



**Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church**  
linked with  
**Muiravonside Parish Church**  
Spring 2014



## My Journey



A boat cannot sail unless it cuts its line with the shore and sets its course with the wind in its sails... it takes faith to cut the line.

And so it is to answer a call.

My journey of faith began at the age of 14 when I became a Christian at a Scripture Union camp. I began going along to Westpark Church in Denny where my faith was nurtured and my relationship with God grew.

It was as a young 17 year old thinking about what I would do with my life, that I first felt a call to consider ministry and my minister and youth group leader encouraged me to consider it too. But at that time there were still few women ministers and I felt a desire to teach and so I accepted a place at New College in Edinburgh to study Theology and Religious Studies with a view to becoming an RE teacher.

While studying in Edinburgh I met Scott, we married in 1995 and moved to Fife and I trained as a secondary RE teacher at Moray House College of Education. We lived in Fife for 12 years, during which time we worshipped firstly at Culross and Torryburn Church and then Gillespie Memorial Church in Dunfermline. As an active member of both congregations I led a house group bible study and taught in the Sunday School and was part of a team who started up and ran a youth café at the Church in High Valleyfield with entirely unchurched young people who would come in off the street.

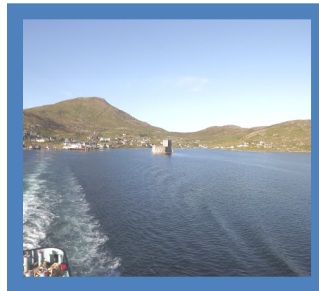
After gaining my teaching qualification I took up a variety of different teaching posts in Fife secondary schools but I was still being prodded, there was no peace from an inner voice urging me to consider ministry! And so after 4 years of teaching, I decided that I had to do something about it. I got all of the forms to apply to go to what at that time was called selection school and I filled them all out but then before I could post them I discovered I was expecting our first child. Aha! Just the excuse I needed... 'see God' I thought, 'I'm just not meant to be a minister!'

The voice urging me to consider ministry disappeared... for a while... but it returned again, though I managed to ignore it, it was easily

drowned out by the busyness of being Mummy to our 4 young children. Then as a family we felt God calling us to Barra, and so at the very beginning of 2008 we set sail as a family for a new life in the Outer Hebrides.

A beautiful and wild place...

But still I was being prodded by God .... Children don't stay babies forever ... I returned to work – part time as a Play Leader and Development Worker with the Children's Centre on Barra, where I worked with all of the children aged 0-12 on the island, developing and running play sessions and story and rhyme time for under 5's, youth club for primary age children and summer play schemes. But that inner voice calling me to ministry had become louder and louder and was becoming more and more difficult to ignore. The church on Barra had become vacant very soon after we moved there. I started up a Bible study and home fellowship group and still I ignored God's prompting, I helped start a worship group and still I ignored God's voice, and then there was a need for someone within the congregation to lead worship occasionally, and an elder asked me to do it.



After a lot of persuasion I agreed.  
And I think God sighed!

Our last view of Barra

At last I had heard his call, and suddenly I discovered that not only could I do the things that I had long said that I couldn't, but that to do them felt just right! And so after lots of thought and prayer I started the 12 month application process for ministry, fully expecting to be turned down, and then to my utter amazement in June 2011 the Church of Scotland accepted me! And so in September 2011 I began 2 years of Post-Graduate study at Highland Theological College in Dingwall, part of the University of the Highlands and Islands.

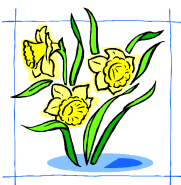
My first placement as a candidate for ministry took me to the wild and beautiful island of South Uist where I experienced rural ministry in the extreme but a shortage of placements in the Presbytery of Uist meant that to complete my training we would have to consider

moving to the mainland and so in August 2012 we as a family took a huge leap of faith and following God's prompting moved here to Falkirk where I served my final 2 placements, at Camelon Parish Church and then at H.M.Y.O.I Polmont. Each of my placements has offered me a very different experience of ministry which I have absolutely loved but all have left me with a very deep sense of the overwhelming privilege of ministry.

It is 23 years since I first felt God calling me to ministry, and in all of that time I see now that God has been preparing me for the ministry to which He is calling me. Someone once said that "A ship is safe in harbour, but that's not what ships are for." By taking that leap of faith and by following God's call I have discovered what I was made for, and who I am.

