

# The Herald

Castlehill Parish Church

Spring 2021



## Editorial

Our front cover this time shows the new Stained Glass Windows.. Many will not have been in Church to see them yet but hopefully this will change soon. While it had been expected by now they would have been dedicated, this special service is still before us. They provide a rich colour and light to the sanctuary area and those who have seen them have been particularly impressed..

Light is something which is discussed in many different ways in Churches and now we are asked to see the "Light at the end of the Tunnel" But I wonder what that light will be and what it will show us. The word "Light" appears almost three hundred times in the Bible, which makes it an important part of our Christian life.

Once normality returns, will our Churches be as vibrant as before? Statistics show that more people have watched virtual services, listened to podcasts of prayers, viewed television services and broadcasts than previously had attended Church. Will they then return to services within the Church buildings?

It is up to everyone of us to make sure that any strangers returning are made welcome and that they will enjoy our company and the services as much as the ones they have taken part in during lockdown.

They say that you should never look back, but it is good to recall happy memories. In this issue we have some nostalgic items, which we hope will do just that. Having looked back, now let us look forward to a return to Church Services at the beginning of Holy Week.

A word of thanks to all who have contributed to this issue. In setting out to prepare the magazine we wondered if we would have enough to make it worth while, but all have rallied round and given us sufficient to produce this Spring edition. Yes Spring is with us again, nothing can stop the seasons from coming round each year, surely a message from God that He is always there and always will be.

**Wellwood Grierson. Editor**

## **Castlehill Parish Church, 1, Old Hillfoot Road, Ayr KA7 3LW**

**Minister**                    **Rev. Paul Russell**

**Tel. 01292 261464**

**Secretary**                **Mrs Sandra Wyllie, Tel. 07508 641832**

**E-mail [castlehillchurch44@gmail.com](mailto:castlehillchurch44@gmail.com)**

**Session Clerk**        **Mr. Douglas Owens, Tel. 442062**

**Church Website:**    **[www.castlehillchurch.org](http://www.castlehillchurch.org)**

**Charity Number**        **SCO01792**

## Have your say

If you have any comments to make on the Magazine, please feel free to do so by letter or by email to [castlehillchurch44@gmail.com](mailto:castlehillchurch44@gmail.com) We are always pleased to consider any articles for the Magazine from members of the congregation, These can also be sent to the same email address.

## From The Manse



Dear Friends

As I write this, it is beginning to look and feel like Spring and I am sure we all are conscious of the contrast between lockdown when the sun is shining and the colours of nature are appearing all around us, and in the dark, brooding, often damp cold which we have come through. It lifts our spirits, as does the fact that the vaccine programme has been rolling out efficiently and has touched many of us and has imparted not only the first element of protection against the virus but also an element of confidence: life as we hope it will become seems to be looming larger on the horizon.

With the positive news which lockdown has achieved, we have also received the encouraging announcement from the Scottish Government and the Church of Scotland that we can recommence Church services for 50 people with effect from 26<sup>th</sup> March. As we have been careful in our regular monitoring of our buildings over lockdown, I have been assured by the Presbytery that permission to proceed will be given to us.

Can I, on your behalf, thank Liz Reid for her diligent checking of all our halls and the Church for arranging urgent work which had to take place. When we open, we shall, of course, continue with the same routine of careful protection which we exercised before – social distancing, hand sanitizer, one way system, face masks, and no congregational singing. No matter how encouraged we feel by the improvements, it is important that we continue to do our bit to maintain high standards of safety.

Over the past three months we have seen the death of a number of good friends from the congregation and that is painful for us. I have been heartened though by the manner in which many have, while respecting the restrictions, paid their respects as the cortege passed the Church: that has not only been of great comfort to the families involved, it has underlined that Castlehill continues to be a supportive, caring congregation and I believe it has helped to share in sadness if only for a brief time and by so doing to encourage one another. Thank you for choosing to participate in this in such a safe manner.

There is not space to pay tribute here to all our members who have died, but I would like to mention two of our elders, Robert Forrester and Freddie Burdon, who both gave sterling service to our congregation over the years and who will be missed for their skill, dedication, their faith and their friendship.

Robert was one of the pillars of our property group for well over thirty years and brought his expertise to the ongoing care of Castlehill not just in that way but in his faithful pastoral care of his district which he tended with particular diligence.

Freddie served as Congregational Treasurer from 1967-79 and as Session Clerk from 1987-99. His cheerful wisdom brought a safe, supportive guidance to each role he held and earned him well deserved respect from his fellow elders, ministers, and congregation alike. We thank God for their service and pray his comfort for their families at this time.

This is a period of constant change for our country and for the Church at large. We cannot tell where the future lies and what shape it will be for ourselves as individuals and our congregation. Can I suggest that it is, therefore, especially appropriate that we begin to look forward again at Easter: and we recall our faith is a resurrection faith. That is not a history lesson in what happened over two thousand years ago: it is an expression of how God operates in the twenty-first century: even out of the worst this world can inflict on us,

God brings new life, new hope, a new future, and we are assured of his blessing on our lives, even if we currently cannot glimpse the way ahead. Let us trust in that promise together and look forward with renewed faith starting from our Easter worship onwards.

Jesus' word to us this Easter is "Peace be with you." May we share in a different kind of celebration this Easter but continue to hold fast to the same promises of faith as we always have.

May God bless you all at this time.

**Paul**



## HOLY WEEK SERVICES

SUNDAY 28 <sup>TH</sup> MARCH	PALM SUNDAY	11.00
MONDAY 29 <sup>TH</sup>	MONDAY SERVICE	19.00
TUESDAY 30 <sup>TH</sup>	TUESDAY SERVICE	19.00
WEDNESDAY 31 <sup>ST</sup>	HOLY WEEK SERVICE	19.00
THURSDAY 1 <sup>ST</sup> APRIL	MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE	19.00
FRIDAY 2 <sup>ND</sup> APRIL	GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE	19.00
SUNDAY 4 <sup>TH</sup> APRIL	EASTER DAY SERVICE	11.00

ALL ARE WELCOME TO SHARE IN ANY OR ALL OF THESE SERVICES. WE CAN ACCOMMODATE 50 IN THE CHURCH AND ARE PERMITTED OUR OVERSPILL IN THE MAINHALL. THE MIDWEEK SERVICES WILL BE A BRIEF HALF HOUR REFLECTION.

