent landscape of Strathcarron. It is an unaltered example of a Parliamentary Church. A single storey T-plan layout built in 1825-27 following the 1823 Act of Parliament to provide places of worship for rural communities. Thomas Telford was charged with overseeing this ambitious programme which saw 32 churches being built.

In the Disruption of 1843 when ministers broke away from the Church of Scotland and formed the Free Church of Scotland most families followed their minister, Rev Gustavus Aird, joining the Free Church leaving only two families attending Croick Church.



Croick Church made safe with the bell tower removed

On 24th May 1845 tenant families were forcibly evicted from their homes in Glencalvie as landlords and factors made way for a large sheep farm. A make-shift camp was created in the Church grounds with some 80 people including children and elderly sheltering. A reminder of this time is visible with names scratched on windows.

Worship continued with a series on unions and linkages. It was 1980 before electricity was installed when major repairs to the structure were carried out. By 2018 the future of the church was uncertain and then in 2020 COVID saw the doors locked for the first time in living memory. A decision was taken to close the Church but fortunately in April 2025 the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland passed the care of Croick Church to Historic Churches Scotland.

The building has been made safe and weathertight. The bellcote was taken down and can be seen inside the Church. There is much work to do and planning and funding will take time.

The plan that HCS has is to maintain Croick Church and to ensure it is open for people to visit and to be used for occasional services. At a time when churches are being closed and sold we in the Dornoch Firth Parish greatly appreciate the work of Historic Churches Scotland to preserve Croick Church and allow us to hold services and also remember the history and heritage of the people of Glencalvie.

Margaret Macrae

OVER TWENTY years ago, Eddie McDonald asked if I would help when there was a funeral filling the South Aisle.

The undertaker would be the local joiner with one assistant. Often requiring members of the congregation to help him carry the coffin out of the church. The elders did everything, from preparing the church, handing out the Order of Service and showing the mourners to their seats.

After Eddie died, Gwen Melville took over his duties with me as her assistant.

When Gwen retired, I became funeral church officer helped by Sander MacDonald and a team of elders.

Covid came and the number of people allowed to attend was restricted. I think it was about twenty, everyone yards apart. We had to have someone on each door as the doors had to be all open.

Now, we have professional undertakers. Only one person from the Cathedral is required to open and close as each firm has 3 or 4 staff members on duty and they organise the funeral and most funerals are live streamed.

Sitting beside the organ, I have seldom heard what the minister has said at the funeral, until now.

It is now time to go and I have enjoyed serving in this way.

Life and Work

I think it is about 15 years since I took over from Mary Gall distributing Life and Work. The Cathedral received 60 copies, today, it is 31. The magazine was put into pews or left at the west door with a few delivered.

Covid came, the church was closed and they all had to be delivered. After Covid, I found that people didn't sit in the same seats and they came in different doors so I had to hand each one to the recipient.

It is sad to see the magazine close after 146 years and with that my role comes to an end.

I leave the editorial team to make sense of this

Margaret

Thanking Margaret

From Carol Anne:

How can we thank you, Margaret, for your commitment to both tasks. Chasing us around with magazines, having to remind us (again!) of debts unpaid, always kind. And you have been a quietly caring presence at funerals for so so long, tending whatever needed tending, bringing your own faith and gentleness and sometimes humour when needed. I'm glad, with Stephen's hard work, the sound was much improved, latterly anyway, and that you were able to hear, especially when the service was for someone you cared for in life as well as in those last acts.

Very many thanks, Margaret, from us all.

And from the Kirk Session:

As we say goodbye to the Church of Scotland's Life & Work magazine, we acknowledge and give sincere thanks for the work of Margaret Macrae, who has faithfully gathered payments for the magazine and distributed them every month. This was appreciated greatly by all who subscribed to the publication.

We also appreciate her work over more than 20 years as Funeral Church Officer, a role which she will step down from at the end of October. She quietly and efficiently worked away at both roles and has been a constant support to many.

Margaret, we all salute your endeavours, thank you sincerely and wish you every blessing in the future as you carry on as an elder and friend to us all.



