

Diary: January

February

1	10.30 Roxburgh	
2		
3		
4		
5		10.30 Roxburgh
6		
7		2pm Scrabble
8	10.30 Stichill	The Guild 2.30pm
9		
10	Scrabble 2pm, Bridge 7pm Session Meeting, Manse, 7.15	
11	The Guild 2.30pm	
12		10.30 Stichill
13		
14		Scrabble 2pm, Bridge 7pm
15	10.30 Makerstoun	
16		
17	Scrabble 2pm	
18		
19		10.30 Makerstoun
20		
21		Scrabble 2pm
22	10.30 Smailholm	
23		
24	Scrabble 2pm, Bridge 7pm	
25		
26		10.30 Smailholm
27		
28		Scrabble 2pm, Bridge 7pm
29	10.30 Stichill	
30		
31	Scrabble 2pm	

Kelso Country Churches The Country Link

January/February, 2017



It dawned on me that looking at many church magazines this contribution is usually titled 'from the manse.' Not only is this not from the Manse it is being written in England. When I said I was moving to near Donaldson's Lodge, 'That's in England,' people kept saying to me as if I had committed some heinous crime. So perhaps I should introduce these letters in the Pauline tradition by a line such as 'Robin, a prisoner for Christ, in exile in England.'

After 25 years in Yetholm Manse to move amongst strangers was nothing like as hard as I thought it might be. The Borders north and south is such a small world and every time I went to the shop in Cornhill on Tweed or the Co-op in Coldstream I bumped into someone I knew. Christmas in church is a time of welcoming the stranger into church and how we do that is crucial to how people see the Ministry of Christ. This is a season of hospitality.

My most profound lesson to underscore this happened on Epiphany last year. I had given myself a trip to Rome. Knowing I was to be there on Epiphany, I designed a pilgrimage around the earliest places of Christian worship. On entering the Parthenon and the major Basilicas, passing the searches, guns and security, I would find myself in awe of the building but rubbing shoulders with other complete strangers, and if a mass was being celebrated it felt cold and distant. Disappointed that the pilgrim in me had not really joined the Magi coming close to the Christ Child, I stumbled into Santa Prudenziانا. This is perhaps the oldest site of Christian worship in Rome. Their Epiphany mass was about to begin. I found myself in the midst of an actual congregation singing carols in English and a language I didn't know. This was the national church of the Philippines. During the Taize song before the Eucharist, the congregation joined hands through the church. It was a wonderful moving experience. The joy in this congregation which included loads of children was unforgettable, the welcome of a stranger to their midst genuine and loving. A reminder that we are never a stranger to Christ.

Kind regards, *Robin McHaffie*

Parish News and Updates

Christmas in KCC: The Advent and Christmas services lived up to our hopes and expectations, as we celebrated once again, the wonder of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, bringing light and hope to a dark world.

Our leadership teams put much thought and preparation into the planning and content of our services to make them special and appealing, and involving people of all ages.

In Smailholm Kirk, a carol service was held on the Sunday morning before Christmas led by Jim, Sophia and David. The carol-singing was accompanied by taped organ music which worked well and proved to those present that we can still enjoy singing our praises to God on the few occasions when Isabel is unable to accompany us.

Stichill Church was packed that evening for the Candlelight gift service of Lessons and Carols. The children of Kid's Club delighted everyone with their re-telling of the Christmas story and some of the children performed musical solos on flute and piano. Jess Knibbs and Isabel performed a duet of 'Ding dong merrily on high' and people from all our churches did readings and poems. People brought gifts for women and children and these were given to Border Woman's Aid and distributed to families in need before Christmas. There was also a Retiring Offering in all our churches for the Church of Scotland 'Build a House' Appeal in Nepal which realised a total of £385.

Makerstoun Kirk was well filled for the popular Christmas Eve service with people of all ages taking part. Happy greetings and conversations were enjoyed over mulled wine and mince pies.

Jim Smith led our worship on Christmas morning, and it was a real joy to welcome more people than expected. There was a sense of warmth, goodwill and togetherness as we gathered in the front pews with candles flickering and Isabel leading the carol singing.