**SUNDAY SERVICES BEYOND EASTER, WILL, UNLESS WE ARE INSTRUCTED OTHERWISE, CONTINUE AT 11.00 EACH WEEK WITH THE SAME NUMBERS AND ARRANGEMENTS.**

### Social Committee

The Social Report. well I would love to say we have a full diary of activities planned but sadly no, but as soon as we can we will set up a beetle drive, afternoon tea and Christmas plans for later on in the year which we hope you will support. Stay Safe

**Liz Reid**

### Wee Kirks

Thanks to everyone who managed to get their Wee Kirk contents to us over the last few months. We are grateful for your efforts. It will not be possible to come for a March visit but hopefully we might manage October. [I think we said that once before] Once the Church services begin again, feel free to bring the contents along at that time and if that is not convenient please telephone me anytime on **01292 737459** and I will make arrangements to collect.



It will be great for our collectors to come and see you all again, but till then take care and stay safe.

**Wellwood Grierson**

## Are all welcome in this place?

Imagine the peace that Jesus spoke of in John 14:27, as being like roots, branches and air. We all choose to put down roots because we wish to build a home for ourselves. We all want to feel that connection as if we belong. There is a tradition in Castlehill that is designed to make people know they are welcome; everyone shares the peace, and it means we are starting our Sunday mornings with kind words and friendly smiles.

We like to end the sharing of peace by singing a hymn that reminds us that his peace is indeed moving in our church. The words of Deep Peace by John Rutter remind us that all we have to do is close our eyes, and search deep within ourselves, to feel the Holy Spirit surrounding us. It feels as if we are getting a massive hug from Jesus. It's only after that, we are filled with confidence about what we must do, and we are at peace.

Once we have firmly planted our roots, it is very important to start growing branches. It may take us a while to figure out how to grow in our faith, but Jesus already knows and as his followers, he wants us to find a cause bigger than ourselves and be like arrows hitting our targets. In other words, we should stay focused and make a positive change to the wider world in some way.

In the final episode of the BBC Television series *The Musketeers* we see the Musketeers under threat and their Garrison bombed. This looks like the end of the Musketeers because we see a young cadet feeling defeated; he doesn't know how to carry on after such a horrific event. But the captain tells him that the Garrison was only ever 'a place' and that we are 'the Garrison'. This echoes the words of the hymn, 'I am the Church' where we are told how the church is not 'a building' it is 'a people.'

Jesus commanded us to ignite the fire in the lives of others so that they too can find this peace for themselves, because wherever we are the spirit of Jesus can be found. After all, it is not called the Good News for nothing. Let's share the peace that Scripture can bring with kind words and smiles every day. The church is for people to come as they are, regardless of who they are as individuals, and be confronted with the notion that they are good enough and that anything is possible with Jesus. He is the light in the darkness.

Loving Jesus is as easy as breathing but obeying him requires us to have complete dedication and commitment to our faith journey and not sit back and enjoy the view. This is not always an easy thing to do because there are times when we feel lost in the mayhem that life brings. Imagine yourself in a labyrinth, many paths to take but not knowing which one to choose. What we forget to do is listen to the Spirit within and no matter what path we walk down we will ultimately find Jesus waiting for us with unconditional love and understanding.

Many writers like Robert Frost in *The Road Not Taken* and Helen Steiner Rice in *The Bend in the Road* have touched upon how we always start off with a plan of how our lives should turn out, but in the end, the air sweeps us off in a different direction and we are led to where we need to be.

With Jesus at the heart of everything in our lives, nothing is too much of a challenge because he is the road map, the compass pointing us in the right direction. Peace means different things to many but the word itself instantly conjures up images of love, acceptance and contentment – that is what the Holy Spirit is all about. We trust that through Jesus everything will turn out the way it's supposed to and the peace that Jesus spoke of will be like growing roots and branches and breathing air.

Yet I feel, in the depth of all that is happening right now with the pandemic the image of peace of mind is shrinking because of anxiety, and now the question is, **are all welcome in this place?**

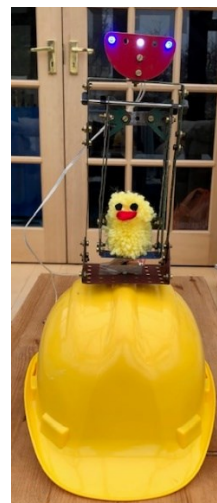
There's a new drama, it's *A Sin* written by Russell T Davies and not only did I find it very powerful to watch, it made me realise history has an odd way of mirroring itself. The five-part series charts the early years of the Aids epidemic in the UK, and comes to television, at what I feel, to be a very apt time because what happened back then, in regard to fear and anxiety pandemic. We should strive to move forward and be open and connected to everyone around us, we must not go backwards or remain stuck in the present. We all want to feel that connection as if we belong. After all, Jesus tells us to love thy neighbour and come as we are because who are we to judge one another if Jesus accepts everyone?

I would like to think that all **are** welcome at Castlehill.

**Kirsty Wyllie**

# Easter Bonnet Competition.

The Coffee Shop asked the Zoom viewers to produce some Easter Bonnets. These are the results. Quite impressive, though whether they could be worn or not, is another question. They have still to be judged, but taking part is the main thing. Which do you like.?



## Modern Technology

*Lockdown has learned us many lessons and many, a year ago, would not be so familiar with Facetime, Zoom meetings and catching up on websites and facebook. In fact they were foreign words to us.*

*In many cases these learning curves have been forced upon us and perhaps we should be thankful that something good has come out of the pandemic*

*Those of us who are of an older vintage sometimes despair of the lack of spelling ability and the grammar of the younger generation. Spelling is no longer considered as a real necessity and the introduction of "text" language has almost made spelling a non-event.*

*Luckily, I have a computer which corrects my spelling mistakes, so I do not need to worry. In recognition of this I have dedicated a wee poem to this marvellous innovation.*

## A Poem for our Times

**Eye halve a spelling chequer  
It came with my pea sea.  
It planely marks for my revu  
Miss steaks eye Kin Knot sea**

**Eye strike a quay and type a word  
and weight four it two say  
Weather Eye am rong oar rite,  
it shows me strait aweigh.**

**As soon as a mist ache is maid  
it nose before two long  
and I can put the error rite  
Its rare lea ever rong**

**Eye have run this poem threw it  
I am shore ure pleased two no  
Its letter perfect awl the weigh  
My spell chequer tolled me sew**



Well, here we are beginning to look forward to what we hope is the final route back to face to face Guiding. Our girls have been busy continuing their Guiding Experience through virtual means using Zoom or social media accounts.