Cathedral Visit and memories

IT WAS SO lovely to catch up with those on duty at the Welcome Table when we visited Dornoch. It was nice to share some memories and also to spend time at the Cathedral. Dornoch holds so many special memories for us both, first and foremost it was the place we were all together as a family of four with our parents running the B&B at Rosslyn and Luigi's cafe and ice cream parlour.

In the last couple of years we reconnected with Dornoch, firstly for the happy occasion of Rachel's wedding at Embo house, then laying our dad George in his final resting place with our mum Lesley. We will be visiting again soon.

Best Wishes to ALL,

Debbie and Rachel Hall



Debbie & Rachel when King Charles III attended the dedication of the St Gilbert's window in 1989



Debbie & Rachel when they visited Dornoch

Womens' Group

THE RUN UP to Dornoch Highland Games Day involves different things for different groups of people...for the organisers and committee it is a frantic time of finalising plans and checking details, for the Highland dancers it is a time of pressing pleats in kilts and practising steps, for the 'Heavies' it is a time for stepping up the training programme and eating a lot of Scott's Porridge Oats and for the Women's Group it is a time to sift, stir, bake and ice!!

Our group were lucky enough to get a free pitch at the Meadows and we decided that a variety of home baked biscuits, slices and cakes might entice passers-by to come, stop and chat, choose some sweet treats to take away in exchange for a donation to Church funds.

Our decision proved to be a good one and our stall did indeed attract a fair crowd and raised a substantial amount for parish funds through very generous donations.

Caroline Gilchrist



Womens' Group baking stall

Dornoch Firth Guild

THIS YEAR is Year Two of the theme “Let us build a house” and we are called to be ‘Living Stones.’ We started on Tuesday 23rd September at 2.30pm in the West Church Hall with an interesting talk about the Highland Library Service.

We have chosen a wide variety of speakers and entertainment and hope that there will be something for everyone. We are hoping that more men will come and join our Guild as it is open to all and a warm welcome awaits.

Our meeting dates are 14th & 28th October, 11th & 25th November and 9th December.

Trish Geddes



Military Wives Choir Concert

LAST SATURDAY the Cathedral was the venue for a concert by the Inverness Military Wives Choir in aid of SSAFA (the Armed Forces Charity) and Dornoch Firth Church of Scotland. The choir, led by musical director Alyn Ross, was set up over a decade ago and has acquired a well-deserved reputation for excellence. It was no surprise, therefore, that their Dornoch performance attracted an appreciative audience of over 200 people. Admission was by donation.



The choir with centre Alyn Ross and Lady Walmsley

The Reverend Carol Anne Porter welcomed everyone to the Cathedral.

The performance was introduced by SSAFA national Vice-chair Lady Alex Walmsley, and SSAFA Caithness and Sutherland branch president, Sutherland Lord Lieutenant Major General Patrick Marriott, gave a vote of thanks at the end.

The cathedral provided the perfect setting for the concert, both acoustically and visually. Staging kindly loaned by Dornoch and District Community Association provided the audience with an excellent view of the choir members and the cathedral's vaulted ceiling ensured that the choir's beautiful singing was heard to best effect.

The choir's repertoire was varied and enjoyable, beginning with ‘I vow to thee my country’ (with music by Gustav Holst) and including material as varied as ‘Annie's Song’ and ‘Caledonia’. The audience participated, with gusto, in singing well-known wartime songs such as ‘It's a Long Way to Tipperary’ and ‘Keep the Home Fires Burning’.

The generosity of audience members ensured that SSAFA and Dornoch Firth Parish cleared one thousand pounds each for their respective charities. Well done, the open-handed citizens of Dornoch and beyond!

William Sutherland

Chairman of SSAFA's Caithness and Sutherland Branch.

Parish Golf Day

“PHEW” I write this the morning after our 2nd Parish Golf Event.

What a day we had. We were blessed with wonderful weather and 44 golfers competed and had fun. Mhairi Mackay made sure they were well fed at the two locations of the halfway house even though bacon rolls and refreshments were provided before everyone set out.