In the absence of a minister of our own, the success of our Christmas activities is due largely to the commitment and dedication and inspiration of our Worship and Leadership teams who give much time and thought to ensure that Christmas is celebrated appropriately each year. A sincere thank you to you all. Also to the ladies who provided refreshments, the folk who decorated and ensured that our churches were warm and welcoming, and those who tidied up afterwards.

THANK YOU.

2.

Website: www.kelsolinkedchurchescofs.org

KCC Church of Scotland Charity no. SC000958

Book Launch

A new book, "**Trees and Woodlands of Stichill Parish**" by Margaret Carlaw and Derek Ogston was launched in early December. The event took place in the beautiful surroundings of Cairns House.

The evening was further enhanced by a display of art work relating to the book and by music, particularly the first performance of "Jock and Jenny" inspired by the two trees on Sweethope Hill, and written by the American composer, Thomas La Voy.



Book cover

Copies of the book priced £25 are available from David Waring on 470 336.

All proceeds from the sales go to support clubs and projects in the Stichill community.

Lord Jesus Christ,

You promised that those who seek will find,
and in the pilgrimage of the Magi
we find proof of that promise.

So now we bring you our prayers for all in our world,
known and unknown to us,
who, in different ways, are searching.

May your light shine upon them:

A beacon of hope and a lamp to their path.

We pray for those who search for meaning, their lives empty,
hungry for something or someone to put their trust in.

In the bewildering variety of this world's voices,
each claiming to offer an answer,
may your love break through

and the message of the gospel touch their hearts,
so that they may find in you
the one who is the way, the truth and the life.

May your light shine upon them:

A beacon of hope and a lamp to their path.

We pray for those for whom the journey of life is hard,
beset by pain, sickness and sorrow,
or overwhelmed by disaster, deprivation and injustice.

In the trials they face and the burdens they struggle with,
may your love break through
and the message of the gospel bring strength and comfort,
help, healing and inspiration.

May your light shine in the darkness:

A beacon of hope and a lamp to their path.

Lord Jesus Christ,

Hear our prayer for all who seek
purpose, help, guidance and mercy.

May we all find in you the answer to our prayer,
and the end to our searching.

In your name we ask it.

Amen

10.

Preaching Plan for January/February, 2017

January 1st: Roxburgh

James Smith

“ 8th: Stichill

Rev. Robin McHaffie

“ 15th: Makerstoun

George Amos

“ 22nd: Smailholm

Sophia Duncan

“ 29th: Stichill

Elizabeth Findlay

February 5th: Roxburgh

Rev. Robin McHaffie

“ 12th: Stichill

David Harvey

“ 19th: Makerstoun

Rev. Robin McHaffie

“ 26th: Smailholm

Rev. Robin McHaffie

March 5th: Roxburgh

James Smith

All services start at 10.30am.

DATA PROTECTION FORMS

To comply with the law of the land we need everyone who wants to and are able to continue their membership of Kelso Country Churches to sign the Data Protection Form. This form allows us to keep on our records the information that we need and that is your name, address, phone number and e-mail if you wish.

We had just over 200 members on the congregational roll before we started this exercise. We do not want to, or indeed will not delete anyone from our list who wants to stay with us. We are diligently going through everyone on our roll but struggle to find some names with the correct addresses, as they have moved on to pastures new and not informed us. Most people have now signed this document, but if for any reason you have not and you know you are a member, please contact your elder for a form or even myself and I will send you one. If on the other hand you want to relinquish your membership we also need to know that as well.

This is something that every church in the land has to adhere to eventually, so please make sure that you continue with us as a member of Kelso Country Churches and the Church of Scotland.

Jim Smith (Session Clerk)

3.

Letter received from Border Women's Aid Ltd.

Dear Kelso Country Churches,

On behalf of Border Women's Aid Ltd., I would like to thank you for your generous gifts for the children and the women. Your commitment to helping Border Women's Aid is sincerely appreciated.

Each year we continue to support women and children fleeing from domestic abuse. Through our safe accommodation we have seen many lives changed for the better.