Monday night Brownies and Guides have continued with weekly virtual meeting while Tuesday night have been setting tasks for Girls to complete over a fortnightly basis.

All units are looking forward to returning first to outdoor Guiding then indoor when restrictions are lifted and our Organisation allows.

We have several girls across the units who are working towards their Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards. To gain these awards the girls have to complete theme awards with two for each level.

Our Thinking Day events were different this year with virtual experiences available for all the girls and their families to participate in.

A huge Happy 50th Birthday to our Tuesday night Brownies who turned 50 in February. WE look forward to celebrating in style when restrictions allow.

Over the next few magazines we will be looking back at the history of Guiding within Castlehill.

**Carol Thomson**

**M L Williams  
Funeral Directors**



**We create every funeral  
individually, just for you.**

**M L Williams are here to support  
and guide you, offering a friendly  
and professional service.**

Call us for immediate support,  
advice or to arrange a home visit.

We are here to help 24 hours a day.

**Ayr**

**01292 262 277**

1b Falkland Park Road,  
KA8 8LL

[www.mlwilliams.co.uk](http://www.mlwilliams.co.uk)

## Castlehill Parish Church of Scotland Ayr

### Statement of Financial Activities

Year ended 31 December 2020

	Note	2020		2019	
		Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £	Total funds £
<b>Income and endowments</b>					
Donations and legacies	4	307,846	53	307,899	76,574
Charitable activities	5	613	—	613	4,115
Other trading activities	6	11,034	—	11,034	22,507
Investment income	7	1,714	33	1,748	1,847
<b>Total income</b>		<u>321,207</u>	<u>86</u>	<u>321,294</u>	<u>105,043</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Expenditure on raising funds:					
Costs of other trading activities	8	—	—	—	1,240
Expenditure on charitable activities	9,10	136,517	4	136,522	118,434
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<u>136,517</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>136,522</u>	<u>119,674</u>
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>		<u>184,690</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>184,772</u>	<u>(14,631)</u>
<b>Other recognised gains and losses</b>					
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<u>184,690</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>184,772</u>	<u>(14,631)</u>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>					
Total funds brought forward		92,587	2,382	94,969	109,600
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<u>277,277</u>	<u>2,464</u>	<u>279,741</u>	<u>94,969</u>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The church financial year ended on 31 December 2020. Members of the Congregational Board and Kirk Session are Trustees of our congregation and due to the coronavirus situation could not meet to approve the Annual Report and Financial Accounts. This was done instead when the nineteen page report was emailed to Trustees who could then give approval by email. Four copies of the report were signed by our session clerk, Douglas Owens, and I. They were passed to the Examiner for approval and then a copy went to the Accounts Inspection Committee of the Presbytery of Ayr and a copy also went to Church of Scotland headquarters in Edinburgh. Following approval by the Accounts Inspection Committee a copy will go to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

During the year we were extremely fortunate to receive a legacy of £191,347 which was invested in the Church of Scotland Investors Trust Funds. The interest from those investments will go to the Fabric Fund as stipulated in the bequest.

The amount given by Standing Orders and the amount of Gift Aid claimed increased thanks to those who changed from giving by FWO to giving by standing order. The amount given by the open plate and Free Will Offering envelopes was less due to the months the church was closed because of the lockdown. Some people continued to give by putting their envelopes or a cheque through the manse letterbox. Fabric expenditure during the year was £14,372 and costs for heating, electricity, manse council tax, insurance and cleaning the church and halls were £13,330. We were able to claim Gift Aid refunds of £12,771.

During the Covid-19 situation our regular income dropped substantially. No services were held during the months of lockdown therefore offerings on Sundays from FWO envelopes and the open plate were not received. Hall lets by outside groups were cancelled and we lost that income which in normal times brings a substantial amount.

If you are a tax payer and use a standing order or FWO envelopes or the Wee Kirks to give money to the church we could claim 25% of the amount given back from HMRC if you sign a Gift Aid Declaration form. Contact Margaret Devlin Tel. 01292 445118 for a form or it can be downloaded from the church website [www.castlehillchurch.org](http://www.castlehillchurch.org) under the publications section. Completed forms should be returned to Margaret.

**Margaret Devlin**



***Something else we could not go to. Usually a Church in the Presbytery would hold a service to which everyone is invited.***

## **World Day of Prayer - Scotland** ***Informed Prayer - Prayerful Action***

Welcome to the World Day of Prayer which was on Friday 5th March 2021.

The World Day of Prayer is an international, ecumenical, prayer movement initiated and carried out by Christian women in more than 180 countries and over 1000 languages. Every year Christians of many traditions and all ages, celebrate a common day of prayer on the first Friday in March. Services are held all around the world, beginning in Tonga and New Zealand in the east and continuing throughout the day to Samoa and Alaska in the west. We bring the needs of the world, and of the writing country in particular, before Almighty God knowing that He will hear and answer us, as we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. God invites us to have a prayer relationship with Himself, but He also expects us to have concerned relationships with our neighbours, throughout the world. Prayer must be accompanied by action, as God moves our hearts and directs our thoughts. Many thanks to all the organisers who organised, participated or attended services written by the Christian Women of the writing country. We really appreciate your contribution.



Republic of Vanuatu was founded on its traditional values, Christian principles, and the people's faith in God, gaining independence on July 30th, 1980. Vanuatu is a beautiful country of many islands and people of many ethnic groups and languages. The islands have black and white sandy beaches and beautiful coral reefs with tropical coloured fish. The forests are full of lovely birds, flora, fauna and spectacular cascades. The inhabitants of Vanuatu are known as Ni-Vanuatu. Most are of Melanesian descent with a Polynesian minority on the outlying islands. A mix of Europeans, Asians and other Pacific Islanders also live on the archipelago. Studies predict that in 2021 Vanuatu will have 312,000 inhabitants.

Tropical Cyclone Harold was a very powerful tropical cyclone which caused widespread destruction in the Vanuatu in April (2020). Harold has battered Vanuatu, bringing with it concerns the natural disaster could prevent the Pacific nation from remaining one of the few countries without any confirmed cases of coronavirus. It was the first Category 5 severe tropical cyclone to occur in the South Pacific basin since Cyclone Gita in 2018 and was also the second-strongest tropical cyclone to ever affect Vanuatu, behind Cyclone Pam in 2015.

Vanuatu proudly waves its flag and its coat of arms with the words, "In God we stand". Their faith has carried them through.