I have climbed into the boat, and in faith I have cut my line to the shore, I have put myself completely into God's hands and I have raised my sail and set out on this journey. It has taken us as a family further than I might have imagined, and it's not finished yet, I don't yet fully know where our destination will be but I trust that my Lord is with us and will guide us every step of the way and that we will arrive at the perfect time!

***Blessings, your friend and Probationer Minister  
Amanda MacQuarrie***



Tea, coffee and a chat are always available in the hall after services. Please stay if you can.



Mrs Jessie Mitchell celebrates her 96th birthday with The Guild

**Funerals**

***'The Lord will protect you as you come and go,  
both now and forevermore.'***

Muiravonside Parish

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Mr Andrew Bennie

Mr James Kemp

Mr Barney Kolon

Mrs Agnes Heeps

Mrs Elma Hoggan

Mr David and Mrs Ruth Findlay

Mr David Thomson

Mr Alex Bruce

Mrs Isabella Downie

Mrs Eleanor Smith

Mrs Jessie Provan

Mr Archibald Campbell

The annual **World Day of Prayer Service** will be held at Slamannan Parish Church on Friday 7 March at 7pm.



The Holy Week Services all start at 7pm and tea and coffee are available after the services.

Monday 14 April Wallacestone Methodist

Tuesday 15 April Polmont Old

Wednesday 16 April Redding & Westquarter

Thursday 17 April Brightons (communion)

Friday 18 April Muiravonside





## Teamwork



I

read

about

the reason

migrating geese

fly in a V formation.

Each goose flapping its

wings creates an upward

lift for the goose that follows.

When all the geese do

their part, the whole flock has

a 71% greater flying range than if

each bird were to fly alone. Also when

a goose begins to lag behind, the others

“honk” it into position. The teamwork applications

here are tremendous. I am sure it is at

least 71% easier to work the teamwork way flying

in the flock than trying it alone, and it is good to

have the advantage of being moved back into position if

we stray from our goals.

That's what team work is all about!

I have always had a keen interest in poetry. When I have a spare half an hour I open a favourite book and read some old favourites.

Sometimes I discover a new gem. Recently I found this poem "Teamwork" When I read these words, I remembered a story which Alison Angus, past Guild National Convener told.

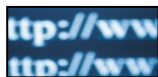
She said that during her year as Convener, she had visited many churches to promote the work of the Guild. On one occasion, she was surprised when the minister described Guild members as a gaggle of geese. Surely the minister thought that they were a group of nosy chattering women whose priority was making tea and providing tasty eats. Both Alison and the Guild members did not approve of this description but the minister had done his homework. He went on to explain that the Guild was not unlike the image of a flock of geese in flight always working as a team. He had also been impressed by the work done through the projects they support, when they raise the awareness of injustices or highlight issues which need to be addressed.

Possibly the image of a flock of geese in flight has been used by many groups as a challenging analogy but it is particularly relevant to the Guild and to the church itself.

With God's strength and guidance we too can strive to:  
fly in perfect formation  
cooperate as a team  
raise an awareness of injustices  
unite behind Godly leadership  
support and encourage one another.

I wonder if the minister had read the poem "Teamwork"?

**Lorna Coulter**



#### **Website**

Our magazines are now available on our website [www.bsandm-church.org.uk](http://www.bsandm-church.org.uk). If anyone would prefer to access them this way, instead of paper format, please let your Church Elder know.

You can also find photos, news, and the **Minister's Blog** on our website.



## Drew's view

### “Bandits” in Mallaig

Many years ago, I had a friend and colleague who came up with what must have been the best excuse ever for being late for work!

This friend was very successful in everything he did. He was one of those people who have a rare but much envied ability to attract good fortune like a magnet in every area of their life. His hobby was entering competitions. He seemed to have a gift for coming up with wonderful slogans for the products that the competitions were promoting. I recall one time he entered a competition where you were to think of a slogan for a certain bran cereal and he duly wrote:

“Goodness, gracious, great bowls of fiber!”

I’m not sure if the slogan was original though, as I’m certain I’ve seen it somewhere else!

I quickly lost count of the items he had won during the years that I had the pleasure to work with him. The prizes ranged from holidays in exotic places all over the world, right down to tickets which he won countless times, for the local cinemas and theatres. My friend was also very kind. He gave away practically all of these tickets to colleagues when an anniversary or birthday was coming up. Almost all of my colleagues, at some point, together with their wives or partners, were treated to a night out, seeing a top show in Glasgow or Edinburgh.