After the golf we returned to the clubhouse for a carvery meal enjoyed by all. Then there was more fun with the raffle and auction.

A small group of volunteers coordinated the event, supported by a wide range of local businesses, and individuals who sponsored holes on the course, or provided raffle prizes and auction items. Glenmorangie provided the prizes totalling £1,800 and the main sponsor Morrisons Construction made a donation as well as entering a team of players.

All the money raised is still coming in and we have a bill to pay, but I am confident that we will have raised just shy of £10,000.

The important news is that everyone enjoyed themselves, especially the winners, who also won last year, aptly named the “BANDITS”.

2nd Murform

3rd RI Cruden Ltd

Ladies longest drive Patsy Mackay, Royal Dornoch

Mens longest drive Mark Cooper, Morrisons

Nearest the pin Jeani Hunter, Royal Dornoch

John McMurray, Organiser



L to R The Winners: Phil Prince, Derick Macaskill, James Manson, John McMurray (Organiser), Graham Simpson

Answers for Scottish Country Dancing Quiz

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Farewell to Delft | 8 Two Pairs of Socks | 16 Quaich |
| 2 Paddlewheeler | 9 Bohemian Reflections | 17 Dhoon |
| 3 The Duchess of Atholl's
Slipper | 10 Bonspiel | 18 Moderator Welcome |
| 4 Auld Lang Syne | 11 Eighty-Eight | 19 The Wild Geese |
| 5 Minister on the Loch | 12 Once on Right Once on Left | 20 The Mountains of Mourne |
| 6 Fidget | 13 Celebration in Zurich | 21 Chappit Ten |
| 7 Turbulence | 14 The Zoologist | |
| | 15 Monymusk | |

1st Derek Darnell • 2nd= Ruth Mathieson • 2nd= Doreen Bruce

£20 Challenge

THERE WILL BE very few people throughout the parish who are not aware of the fund raising £20 Challenge that has been held over the last few months. There were so many different activities where peoples' talents were used to grow their £20 'starter fund.' An added extra for those involved was they met new people and the social benefits for many were as enjoyable as the afternoon teas or the scones or their car getting washed. Many new friendships were forged as talents were shared across the parish.

These are most of the activities that saw people use their skills and talents:

Jam and marmalade making; Lucky squares for a painting, a lamb box, a bottle of malt whisky; Knitting and crocheting; Making coasters; Scone making lesson; Tablet; Lunches; Car wash and valeting; Selling eggs; Designing tea-towels; Card making; Quiz; Making Chutney and sauces; Concert; Making bird boxes; Raffles; Plants; Liqueurs; Baking; Gardening; Prayer booklet; On-line sales; Art exhibition; Wax melts; Sales table and market stalls.

When this was suggested as a fund raising idea and then announced at a morning Service the uptake was amazing. In total 56 different people signed up to use their talents to grow their £20. It is best if you are sitting to read this next sentence – at mid-September when the Parish News articles were being drafted an amazing current total of £7,311.35 was raised. Yes, I checked the amount to be sure and so far £7,311.35 it is.

There are a few still to complete tasks and pass their money raised to Mhairi. Please see Mhairi to sign the Record Sheet. The final total will then be in our Sunday Order of Service.

Thank you to Everyone, those using their talents and everyone who attended events or bought articles.

Mhairi Mackay

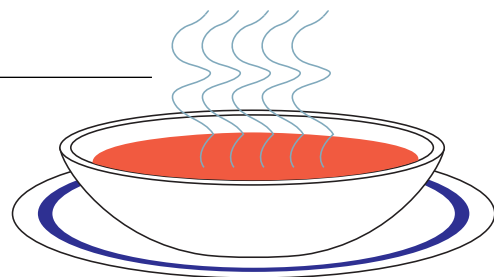


Carol & Babs – afternoon tea was their challenge

Friends of Oversteps

A "SOUP'N'SWEET" Fundraiser in the West Church Hall on Saturday 6th December, 12 noon to 1.45pm. This is help provide for the Residents' Christmas gifts. Any help and donations are very welcome.