The Vanuatu Committee's prayer is that the ecumenical relationship they experienced during the blessing of working together for the 2021 programme will lift up the voice of Vanuatu woman across the world. They stand with the women and men of the world and proudly declare that the Vanuatu nation is built on the Rock of Ages, who is Christ the King.

Their theme of the service is 'Build on a Strong Foundation'

“  
Taken from World Day of Prayer (Scotland) website”

**We have thought of having a “Memory Lane” item for some time but were conscious of the fact that we would need to rely on contributions from our readers. The recent passing of Jim Roy prompted us to start it off as we had photos from some of the bus trips which Jim organised. We are grateful for the pictures we received from members of the congregation.**

## Down Memory Lane



As far as we know there were five trips, Loch Katrine. Mount Stuart. The Kelpies, Floors Castle and Rosslyn Chapel. We have been unable to get Photos from them all but here are a few which I am sure will bring some memories to a number of you.



Great day at Loch Katrine



Dwarfed by the Kelpies



Visit to Floors Castle



Lost at the front at Floors Castle



What are we doing next?



Do not know where I am but I am enjoying my day.



Thank goodness that worked out O.K.

Every trip was well organised, we always had stops for coffees., and before returning home there was always a place to visit for an excellent evening meal. Some journeys were longer than others, but the chat on the bus made the time pass quickly

I wonder if Jim knew how much enjoyment he provided for so many of his friends.

### What if Mary had said, “No”?

It's a game that historians and novelists play. What if Hitler had been shot dead, rather than just injured, during WWI? Or if Christopher Columbus had listened to his frightened crew and turned back to Spain? Or if Prince Charles Edward Stewart had carried on from Derby to a London where the Hanoverians were panicking? Or if the Mamluks hadn't defeated the Mongol hordes at the battle of Ayn Jalut? Or if the Greeks hadn't won the Battles of Marathon and Thermopylae?

All points in history after which, if they'd gone the other way, the present day would be vastly different. But, in my opinion, none would have been so epoch defining as, when Mary, the young Nazarene woman, when asked to be the mother of Jesus Christ, she turned to the Angel Gabriel and said, “No”.

Let us assume that Gabriel turned and went away with his wings 'between his legs' to report his failure to God. What would the subsequent world look like?

Perhaps we can look at the architectural bits that would be missing. There would be no St Peter's, no cathedrals at all, no churches, no pilgrimages to sites in Jerusalem or Bethlehem (or Santiago de Compostela). Politically, there would be no Vatican City (or State – in Medieval times), no Holy Roman Empire or any missionary activity into Africa, Asia, or the Americas.

Obviously, there would be no ministers, presbyteries, priests/cardinals/Popes, bishops/archbishops, deacons, curates, or elders. Perhaps druids would still be around.

Assume that Jews had been determined to keep their religion to themselves and had no ambitions to proselytise to anyone who was a gentile. Perhaps the Temple would still have been destroyed by the occupying Romans, but the diaspora would just have been throughout the Middle East. If the Jewish religion was not to be intimately connected to the new Christianity, it may have meant that Islam would not have risen to be such a competitor in the region. Hence, no Crusades as Jerusalem and the Holy Land weren't important. So, no Islamic conquest and no schism in the region.

If we concentrate on Europe and leave the Americas, Africa, and Asia for now, we must remove all Christian influence from its history. No Roman Catholic Church with its scriptoria copying biblical texts or its monasteries keeping medicine going through the 'Dark Ages'. Martin Luther would never have pinned his Theses to the church at Wittenberg. The Reformation would never have been necessary. The European religious wars would not have occurred. Let us not forget that we would never have had the Spanish Inquisition either. The monastic cells in Ireland, which gave us St Columba and kept knowledge safe from ignorance, would never have been built.

Looking briefly at Scotland, St Columba wouldn't have landed on Iona, St Ninian wouldn't have founded his refuge at Whithorn and, possibly, the Vikings wouldn't have looted monasteries (there were none) or invaded. That last point is moot as the Vikings did need to find new lands and Scotland was on their doorstep. Just as well as it is fairly evident that I have Viking roots!!

We wouldn't have had a St Margaret, or the Celtic/Rangers divide.

So, what would we have had in place of this 'Christianity'? Perhaps we would still be in the 'Dark Ages'.

Paganism covers many aspects of ancient beliefs. Modern paganism is mainly manifested in Druidic beliefs and Stonehenge. The rising and setting of the Sun on both summer and winter solstices would be the centre of religious holidays. If we believe the work of modern archaeologists, feasting was a central part of such festivities. Christmas dinner, anyone?

It is often said that religion causes war. So, does that mean if there were no religion, there would be no war? Hardly. War is far older than organised religion. Again, if we look at Scotland, clan battles had no religious basis. Wars are usually fought over land, gold, or other wealth. Perhaps even over a woman, such as at Troy. Assuming oil was discovered, wars would be still fought over it.

There is no doubt that religious fervour helped swell armies, but the main attraction would always have been booty in one form or another.

Sometimes, religion is said to be the enemy of scientific investigation. However, the discoveries of Galileo, Copernicus and James Hutton amongst others would still have been controversial no matter who was in power. Why?

Because they undermined traditional thought. So, would there have been no Scottish Enlightenment of Hume, Smith, Burns, Hutton, etc?

If we take religion out of the equation, the retention of power would have led to leaders suppressing 'out of the box' thinking. The Earth moves round the Sun – ridiculous!! Someone other than Bishop Usher (who had no scientific training) could conclude that the Earth was just over 6000 years old but a scientist like James Hutton (who was trained) would have realised that the timescales were much longer.

Humankind would still have produced men and women with a thirst for knowledge and a desire to push boundaries. There would always have been powerful forces trying to stop them.

Religion, especially Christianity, has been a driving force in the arts. Think of the very many paintings inspired by the Bible, such as 'The Birth of Adam', 'The Flight to Egypt' and the numerous depictions of the Nativity and the Crucifixion. Take all these away and we would be left with the Statue of David, the Venus de Milo and Turner's and Constable's landscapes. Perhaps not, as there may well have been no Renaissance explosion of the arts *i.e.*, no Mona Lisa or Sistine Chapel ceiling.

What **is** missing from such a world is the knowledge between 'evil' and 'good'. If the Jewish religion stayed in the enclave of Israel/Palestine, there would be no widespread understanding of 'The Fall of Man', the Exit from Eden and the Ten Commandments. These stages of the evolution of mankind - from animal to a sentient being, knowing and disobeying God and accepting 'laws' which would control society – would have forever remained 'secret' from most of the world.