One time, the office ran a small raffle. He even won a prize in that as well! The solitary ticket he bought came up trumps and he was duly presented with a bottle of champagne by a bemused boss, who had bought two whole books of tickets and managed to win absolutely nothing! This rare gift extended even to his work. Anything he arranged would always go extremely well and his meticulous plans would fall effortlessly into place. It was rather like watching one of those intricate timepieces that the Swiss are so famous for! It would seem that everything he touched turned into gold and he could do no wrong. Except, that was, when he was trying to make it into work in the morning!





For some strange reason, those wonderful guardian angels who seemed to sit above him on a cloud of good fortune, deserted him early each morning when he embarked on the routine task of driving into work. It was as if they liked to have a lie-in!

On many occasions during the drive to work, a mishap would happen to my friend that would delay him, but was usually genuinely no fault of his own. Often the car would break down. On other occasions he would suddenly develop a puncture and have to change a wheel.

Sometimes the mishaps were quite spectacular. One morning on the way in, he was asked to collect some papers from an office at the docks. Unfortunately, during the night, the road he was to take had become flooded. Thinking that the water didn't look too deep, my friend drove boldly on. The car promptly spluttered to a stop and floundered in the midst of the water. We kept a log book to record the car's journeys and mileage in the glove compartment. The next day when the car was eventually rescued and towed back to the office, my boss opened the now very soggy, but still readable log book to find one very short entry for the previous day:

October 28 1990, "Sunk."

There was a really memorable occasion when my colleague phoned in to say he was having a bit of trouble with the handbrake. This turned out to be the understatement of the decade because a little later, just before ten o'clock, we heard footsteps coming up the office stairs and in he came, clutching the car's handbrake with all the wires dangling off it

Another morning, just as he was leaving his flat, he managed to drop the company mobile phone down a flight of stone stairs. This was back in the days when mobile phones were huge and even came with a carrying handle! They were mounted on a box like cradle and felt like they weighed half a ton! They were so rare that an entire company no less, would have a mobile phone, rather than an individual. Employees would share the use of it when they were going out and about!

I can imagine the clatter the phone made as it tumbled all the way down. We were soon to discover that the phone was indestructible.

My colleague telephoned from the bottom of his stairs to let us know that this was the case! He then added that he would be delayed coming in, as he was scrabbling about trying to find bits of the plastic casing that had fallen off, but promised he would glue them together!

These regular lapses into lateness tended to be overlooked because anytime they happened; he would stay on after finishing time and work for hours into the evening without ever charging the company a penny. He often paid the company back fivefold for the time that was lost.

The most spectacular delay that ever happened to him was still to come. This time my friend was exceptionally late. Nine thirty came and went. By ten, speculation was rife. What had happened this time? Was it the car? Had he slept in after being to one of these theatre shows that he won tickets for? Finally, at ten fifty five he burst through the double doors with an apologetic look on his face!

"You're never going to believe this," he said. "Try us!" we all shouted in unison.

"I wasn't able to leave the village until half past ten. There was a massive traffic jam. In fact I couldn't even drive away from the house because the streets were crowded!" (He lived in Blackness, a quiet, peaceful little village at the best of times.)

A skeptical look was mirrored on everyone's face. He continued, "There was a film crew in the village at the castle. I couldn't get moving because Mel Gibson was there and lots of people had come to try and see him! The street was totally blocked with cars, people and the film crew's lorries and I had to wait until the road cleared."

We were all in agreement. That was a good one! Probably the best excuse we'd ever heard for being late. It would be a long time before we were treated to one like that again. My friend tried to convince us. Even I didn't believe him, I'm sad to say. Until that evening. When I switched on the news. Lo and behold, there was Blackness Castle complete with a reporter telling us that Mel Gibson had been there filming scenes for the new movie "Hamlet."

I laughed, burst into a round of spontaneous applause, then rushed to phone my friend who was still at the office working to make up for the lost time. "Told you so!" he said.

My friend would never in his life have expected to encounter Mel Gibson in Blackness. His experience brought it home to me that sometimes you can encounter people or find something quite suddenly and unexpectedly in the unlikeliest of places.

In my own case, during the mid 1990s I once encountered "Bandits" in Mallaig!

Ever since I was a child there was a brand of chocolate biscuit that I just couldn't resist. It was made by a company called MacDonald's and was later taken over by McVitie's. It had a chocolate outer coating with a very crispy wafer inside which was absolutely delicious. This chocolate wafer went under the name of "Bandit" biscuits and was very popular for several decades, right up until the 1990s. Gradually though, it became more and more difficult to obtain this biscuit and I had to go further afield to find a shop that sold them. In the end, I remember searching all over central Scotland without success. I knew then I would have to resign myself to the fact that they must have just stopped making them.