Please contact Shiona Stuart, 07762 232788.



Brownies

IT'S INTERNATIONAL Day of the Girl on Saturday 11th October and this year's theme is all about girls leading changes they want to see. A brand-new sparkly badge is available to remind them that they can do anything.

On the 4th September we had a leaving party for Claire Mackay who was one of our young helpers. She will be greatly missed and we wish her well as she embarks on Primary Teacher Training and her continued role in Girlguiding.



Cruise Ship Tours

WITH ONLY a few more official cruise ship tours left to go, it's time to say some thankyous.

Our guides, Morag Macaskill, Alison Bartlett, Roger Boyce and Gary Cruden are doing a wonderfully professional job, making the visitors' experience truly memorable. Delivering historical information in an entertaining way to a large group of foreign visitors is a great skill. Seeing the fascination, curiosity and appreciation on the visitors' faces is a reward in addition to the knowledge that their work is contributing to the general funding of the Parish.

Dealing with unexpected questions, such as, 'Is lunch included?' or 'Where can I find some plasters for my blisters?' and being able, spontaneously, to recommend delicious takeaways from eateries close by or products available in local stores, adds a caring, personal touch to the tours that in crowded, bigger venues is seldom to be found.

The skirl of young Logan Mackay's pipes and the welcome arranged by our Historylinks colleagues on the arrival of the tour party in the coach park gives the visitors an all-important feeling of being 'special'. Logan is a pupil at Dornoch Academy; he's loving using his talents to lead our guests towards their introduction to traditional Highland culture in the beautiful surroundings of our delightful town.

The exhibits at Historylinks all tie in with our church's story, making the combined visits to these venues an enriching and enlightening experience. Lynne Mahoney and her staff have a wealth of knowledge to add to our visitors' enjoyment.

Yvonne and James at Highland Creations have very generously paid the coach parking tickets for all 14 tours; Sharon Mackay of BID has spread the word to local businesses that a coach party will be spending more time in town than usual for shopping; volunteers at the church sales tables, including Sue Boyce and her team have opened up at random times to suit the tour schedules; Many church volunteers who work away in the background all contributed to making this first season of tours from the cruise ships a resounding success.

Are you interested in joining our team of tour guides? Just speak to our minister, Carol Anne, and she will point you in the right direction. We'd love to have you in training over the coming winter months, ready to take part our next season, 2026.

Pat Murray

Editor: a massive thank you to Pat who planned the tours, used her contacts to get the tours offered to passengers, wrote the guides scripts, and spent endless hours training guides and helping coordinate the schedules. Roberto, we appreciate your support and we thank you both most sincerely and wish you well as you relocate back to Italy. You will be missed.

1st Dornoch Girls' Brigade

WE STARTED back on Monday 1st September in the West Church Hall with a fun evening of crafts and games.

Our company night is on a Monday:

P1 – P3 - Explores 6.15pm - 7.15pm

P4 – P7 - Juniors 7:00pm - 8:30pm

S1 – S6 - Brigaders 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Come along for some great fun whilst developing friendships, sharing experiences, learning new skills & crafts and tackling new challenges.

Please contact Marianne for more information at dornochgb@gmail.com

Marianne Macleod, Leader



Dornoch Firth Junior Band

THE BAND has performed at three very recent events. The first was to mark the 80th anniversary of the official ending of World War Two, VJ Day. Taking place in ESRA's fabulous lifeboat station, the group produced an assured and well-received short programme, despite the lack of practice during the school holidays. They were delighted to welcome young Logan Mackay as a guest and his bagpipe playing certainly added to the atmosphere of the event.

Their second recent venture was to play at the reopening and renaming of the old Kincardine Church Hall - now An Tobar (The Well) in Ardgay. This is a genuinely good news story, and the group were very pleased to have been asked to play. Everything was set up in a very stylish gazebo. But... as the first note was struck, the rain came down, the wind howled and the temperature plummeted.