Let's look at society before Christianity became a dominant force. The Roman Empire commonly used crucifixion and used the death of people to entertain the mob. Human sacrifice was common in pre-Columbian America as it was in other cultures. Now, early Christian forces were not innocent in wreaking horrible punishments *e.g.*, Spain in the Americas, France and the UK in Canada and the US, the US military on indigenous Indians, Dutch, Belgian, French and UK forces and settlers on African tribes but it was later Christian folk, *e.g.* David Livingstone who stopped such atrocities.

Slavery was rife in ancient times - all over the world. There was NO society which was innocent. It was the lot of conquered people to be sold into slavery and it was exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to get out of it. Of course, the trans-Atlantic slave trade is the best known due to it being fundamental to US history and the rest of America. What is not so well known or acknowledged is that the men, like William Wilberforce, who campaigned (and won) to stop the said trade were deeply Christian in outlook. It was their religious beliefs that drove them to ignore numerous defeats and, eventually, get the trade to cease. Remember that the hymn 'Amazing Grace' was written by the Captain of a slave ship who became a Christian and realised how wrong it all was.

Without Christianity, it is entirely possible that the trade would still be continuing. There is still much to be done, even now, to eradicate it as incidents pop up in the press from time to time.

Now that I've thoroughly depressed you, let's return to the situation in Nazareth 2000+ years ago.

If Mary has said, 'No', what would Gabriel do? He COULD return to God and report his failure. Doubtless God wouldn't be pleased. Gabriel, if he were sensible, he would look for another young woman to be the mother of Jesus. Would there have been an Anna, Hannah, Sarah, or Elizabeth in the next street? But then how would the Bible reconcile the pregnancy of Mary's cousin, Elizabeth?

Quite a conundrum.

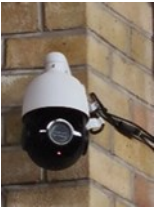
Now we come to the crux of the story. Was the choice of Mary totally random? Or was it all part of God's plan? We must believe that it was. So, God knew that, when he sent Gabriel to inform her of what God expected of her, He knew what her answer would be. Thus, the above speculation is just that, speculation. Mary was never going to say, "No." God had chosen her, and she knew that. "I am God's servant." Plus, all the rest of the 'Magnificat'.

We can rest easy. God's plan was always that Mary would be the mother of Jesus. It was never in doubt. Thoughts, like those above, which are prompted by thoughts on an alternative outcome of the meeting of Mary and Gabriel, are just fanciful.

**Allan Jack**

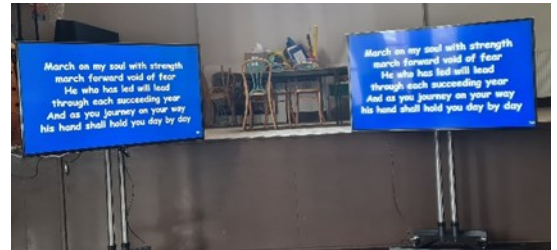
## Changes in the Church

Last year during lockdown it became apparent that we were going to have to change the way in which to reach the congregation and the wider community in our parish and beyond.



One of the ways in which we moved forward was the installation of 3 cameras in the Church and 2 large television screens in the Main Hall. These are all wired to the existing equipment in the Church, which enabled us to have extra people over and above the 50 or 20 which were allowed on Sunday mornings, when we were allowed to hold services. This technology allowed

the people in the hall to feel as though they were very much part of the congregation in the Church, as they could see Paul and what was happening and also see the words for the hymns that were played, with no singing of course at present!



Having the cameras also allows us to stream live services via Facebook. We have done this with two recent funerals. This allowed all those who could not be in the Church because of Covid restrictions to see the funeral.

We had hoped to have the streaming equipment installed permanently but the further lockdown restrictions in January and February have delayed this happening. We hope to have this completed soon. This equipment will enable Castlehill Church to reach out to the congregation and the wider community and to move forward in a positive direction.

It has been quite a challenge to ensure that Sundays Services (when we were allowed to hold them) went smoothly. We did have a couple of hiccups including the Sunday morning when Paul managed to mute himself and therefore no sound was going through to the televisions in the Main Hall, which caused a bit of a stir! but most Sundays went well.

It has been quite a learning curve learning to move smoothly between the different cameras and all the angles, working in the laptop (for the hymn words) ensuring that the sound was working in the hall, and also trying to make sure that the loop system was behaving itself too. Once all the wiring has been tidied up the "hiccups" will be resolved and the "tech" corner will be much easier to manage.



Having the televisions and also wifi in the Hall has allowed some of our organisations to have access to online information, which has been invaluable during the past year. We hope this continues with the equipment becoming an integral part of life in the Church.

If anyone is interested in becoming part on the Sunday morning "Tech Team" please contact Sandra Wyllie (01292 286115) for more information .