After a while I gave up looking, until one glorious summer weekend I decided to spend a few days at Mallaig. I arrived in good time and had a really nice afternoon exploring the peaceful little village. The next morning, I went into the small Spar supermarket to buy a newspaper. As I was waiting in the queue, something amongst the display of biscuits for sale caught my eye. It can't be I thought... But it was!

"Bandit" biscuits!!! - And four packets of them no less!!!

Needless to say, I bought the entire stock, much to the amusement of the shopkeeper. He was thrilled when I told him that I'd searched all over Glasgow and Edinburgh, but his was the



only shop that still stocked them! I'm probably the only person who has ever brought back "Bandit" biscuits as a souvenir of a stay in Mallaig – a memento that would be rapidly consumed!

I was reminded of my colleague and how sometimes you can come across someone or something in the most unlikely of places. For me it was "Bandit" biscuits in Mallaig. For him, it was Mel Gibson in *Blackness*. It also reminded me of an encounter in the Bible that two followers of Jesus had with someone in the most unexpected of places – a meeting which ended in absolute joy.

In Luke, Chapter 24, verses 13-35, just such an encounter with Jesus is described. Two of his followers were walking along the road to a village called Emmaus. It is easy to imagine the sadness of the two men, as they walked along this long and dusty road. They were dispirited and depressed even though they had heard the wonderful news about the resurrection. They had even learned that some women from their group had visited the tomb at dawn, could find no trace of Christ's body and had come back saying they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he was alive.

In the distance they see a figure coming towards them. They probably didn't pay much heed to this solitary man who was now approaching ever closer to them. After all, they had been through a lot in the past few days. They had seen Jesus, whom they loved put to death. Even worse, when he did finally approach them, this "stranger" asked them what they were discussing, as if he had been in another world for the last three days and was the only person who didn't know about the saddest thing that had happened in their entire lives.

Like me, you are probably wondering, how on earth did they not recognise Jesus? They were grief-stricken. Convinced that Christ was dead. They didn't expect to see him on this road or anywhere else. Perhaps too he was approaching them out of the setting sun and they were blinded a bit by the tremendous glare. They were spiritually blinded as well. Their minds were closed. Even Jesus' explanation of the Scripture made no difference. The two men were not able to grasp the point of Jesus' exposition of the Word or recognise the relevance of the prophecies to his life.

Sometimes this happens to us as well. We get disappointed about something that has gone wrong. Our hopes are dashed and in our despair, we feel completely alone. Sometimes every road feels just like an Emmaus Road. We become temporarily blinded and cannot feel Jesus with us. It is very easy to feel great empathy for the two men, as most of us have probably been down a very similar road at some time.

But in the twenty first century, we have the benefit of knowing what happened next. There is some good news in store. The two disciples invited this “stranger” to stay with them as it was now beginning to get dark. Maybe there was something about him. Something that was familiar about him that ignited a small spark, although at this stage the two men still didn’t recognise him. Then Jesus sits down to eat with them, takes the bread, says the blessing; breaks the bread and gives it to them.

That’s when the wonderful thing happens. It is as if some kind of veil is lifted and for the very first time, they see.

My colleague may have encountered Mel Gibson in *Blackness*. I may have discovered “Bandits” in Mallaig. Our adventures pale into insignificance though compared with the experience of the two men walking along a quiet dusty road and meeting a “stranger.” How I wish I had been with them to share this experience, both on the initial encounter and later, when the veil was lifted and they suddenly realised who had walked along that road with them. What an incredible and joyous moment it must have been also back at Jerusalem when, “They found the eleven disciples gathered together with the others and saying The Lord is risen indeed. He has appeared to Simon” (Luke Ch24, v33-34)

My discovery of “Bandits” in Mallaig taught me never to give up searching for what you want. You will find it - and probably in a place where you never dreamt it would be. The same applies spiritually. We often encounter Jesus’ love, forgiveness and wisdom at the unlikely of times, when we don’t deserve it and in the least expected places or situations - and always when we need it most.

What a blessing that is.

### **There is something to be said about walking to church**

It reminds me of when I lived in California and did that same walk to church. In those days you had no car; it was a short walk, every one walked to church, once you reached the brow of the hill the church came into view. You knew where you were going where you would sit and the people you would meet on that walk to church.