Undeterred, the band played on! Pegs holding music sheets dislodged, music sheets flew around like paper planes as violin bows, some sodden, battled through the tunes. The crowd were genuine in their appreciation of the children's efforts - and those who played will certainly carry fond memories of the opening of An Tobar. A real experience!

Finally, the band accompanied two hymns at the Family Sunday Service on 7th September in the Cathedral. They played Leaving Lismore and The Skye Boat Song, tunes to the hymns Spirit of God Come Dwell Within Me and Spirit of God Unseen as the Wind. The congregation were most kind in their comments afterwards. The children enjoyed being part of the service and one or two were spotted adding to the prayer tree before they left.

The band are now practising four new tunes for this term and they are looking forward to playing them for you soon.

INSTRUMENT PLEA

If anyone has any instruments no longer being used and looking for a new home, the band would love to hear from you.

In particular, we are looking for string and woodwind instruments, including recorders. Everything considered. Please contact Graham McCarthy 07908 076620 or email: <gramgash@aol.com>.

Thank you.

Graham McCarthy



Playing at the An Tobar BBQ day



Playing in the Cathedral for Sunday morning Service

VJ Day – Friday 15th August



Fancy dress in period costume

Photo: Peter Wild

THE COMMUNITY of Dornoch came together to mark the 80th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day) with a full programme of remembrance and celebration.

The day began with a service of remembrance and wreath-laying ceremony at the War Memorial, where members of the public were invited to lay wreaths or posies in memory of those who served. Veterans, families, and residents gathered in solemn reflection to honour the sacrifice and resilience of that generation.

Later in the morning, the mood lifted with a 1940s-themed coffee morning in West Church Hall, followed by a children's fancy dress competition on the Cathedral Green. Youngsters and families embraced the spirit of the era, bringing colour and smiles to the historic setting.

In the afternoon, the Carnegie Library hosted a paper crane workshop, commemorating Hiroshima and Nagasaki and sharing the story of how folded cranes became a global symbol of peace. Strings of cranes and a kimono were later displayed in Dornoch Cathedral as a poignant reminder of the human cost of war and the hope for a more peaceful future.

St Finnbarr's Episcopal Church was open in the early evening for quiet reflection, before the day concluded with a celebratory gathering with East Sutherland Rescue Association at the Cadogan Lifeboat Station. The evening featured live music, dancing, community singing, a buffet, and a 1940s quiz, alongside an exhibition from Historylinks Museum exploring the local impact of the Second World War.

At 9:30pm, a Beacon of Peace was lit on Dornoch beach, accompanied by the haunting notes of a lone piper and the firing of a cannon. Similar beacons shone across the UK, uniting communities nationwide in commemoration.

The day brought together moments of solemn reflection and joyful celebration, reminding us not only of the sacrifice of those who served, but also of the enduring strength and spirit of our community.



Paper cranes & Komono were made in the Carnegie Library
Photo: Peter Wild

V-J Day Reflections

EIGHTY YEARS ago on V.E. Day (May 8th 1945) my late husband S.L.M. Harris DSO,MC, a Major in the Indian Army, was relieved of his post at Chitagong Harbour, then still part of India. He was told to go “home” to rebuild his country as “more experienced officers” would be coming from Europe to defeat the Japanese and their push west.

My husband had at that time served in the Indian Army since 1932 (awarded an MC) and had spent most of the war since September 1939 in North Africa and Palestine (DSO)

As ordered, he returned to his civilian job with an International Company where he stayed until forced to retire in 1965.

In late August/early September 1945,(my memory fails) he and his then wife, Kitty, were at Calcutta Harbour when the first ships bringing former prisoners from Changi Prison and elsewhere docked. Kitty, as a Red Cross worker was much in demand. After they had watched as many soldiers and others, some only skin and bone, insisted in marching unaided from the boats, Major Harris was honoured to be allowed to offer assistance where he could.

The irony was that early in the war he had been posted to Singapore (some specialist knowledge he had) but a senior officer (with some influence) decreed his young son have the ‘safe’ posting. Unfortunately the boy died in Changi at the hand of his captors.

It was almost thirty years after that my husband was able to tell me of these events, and others of his war years 1932-1939 had been told earlier and fascinating they were. I was able to meet some of the other men who were in India at the time and with whom he served.