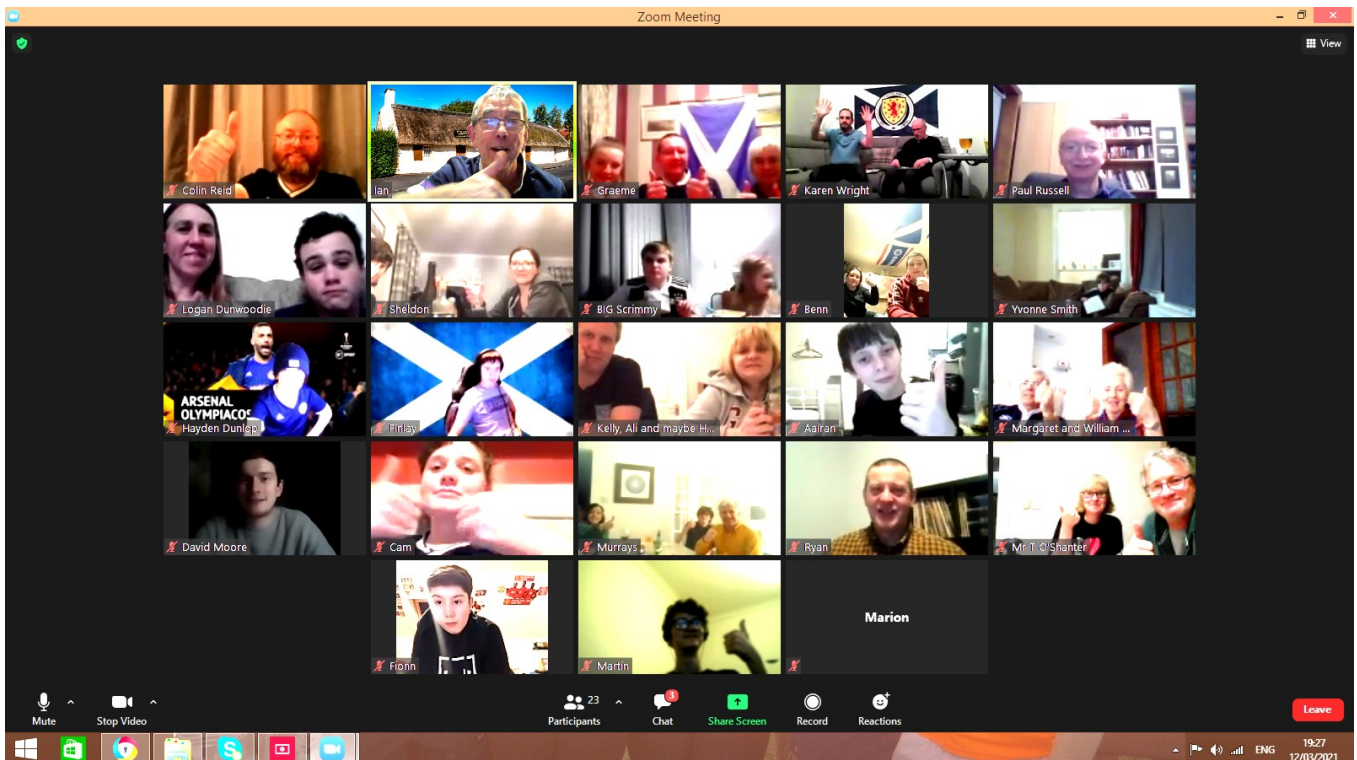
**Sandra Wyllie**



After we broke up for Christmas we thought we would return to our face to face activities on January 8<sup>th</sup>. The subsequent government announcement meant that wasn't going to happen. In January we started having our Friday meetings on Zoom. I was delighted with the response from the boys and the encouragement from the parents. Out of sixteen boys we have fifteen attending. The meetings last for about an hour

each week, during which we manage to break into small groups so we can chat to the boys with one officer to three or four boys. When we go back into the whole group we usually have a topic to cover and a quiz.

The highlight of our time on Zoom has been our Burn's Supper. On Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March we held a Zoom Burn's Supper for all the families. The boys and their families joined the officers and their families, in total we had about 60 people. On the day of the event we delivered boxes to each family containing the supper of haggis neeps and tattie pies, oatcakes, cheese and Irn Bru. The evening started with Colin Reid piping in the haggis. All fifteen boys contributed to the evening by recording pieces before the event. We had four boys each doing two verses of the Address to the Haggis followed by the Selkirk Grace. Other poems covered by the boys were, Winter and Address to the Toothache and the officers gave us A Man's a Man for A' That. We were also entertained by two talented brothers, Callum and Fraser Murray who dueted with their guitars on Caledonia and Auld Lang Syne both of which were excellent. The event was very well received and everyone thought it was a big success, something which will live long in the memory.



In January I was contacted by Leslie Martin who is a former member of the 17<sup>th</sup> Ayr now living in England. I am always heartened when former members make contact and their memories are always of happy times. Leslie's letter is published further on in the magazine.

Another contact I had was from a gentleman called Hugh McCormick. He is a social worker in Glasgow and the last time he contacted me was a year earlier to tell me he had our missing Colours in his possession. His colleague Dougald Donnelly had passed away and our missing Colours had been found in with his belongings. The full story appeared in last year's Easter edition of the Herald. Here is an extract from Hugh's email

*" I am now contacting you to inform you that it is our intention to make a donation to your organisation on behalf of Dougald. It was obvious from past events that your organisation played an important part in Dougald's life as a young man and we could think of no better way of donating the money. We are going to purchase a brick at Ibrox in remembrance of Dougald and any funds left will be given to yourselves."*

We were very touched by this gesture. It is our intention to pay tribute to Dougald at our dedication service in October. We will parade the old colours into the church for the first time since 1997.

**Ian Queen**

## **Remembering Alistair Bowman**

On behalf of Billy, Fiona & myself we would like to say a huge thank you to our minister Paul Russell for his total devotion to us as a family in losing our dear son Alistair. His love, care & compassion nothing short of outstanding, and also his time given to extended family and Alistair's friends.

Also, a thank you to members of the congregation who sent cards, flowers, letters & food, all very much appreciated.

We as a family will never get over losing Alistair and we are sure for many of you who stood outside church listening to his service will appreciate this and we thank you for being part of his life from his very early days in church till the end.

The Boys Brigade was one of Alistair's loves in life and we want to thank Ian Queen for a very fitting guard of honour and walking behind the hearse for one of his Queensmen taken too soon at the young age of 25, but Ian, leaders and Queensmen gave Alistair a great send off. Alistair thought the world of Ian, and also Margaret Graham & leaders who I am sure will all remember his wit and charm.

Alistair is now at peace. Let us give thanks for the life he had and the many happy memories.

God bless. X Eleanor Bowman

## **Fabric Report**

Every five years we have a Church Buildings inspection, just to see if we are maintaining our property in the correct manner. This was done and we have had our report back from the Church of Scotland. The manse got a good report only the main bathroom had problems with the shower unit which we knew about and had started repairs on that. We also know about the back gate and that the garage needs repaired but these are not urgent.

The main church building has a few repairs needed on the roof and we have had a leak during lockdown which has been repaired, but the bell tower has lost some of the outside cladding and we are getting quotes for this. There was a concern raised about a damp patch above the organ. This will be looked at after lockdown. This is a very comprehensive report and we have looked at the urgent repairs on the report and will get them done as soon as we can. We will update you on the progress of these.

## **Your Help Wanted**

We will need people to help with wee jobs around the Church like garden clean up, tidying up and a bit of painting. It would be great to have some help once the weather gets better and restrictions are lifted.

**Liz Reid**

Hello. My name is Leslie Martin and I was a member of the 17th Ayr (Castlehill) Boys' Brigade Company in the 1960's.

I was going through some of my not inconsiderable collection of LP records, cassette tapes etc. recently and discovered a tape of "Music in Castlehill" from 1976. Both my parents, Les & Alice Martin and myself were involved and sang in the choir in the 60's and 70's, firstly under Mr. Liddle and then Sandy MacPherson.