Border Women's Aid has had great success over the past 30 years. We provide safe accommodation along with a range of practical and emotional support from our trained and dedicated team of support workers. The support staff work with the women and children every step of the way on the journey to a new and safe home. We continue to provide outreach support once they are settled in a new home.

The goal of Border Women's Aid Ltd. is to continue to make a difference for women, children and young persons fleeing domestic abuse. With the help of donations from supporters such as you, we will continue to provide support and safe accommodation.

Thanks again for your generous support of our efforts to Border Women's Aid Ltd.

Kind regards, Fiona (BWA)

From the Editor's desk

I wish all our readers a happy and peaceful New Year.

As we move into the second year of a Vacancy in KCC, we can look back on 2016 with some comfort knowing that we fulfilled many of our aims in keeping good heart and financial stability in our united parishes as well as fulfilling our obligation to give generously to the outreach work of the church.

We are pleased to welcome back Rev Robin McHaffie as Interim Moderator and he has offered to take some of our services and do some hospital visiting or urgent pastoral care. His contact details are on page 11. Or inform your elder or Jim Smith if you know of anyone in need.

The charge of Oxnam with Kelso Country Churches is already being circulated and will be advertised in 'Life and Work' in February.

In the words of the hymn: *Look forward in faith, our time is in God's hand, Walk humbly with him, and trust his future plan.*

The Guild

Sophia Duncan

The Christmas Social held on 14th December was a happy and heart warming afternoon of entertainment, carol singing and a festive tea. We welcomed many visitors from neighbouring Guilds, and our own church family, and also members of KCC Kirk Session.

Rev. Marion Dodd gave a fascinating and at times amusing account of her experiences of a weekend with the Queen and her family at Balmoral when she was invited to preach in Crathie Church in 1994.

The Convener of the Presbyterial Council of the Guild, Sheena Sangster presented long-service certificates to some of our ladies;

Alison Darling – 47 years, Mary Logan – 47 years,
Avril Purves – 40 years, Sophia Duncan – 36 years
Kathleen Wilkie – 34 years.

The Woman's Guild (as it used to be called) has been active in supporting the church, the community and the wider work of the Guild throughout the world in the 87 years since it was inaugurated in Stichill in 1929.

There was a great buzz of conversation and laughter in the hall after, where a delicious tea was served.

The next meeting takes place on Wednesday, 11th January at 2.30pm in the church hall. Isabel Gordon from Kelso will give a talk on 'The Scholar, the Wizard and the Seer.' All are welcome.



Kid's Club

The children are looking forward to an outing to the Pantomime on Sunday afternoon, 8th January when the Northumbrian Theatre Company are performing 'Little Red Riding Hood' in Oxnam Kirk.

Nita, Rosalind and Lynda will accompany the children in the mini bus and we look forward to hearing all about it.



Christmas Thank You's

Dear Auntie

Oh, what a nice jumper,
I've always adored powder blue,
and fancy you thinking of orange and pink
for the stripes, how clever of you.



Dear Uncle

The soap is terrific,
so useful and such a kind thought.
How did you guess
that I'd just used the last of
the soap that last Christmas brought.

Dear Gran

Many thanks for the hankies.
Now I really can't wait for the flu,
and the daisies embroidered in red round the "M"
for Michael, how thoughtful of you.

Dear Cousin

What socks!
And the same sort you wear,
so you must be the last word in style.
And I'm certain you're right that the luminous green
will make me stand out a mile.

Dear Sister

I quite understand your concern;
It's a risk sending jam in the post,
but I think I've pulled out
all the big bits of glass
so it won't taste too sharp spread on toast.



Dear Grandad

Don't fret, I'm delighted,
So don't think your gift will offend.
I'm not at all hurt that you gave up this year,
and just sent me a fiver to spend.

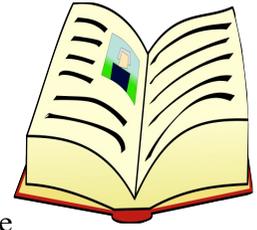
8.

Mick Glover

Book Review Lynda Stark

'His Bloody Project'

by Graeme Macrae Burnet



This book is subtitled "Documents relating to the case of Roderick Macrae", and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2016.