I myself have no recollection of V.J. Day, after all I was only four at the time, but I do remember V.E. Day and our street party – the noise and the number of people all together, probably for the first time in my short life. I was allowed to stay up quite late – it was dark before I went to bed.

I feel it is necessary to remember this anniversary and the methods that had to be used to stop the cruel, despotic regime in charge of Japan at the time. I am certain that there is not one person in Britain, or for that matter anywhere in the world who wants to see nuclear bombs ever used again.

Valerie Mackenzie Harris

MySelf-Management

ARE YOU living with a long term condition? MySelf-Management promotes and supports the vision of the self-management of health for those living with long-term conditions across the Highlands. Self-management is a way of informing and supporting you to manage your long term condition, for yourself, not by yourself.

In Dornoch, we have monthly meetings in West Church Hall, Sutherland Road from September to June every year. These meetings involve such things as talks, **crafts** and ‘Boccia’ – a seated bowls game as seen in the 2024 Paralympic Games.

Future dates for our meetings from 2pm to 4pm

30 October - Talk by David Mahoney of Dornoch Light Railway

27 November 2025 - Talk from Robert Morrall of Pictora Ltd

Please email vicki@myself-management.org if you would like to join us. I will happily meet you a bit earlier if you are nervous about joining a new group.

Alternatively, we offer a range of online services, talks and peer support groups. By becoming a member (no charge), you will get regular emails with all the events and how to join in. There is more information at www.myself-management.org.

Vicki Nevin



Dornoch Firth Group

Our Little Otters outdoor group have enjoyed some lovely sessions recently, including a visit to the mini meadow at the farm where we cut flowers for our nature journals. We're also planning some farm tours before the end of term. For more information about farm tours contact Eilidh at <eilidh@dfgcommunity.com>.

We ran our first Dads' Little Otters session on Saturday 6th Sept and more are planned in the future – it was a great chance for dads, grandads, and little ones to spend time together.

Our Mamas' Club mums have returned after the summer with bigger baby bumps, bigger bairns, and some with new babies! They have been getting creative with ceramic painting and are looking forward to some Highland coo crafts coming up.

The Knit and Natter group continue to craft up a storm, creating stunning pieces for friends and family. One of the group very kindly made a beautiful jumper for a staff team member – Jen is delighted with her new winter woollies!

With a flurry of new babies, we are thrilled to have new parents join Tuesday Tots this term, with around 30 families each week. Everyone enjoyed a day dedicated to cardboard boxes – the children had the best time! We've also had some messy play in the garden with big tubs of jelly and the paddling pool out – swimsuits in the sun!

Our Seaside Storywalks are always a joyful way to start the week, and so far, we've been blessed with good weather. The children loved going paddling (some with shoes and trousers on!) during our crabbing morning, where we went rockpooling and enjoyed a snack on the sand.

Baby Massage has restarted for the autumn term, and we've loved meeting all the new mums from around the area. It's a lovely, relaxed start to the morning before everyone arrives for Tots.

The Golspie Teddy Bear Club is delighted to have new members this term who are enjoying the lovely activities Larissa prepares every Friday. Everyone is very welcome to attend and there are activities suitable for the littlest babies up to preschool children aged 5. For more info please contact <larissa@dfgcommunity.com>

For information about our family groups contact Jen Smith email:<jen@dfgcommunity.com>



Jen with her jersey from Natter & Knit



Visiting the min meadows

Scottish Country Dancing

CLASSES START in Ardgay Public Hall on Tuesday 7th of October at 7.30pm

Patricia Hannah will be leading us through the season from October to Christmas with our Twixmas Dance on 30th December from 2.00 to 5.00pm.

Cost £25.00 for the season or £3.00p per evening. Learning to dance to CDs specific to each Jig/Reel/Strathspey. Beginners and rusty Dancers Welcome.

Contact Patricia Hannah on 01863 766061 if you need any more information.