It got me thinking about the Church and the happy memories I had of it. I have especially fond memories of my time in the B.B. when I was a lad between the ages of 13 & 19, and the boys and Officers of the time....e.g. Captain Bill Otterson, Ian Watt, John Martin (no relation) and the inspirational James A. Bloomer. And of course, I can't miss out the Rev. David Munro (or 'the wee man' as he was affectionately known).

It's been many a long year (probably around 50 or so) since I was last in Ayr (I'm now 72 and live in Lancashire) but I decided to check out the Church on Google and was delighted to discover a multitude of information, especially in the Herald from 2006 onwards. The work the B.B. has been doing in Romania under the captaincy of Ian Queen has been wonderful.

I'd like to share some of my memories of my time in the B.B. with you, starting with the Summer Camps. We went to many different places including Dumfries, Kirkcudbright and Brodick in Arran. The camps were always set up in some farmers' field. In those days, we slept under canvas on palliasses (a sort of mattress) made of straw, for beds. We seemed to be always wet but our enthusiasm for our surroundings, our activities and the camaraderie between us was infectious. We enjoyed it, we loved it.

On my first camp (I would be about 13), my mother had given me a suitcase made of hard cardboard for my clothes etc. On our return from a particularly wet camp, she, along with many of the other Mums met us outside the Church to take us home (we lived on Cunningham Crescent...so not too far). She was horrified to see me with my suitcase, which was now just a soggy pile of papier- mâché tied up with string, and vowed that she would never let me go to camp again. I did of course.

On my final camp to Brodick when I was about 18 or so, I was picked to go as part of the advance team. This was a group of about three boys and an Officer who went to the location of the camp two or three days before the rest of the boys arrived.

Our job was to pitch the accommodation tents and the large marquee where we would have our communal meals and meetings etc. It was also our job to dig the latrines. I soon realised what it must be like to be a gravedigger. We also had to construct a wooden plinth around the hole with at least two toilet seats. From reading the Herald, the boys of today have much more pleasant accommodation and facilities!

It's a well known fact about people of around my age or older, that when asked if they can remember where they were when they heard that President Kennedy had been killed, nearly all will know exactly. I am no exception. On Friday evening the 22nd of November 1963, the Company were doing their usual activities in the North Hall, when a sombre Captain Otterson came into the hall and asked us to stop what we were doing and gather round. He told us that the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, had been assassinated. I had just turned 15 the previous week, so I, and the older boys, fully understood the implications of what we had just been told. I'm not so sure about the younger boys. However, Captain Otterson led us in a solemn prayer for the President and his family, and asked us to quietly go home.

One of the activities I particularly enjoyed was the P.E. instruction under the guidance of John Martin. We had some really good gymnasts in the Company and one of the highlights of the summer was being invited to give a fortnightly display for the holidaymakers at BUTLINS camp near the Heads of Ayr.

We all thoroughly enjoyed our Sunday afternoons at the camp and especially the free meal after the display.

There was a great selection.....including bridie & chips, fish & chips, sausage egg & chips etc. etc.

Probably, the boys of today would have enjoyed pizza, but unfortunately they hadn't been invented yet, or they probably had been in Italy, but had yet to make an appearance in Scottish cuisine!

An important aspect of B.B. training was the discipline exercised in drill and marching. This was ably carried out by Ian Watt, who put us through our paces and turned us into a formidable and well trained marching unit. Although we may not have enjoyed the training all the time, it did give us an immense sense of pride when at Battalion Parades, we marched through the streets of Ayr with our heads held high.

I think the most influential Officer during my time was James A. Bloomer. I understand he went on to become Captain from 1969 - 1979 I recall the first time he was introduced to the Company. He stood in front of us all and said something like.....OK. My name is Mr. Bloomer and you giggle now and get it over with. Of course we all did. And that was the end of it.



He was involved in all kinds of activities but my main recollection of him was in setting up the "B.B.BANDBOX".

This was a variety style show produced in 1965 and again in 1967. It brought together boys from the whole Battalion and nearly every local Company was involved. The show was billed as "a riot of music, song, dance, laughter and enthusiasm" and was staged at the Gaiety Theatre in Ayr during the last week in November. It turned out to be a great success.

I had just turned 17 and was involved in many of the production numbers. It was a wonderful experience for boys young and old.

In 1967, the show was again produced, By this time, I was studying at the Scottish Academy of Music in Glasgow. I volunteered my services as Rehearsal Pianist and we had Sandy MacPherson as Chorus Master. In the cast list for that year, a Paul Russell is mentioned. He would probably just have been a boy then, but could he possibly have gone on to become your present minister?

Once again the show was an amazing success, due in no small way to the efforts of the production staff and in particular James A. Bloomer. I know Sandy MacPherson went on to become Organist and Choir Master at Castlehill in 1969.

As for me, I taught at Kilmarnock Academy for a year, enjoyed some time as Organist and Choir Master at Laigh Kirk In Kilmarnock and in 1971 my musical career took an unexpected and totally different direction.

But that's another story!

**Leslie Martin**

***I wonder how many of those reading this will remember those past events. It would be great to have your thoughts and comments. Send them to Ian Queen, Paul Russell or to me at the magazine and we can maybe include them in the next issue.***

***Wellwood Grierson Editor.***

## **ANCHORS**

BBatHome Christmas Art Competition was a national competition and our Anchors submitted entries to BBHQ in December.

In January the boys and leaders participated in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. It was really interesting to note some had an abundance of birds and others saw none at all.

Leaders continue to provide a weekly zoom meeting for Anchors together with materials delivered to their home for various activities to participate in. Currently they are using wool to sew a heart with wool. Watch our website for their creative work which will be posted.

**Margaret Graham**

## **JUNIOR SECTION.**

We had a great first session back face to face from Oct to Dec - we were the 1st companion Ayr Battalion to return and remain 1 of only 2 that manages to restart.

The boys and families bought into our new way of working and it actually helped to improve our meeting nights. The parents were so thankful for all our hard work.

We have not worked with zoom for our age group as I don't think these boys would sit still long enough to engage. Also, we wanted to allow them the chance to concentrate on their home schooling without adding in another electronic session for them.

We have decided to provide them with various activities through BB@home for the boys to complete in their own time. This gives the boys something different to do without putting too much extra pressure on them.

We must thank all boys, families and the other leaders as without them we would not have a BB to keep operating.

Fingers crossed that we can return to the church hall again before too long.