It is an amazing, and riveting, read, being both a historical novel, and the story of a triple murder. On the historical side, we learn that crofting communities in Ross shire, in 1869, were harsh, poverty stricken places where the exercising of power was arbitrary, according to the whims of whoever was given power over the lives of the villagers. On the other hand we are drawn in to an account of the murders which Roderick Macrae is accused of. The question arises, as to why he committed the brutal crimes, and then made no attempt to cover up what he had done.

As the story is told by Roderick himself through the copious documents he has written, we are left in no doubt that he is guilty of the crimes, and therefore there is no element in the book of "whodunit?" The psychological state of Roderick seems to be unrecognised by the justice system, but he has committed the murders in what seems to be a cold, and calculating way. He murders the girl he has loved, her very young brother, and her father. The one he set out to murder was the father who has used his sister, making her pregnant, and causing her to commit suicide, and has preyed on the family, taking their land and using various other ploys to make their lives impossible. Roderick's father is passive and resigned, and Roderick's given excuse for the murders is that he was avenging his father's misery. The end of the novel is the court case which is written as if for the newspaper of the day, and is fascinating in itself.

This may seem like a pretty unpleasant read, but it is well written, well researched and grippingly readable. I could hardly put it down!

Flower and cleaning rotas for 2017 are in the churches. Please add your name to a date that suit you. 5.

Coping with adversity



On 18th November, 1995, Itzhak Perlman, the violinist, came on stage to give a concert at the Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Centre in New York City. If you have ever been to a Perlman concert, you know that getting on stage is no small achievement for him. He was stricken with polio as a child, and so he has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of two crutches.

He walks across the stage one step at a time, painfully and slowly, yet majestically, until he reaches his chair. Then he sits down slowly, puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the clasps on his legs, tucks one foot back and extends the other foot forward. Then he bends down and picks up the violin, puts it under his chin, nods to the conductor and proceeds to play.

By now, the audience is used to this ritual. They sit quietly while he makes his way across the stage to his chair. They remain reverently silent while he undoes the clasps on his legs. They wait until he is ready to play.

But this time, something went wrong. Just as he finished the first few bars, one of the strings of his violin broke. You could hear it snap – sounding like gunfire across the room. There was no mistaking what that sound meant.

People who were there that night thought to themselves: ‘We figured that he would have to get up, put on the clasps again, pick up the crutches and limp his way off stage – to either find another violin or another string for this one.’

But he didn’t. Instead, he waited a moment, closed his eyes and then he played with such passion and such power and such purity as they had never heard before. Of course, everyone knows that it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings. I know that and you know that, but that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that.

At one point, it sounded like he was de-tuning the strings to get new sounds from them that they had never made before. When he finished, there was an awesome silence in the room and then people rose and cheered. There was an extraordinary outburst of applause from every corner of the auditorium. We were all on our feet, cheering and doing everything we could to show how much we appreciated what he had done.

He smiled, wiped the sweat from his brow, raised his bow to quiet us, and then he said, not boastfully, but in a quiet, pensive reverent tone, “You know, sometimes it is the artist’s task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left.”

☆☆☆☆

I hired a plumber to help me restore an old farmhouse, and after he had just finished a rough day on the job, a flat tyre made him lose an hour of work and his electric drill broke. Then his ancient truck refused to start. As I drove him home, he sat in stony silence.

On arriving, he invited me in to meet his family. As we walked towards the front door, he paused briefly at a small tree, touching the tips of the branches with both hands. Upon opening the door he had undergone an amazing transformation. His face was wreathed in smiles and he hugged his two small children and kissed his wife.

Afterwards, he walked me to the car. We passed the tree and my curiosity got the better of me. I asked him about what I had seen him do at the little tree.

“Oh, that’s my trouble tree,” he replied. “I know I can’t help having troubles on the job, but these troubles don’t belong in the house with my wife and the children. So, I just hang them up on the tree every night when I come home and ask God to take care of them. Then in the morning, I pick them up again. Funny thing is,” he smiled, “when I come out in the morning, there aren’t nearly as many as I remember from the night before.”