When I lived in Maddiston I normally took the car, on days that I had the time and weather permitting I would walk. It was quite a brisk jaunt and always took longer than I had estimated. But I was always too busy, in too much of a hurry that I never took the time to take in my surroundings and never spent the time getting to know my fellow parishioners'.

These days I live in Whitecross and the walk to church, is one of the nicest walks that I take for a variety of reasons.

First of all I have time to think about where I am going and why. I have time to think out loud if I want! Also to give thanks for beauty in all that I see, I have time to appreciate the wonder of spring time, all that new growth and all the blessings they bring, On one particular walk recently the snow arrived very light and magical ! (This was March) It then became heavier and I was dancing in the snow and thought if anyone could see me now!!! Then Alistair and Alice did and came to my rescue.... Alistair was spot on when he said that the snow could make us all act like a five year old....

But the really good days are when the sun is shining, you feel the wonder of God. Not only on that walk to church but also in the church, with the sun streaming through the windows, and the singing which can give you the shivers! You feel truly blessed!

Then you have the winter which brings a drop in temperature; icy roads snow frost and strong winds, which make you, wrap up well and gives you colour in your cheeks. Yet again I love this walk



because you take all this in and you are reminded of all of the wonders the God created. So many very good people stop to offer me a lift, often I feel vexed at refusing but I truly love that walk to Church. Yet over a period of time I have realised that by walking to Church you get to know so many more people than if I taken the car.

The moral of this tale is that by not taking the car I get to know everybody and everybody gets to know me.

**Margaret Grant**  
**Muiravonside Church**

**Spring Harvest 2014**



A small group from both churches will be heading off at the start of April for 5 days to the annual Christian festival known as Spring Harvest..

We will be heading to the Butlins site at Minehead for this year's event. The theme for this year's event is " Unbelievable". Spring Harvest is hoping through this year's theme to revive in those attending the event their confidence in God, the Bible and in God's power to change people's lives. We will have the opportunity to hear from a number of leading Christian speakers and join in with the worship. It is exciting to hear new hymns and songs and we will be fortunate to have Pete James as our worship leader for the 5 days. He will be leading the praise during the main evening celebrations.

We will be going in anticipation that God and his Holy Spirit will be at work during the event to help us reflect on how we tackle some of the tough questions facing the Church and our country. It seeks to inspire us to see the unbelievable as very much believable. It is such a great time for learning and fellowship and leaves you excited at what God is doing and can do in his world with our help through the work of his Holy Spirit. If you have access to the internet please have a look at the Spring Harvest site at [www.springharvest.org](http://www.springharvest.org) and see for yourself what it is all about. You might even think about joining the group for next year.

**David McC**

## Notes from a Shieldhill Garden



*And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

I was checking my azaleas to see if they had buds because they should be bursting into flower within the next few weeks. This turned my thoughts to another plant hunter. This time the plant hunter in question not only was a Falkirk bairn, but began the link that exists today, between The Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh and with China.

George Forrest was born in Graemes Road, Falkirk on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1873 and was educated in Kilmarnock. When he left school he began work in a chemist's shop. As part of his work he made a collection of dried plants, mounted them and labeled them, as was the practice in apothecaries at that time.

He inherited a small amount of money and used this to travel to Australia to visit relatives. This was at the time of The Australian Gold Rush and he tried his hand at gold panning, returning to Scotland in 1902.

When he returned to Scotland, Forrest was employed as a clerk in the herbarium at The Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. The Regius Keeper, Sir Isaac Balfour, was so impressed by Forrest's diligence and resourcefulness that he recommended him to A.K Bulley. A.K Bulley founded Bees Seed company. He provided the funding for Forrest to make his first expedition to China's Yunnan province.

Forrest arrived in the town of Talifa in August 1904. He made an effort to learn the language and get to know the local people. He funded an inoculation programme against small pox as this disease was at epidemic levels among the indigenous people.

He was ready to begin his expedition in early 1905 and, with a team of 17 local people, he collected plants in the northern corner of Yunnan, near to the Tibetan border. While he was collecting seeds and plants from rhododendron groves, at base camp there was a Llama (warrior priests) uprising and they were attacking local people, foreigners and people who had had any dealings with foreigners. Forrest escaped, with the help of indigenous people, to Talifa.



He returned a further six times to this area of China, collecting plants, butterflies and birds. On 5<sup>th</sup> January 1932, while hunting game in the hills near Tengchong, the town where Forest usually set up his base camp, he suffered a fatal heart attack. He was buried at Tengchong.