**Colin Reid**



**Christian Aid** is still struggling on under all the ramifications of the pandemic. There is no doubt that the income from donations has reduced considerably. If we take, for example, the donations from Castlehill Church, the amount this has decreased by about 60%. It is always dangerous to extrapolate from one data point (although it doesn't seem to stop politicians!) but it is highly possible that monies going to **CA's** coffers have dropped by that at least.

Along with Donations, there are other ways of contributing to **CA** – by legacies in Wills or In Memoriam. Philanthropic Trusts and Foundations are also accepted from those who are able.

However, the work doesn't stop. For example, the Christmas Appeal was for the Locust Crisis in Ethiopia.

Hardcopy publications still arrive and are posted on the CA Board in the Church Foyer. That really doesn't help as people aren't going to church!

It is normal in these days to assume that everyone has access to the internet, but not everyone does.

Those that do have access, they can log onto the Christian Aid website: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/>

For those who have a Facebook account, they can access - facebook.com/christianaid/

On the website, there is information on appeals and resources. Also sections such as the daily readings where you can find a theme for which there is something to read, think, do and pray. For example, 22 January was about Salt: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/daily-bible-readings/daily-reading-22-january>

**CA's** Scotland's Val Brown shared information about a **Virtual Gathering**: 16 February 10am – 12pm.

Other **Virtual Events** include *Ben Nevis Treks* in June and September 2021 and a *Kiltwalk* in April 2021.

There was no **Christian Aid Week** in 2020 but the 2021 week will focus on water deprivation in Kenya.

All **Christian Aid** offices are currently closed. It has been announced that the Glasgow office will be officially shut from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 with all CA Scottish business to be concentrated in the Edinburgh office. Contact can still be made through the website or at [edinburgh@christian-aid.org](mailto:edinburgh@christian-aid.org).

All charities are suffering financially during this time and some will, no doubt, not survive. We trust that Christian Aid will, but not if this present situation continues indefinitely. We must pray that the end is in sight.

**Allan Jack**

## The Coffee Shop

Through the years we have always enjoyed the Coffee mornings on Tuesdays. It is something that many miss, the chat, the close proximity of all our friends and the opportunity to give someone a hug when things have not been going to well.

The two images show how things have changed from a proper party to a virtual chat. But that is the way it is and we can all keep in touch even if it is through a Zoom lens. Want to join on Tuesdays?, just contact Margaret Graham and she will tell you how.



## Funerals

### OCTOBER

ANNE HAINEY WINDYHALL NH  
BILL BENNETT TEMPLETON HOUSE NH

### NOVEMBER

IAN THOMSON HILLTOP PLACE  
GEORGE CUNNINGHAM DALMELLINGTON ROAD  
ALISTAIR BOWMAN BRIAR GROVE

### DECEMBER

ROY PAGE DALMELLINGTON ROAD  
KENNETH WALKER EAST KILBRIDE  
MARGARET BELL FOREHILLROAD  
ALLISTER ANDERSON MEADOWPARK

### JANUARY

BILL BROCK ELLISLAND SQUARE  
MARGARET HUTCHISON MAYBOLE  
ESSIE JOHNSTON HAWTHORN DRIVE  
MARGARET CLARKE CREGGAN BAHN NH  
JIM ROY PETTOCH ROAD, DRONGAN

### FEBRUARY

ROBERT FORRESTER CEDAR ROAD  
ANDREW SMITH ST LEONARD'S COURT  
PEARL NEIL FENWICKLAND AVENUE

### MARCH

GERRY BLANE CARRICK HOUSE NH  
FREDDIE BURDON MASONHILL ROAD  
MYRTLEBURDON HEATHFIELD NH



As we welcome in a new year  
bidding farewell to the old  
we look forward to the coming months  
to events that will unfold

Winters grip will loosen,  
the countryside turns green  
and the snowdrop, flower of promise  
will very soon be seen

Hard times will come to trouble us  
as they do in every year  
but with the hand of God to guide us  
We can step forward without fear



54 Holmston Road Ayr KA7 3BE  
Tel 01292 268512 Fax 01292 268512  
sales@marysflowers.co.uk www.marysflowers.co.uk

**We appreciate support from all our  
advertisers and hope that you will  
support them too.  
Please mention "The Herald", when  
using any of their services.**



Rainbow Services offers more than simply the delivery of Care Services. If you are looking for a service that lets you or loved one keep on enjoying life at home why not look at our website:-[www.rainbowcareservices.co.uk](http://www.rainbowcareservices.co.uk) or give us a call on T:-01292 294180.



**TOM CALLAGHAN**  
WINDOWS and CONSERVATORIES



Windows      Doors      Conservatories      Roof Trim

**Unit 2, Block 3**  
**North Harbour Industrial Estate**  
**Ayr KA8 8BN**  
**Tel No: 01292 288445**



**ROOFING PROFESSIONALS**  
**AYR**

**0751 671 9773**  
**www.roofingprofessionalsayr.co.uk**  
**01292 265 032**

**-Barry Whalen-**  
**Funeral Directors**

A Privately Owned Firm – Offering a 24 Hour:  
Genuine, Caring & Professional Service

(01292) 611 148  
River Terrace, Ayr  
(01292) 531 400  
Dalvennan Avenue, Patna

**gordon Shanks**

GARDEN MAINTENANCE  
CHIPPING AND BARK  
PRESSURE WASHING  
TURF

T: 01563 884206  
M: 07765 805383  
E: [enquiries@gordonshanks.com](mailto:enquiries@gordonshanks.com)

**PRESTWICK**  
**DECORATORS**  
INTERIOR & EXTERIOR DECORATORS

George Brown

Tel. 07907 527227  
Sales Office: 01292 861474  
E-mail: [prestwickdecorators@yahoo.com](mailto:prestwickdecorators@yahoo.com)  
Lynven, Lochmark Avenue KA6 7BE




**Harkness Tree Services**

All Kinds of Tree Work Undertaken  
Removal/Reductions/Pruning/Thinning  
Fully Insured  
City and Guilds Qualified  
Free Estimates  
Phone: Archie on 07816146974

**JOHN FERGUS**  
*Electricians*



SJIB APPROVED      Sponsored by: 

**DOMESTIC - COMMERCIAL**  
**INDUSTRIAL**

Rewires : Showers : Security Lighting  
No Job Too Small  
Over 27 Years Experience  
Quality Workmanship at Competitive Prices

**Discount to Club Members**

**FREEPHONE**  
SELECT **0800 955 2242**   
Mob: 07713 222086  
18 LANSDOWNE ROAD, AYR