Dornoch Cathedral back in time



IN PHOTO number 1 is someone painting the fountain, look closely and see the ladder? I love trees but wish that they were still the size in this old photo? Take notice of the road through the Cathedral Green. Photo number 2 is from 1949, so Photo 1 must be much earlier.

When do you think this photo was taken?

Photo 2 is a postcard which came from a wee shop in St Fillans, near Crieff, which my daughter thought would be interesting for us to have. It was sent to the Rev. Peter M. Jackson, Free Church Manse, Chapelhill Road, Rothesay, Isle of Bute from an M. Mullen. *"Having a lovely holiday and the weather not too bad at all. We've been visiting Dornoch today and spent quite a while in the Cathedral."*

Willie Mackay



Postcard sent in 1949

Doors Open Day

ON SATURDAY, 20th September, we hosted our first 'Doors Open Day' as part of the campaign being held around the country, whereby buildings were opened up to the public with free entry. A wonderful welcome awaited many locals and visitors alike, with some visiting the Cathedral for the first time. An estimated 200 to 300 people, of all ages, came through the doors during the day, enjoying guided tours of the Cathedral and Tower and light refreshments were served throughout.

A huge thank you goes to all the volunteers who gave up their time so willingly and helped make the day such a huge success.

Liz Manson, Session Clerk Team

Dates for your diary

WORSHIP SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE PARISH:

OCTOBER - Sundays

- 5th 11.00 am – Family Harvest Service at Dornoch Cathedral
12th 11.00 am – Morning Worship at Dornoch Cathedral
1.30 pm – Celebration of Harvest at An Tobar, Ardgay
19th 11.00 am – Morning Worship at Dornoch Cathedral, live streamed to An Tobar, Ardgay
26th 11.00 am – Morning Worship at Dornoch Cathedral
1.30 pm – Afternoon Worship at An Tobar, Ardgay

NOVEMBER - Sundays

- 2nd 11.00 am – Family Service at Dornoch Cathedral
9th **Remembrance Sunday**
10.40 am – Parade leaves Dornoch Square followed by Remembrance Service at Dornoch Cathedral
Remembrance Services at 10.15 am Ardgay the 10.50 am Bonar Bridge, Edderton details in Order of Service
16th 11.00 am – Morning Worship and Communion Service at Dornoch Cathedral
23rd 11.00 am – Family Service at Dornoch Cathedral and Girls' Brigade Dedication Service
1.30 pm – Afternoon Worship at An Tobar, Ardgay
30th **First Sunday of Advent**
11.00 am – Morning Worship at Dornoch Cathedral

OVERSTEPS (2:30pm) & MEADOWS (3:15pm) SERVICES

Sundays 19th October and 16th November

PRAYERS FOR THE PARISH - Thursdays, 10:00 am

16th October in West Church Hall and 20th November An Tobar, Ardgay

MORE DATES TO NOTE

The Chosen – Wednesdays, West Church Hall, at 7.15pm
Dornoch Back to School is on Thursdays – contact Carol Anne for details
Friday at Bonar Bridge Primary – 2.30pm – details from Carol Anne
Family Fun at An Tobar - 2.30 to 4pm on 30th September and 7th October
Coffee Mornings - 17 Oct, 22 Nov, 12 Dec 10.30am at The West Church Hall
Christmas Gift Parcels - 14 & 21 December after morning Service
Natter & Nosh - 6 & 20 Oct; 3 & 17 November; 1st & 15th December - 12.30
Guild - 14 & 28 Oct and 11 & 25 Nov & 9 Dec – 2.30pm
Womens Group – Mondays – 6th October and 3rd November
Singing Waiters - 24 October in Bonar Bridge Hall – tickets on sale soon
Friends of Oversteps Soup & Sweet - Sat 6 December 12 noon to 1.45pm
Scottish Country Dancing - Tuesdays Ardgay Hall 7.30pm
Autumn Walks – details in Order of Service

Please look out for further information on line and locally

CASWA (Caithness & Sutherland Women's Aid)

Supporting women, children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse.

web: www.caswa.org.uk | t: 0345 408 0151 | e: info@caswa.org.uk