Rhododendrons, azaleas. Lilies, primulas, buddleias, acers and asters are among the garden plants that he brought to Britain. His work in Yunnan still goes on today. For many years, staff from the Botanic Gardens have worked closely with the people of Yunnan helping with conservation work. The people in this area of China rely on plants for shelter, food and medicine. They have established the Lijiang Botanic Garden and Jade Dragon Field Station.

The Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh has its own Chinese Hillside. Since 1993 they have been creating this hillside that is south of Inverleith House and enjoys views across the city towards The Castle. It has a waterfall that tumbles into a pond, a Ting (Chinese pavilion) and a winding path that winds through beautiful plants. The Princess Royal opened this area in May 1997.

Entry to The Botanic Gardens is free - one pays to go into the greenhouses. The gardens have something to offer at all times of the year - spring bulbs, azaleas and rhododendrons, thousands of flowering plants and magnificent trees.

Without the Plant Hunters, our garden displays would be quite different.

*Rena Moore*

**THE BIG NIGHT OUT!**  
**Michael Buble and Robbie Williams**  
**7 Nov 2014**  
**The Three Kings**

### National Stewardship Programme

Here are the latest free will offerings for Blackbraes and Shieldhill:

	2012	2013
<b>October</b>	£1405	£1,424
<b>November</b>	£1,472	£1,392
<b>December</b>	£1,804	£2,346

To put these figures in perspective, we send £1,780.20 to Ministries and Mission in Edinburgh each month as our contribution to the wider work of the Church.

Thank you

**Christine Jones**

#### Daffodils



Daffodils are very special flowers,  
As they are also known as Easter Bells.  
Flowering as we come together in  
Fellowship as we remember.  
Our Lord and Saviour who,  
Died on the Cross to save us all.  
In three days time he rose again,  
Leaving death defeated in an empty tomb.  
So let every Easter Bell ring with joy.

**By Drew Robertson**

Poetry Corner

## **Bible Study Group**

Around 12 people from both churches continue to meet monthly for bible study, reflection, discussion and fellowship. We would be delighted if you would think about coming along to join us.

Do not feel you need to speak and if you would prefer to sit and listen that would be wonderful too. We start the evening with a short time of praise and then turn our time to study and reflect on different parts of the bible. We finish the evening with some supper. In recent times we have been using study guides which are DVD based and allow us to listen to the opinions of well-known Christian writers and broadcasters too.

We have just finished studying a series of 6 sessions on Hope. We looked at how hope is founded on our history and in particular on the death and resurrection of Jesus and how hope fuels our relationships with God, each other and the community around us. However the sessions took us through to the book of Revelation and where ultimately we find that our hope looks to the future and gives us a perspective on the end times and a perspective on Christ's return.

We are now following a series of studies based on the book of 1 John. The series is entitled "Get close to the Source in being, saying and doing". In this book John is concerned at how people were being led astray by false teaching and losing hope and he decides to put pen to paper to tell people then and now that it is all about Jesus. He makes it clear that he knows this because he knew Jesus and Jesus was his friend. John writes passionately and repetitively about the love of God. We are reminded that you cannot say that you love God but then act in such a way as not to love your brothers and sisters in Christ. John says that you cannot have one without the other.

The group has just started this study and we would encourage anyone interested to come along to one of the meetings. Just listen as the intimations will give the next dates or phone the Manse.

***David McClements***



## Eco Congregations

Several folk took part in the RSPB Big Garden Birdcount.




It must have been one of the wettest weekends during a very wet January and birds don't fly in the heavy rain - not even ducks. I think that the bird numbers in my garden are boosted because of my houses nearness to the bings. In the summer months, there are usually a good number of summer visitors in the bushes at the edge of the bings and a few of them add to my garden numbers during the summer months.

In the middle of January I did an early arrival at the bird food count for The British Trust of Ornithology. In my garden the blackbird was first followed closely by the robin - both before sunrise. The wood pigeon was third and then the tits and finches arrived. The starlings were last.

If you enjoyed counting your birds, you can count your garden birds every week, throughout the year with The British Trust of Ornithology' Garden Birdwatch. In two or three months time I should get a list from the RSPB of the most common birds.

Thank you all the folks who took part.

*Rena*



**FRIDAY FILM NIGHT**  
**7PM**  
**BLACKBRAES AND SHIELDHILL**  
**PARISH CHURCH**

**COMING SOON:**

<b>Matilda</b>	<b>14 March</b>
a little magic goes a long way	
<b>The Thrill of it All</b>	<b>4 April</b>
Doris Day and James Garner	