

Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Parish Church
linked with
Muiravonside Parish Church
Winter 2015



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Registered Charity
Blackbraes and Shieldhill SC 002512
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**From the Manse
November 2015**



'Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.' 1 Corinthians Ch12, v27.

Dear friends,

Church life is back into full swing now and there are lots of events and special services taking place in the lead up to Christmas. In September two of our young people were nominated to become Church of Scotland National Youth Representatives and at present are working with other young people within our Presbytery to set up a fellowship group to discuss faith issues and just hang out and enjoy each other's company. We wish them well in their year ahead and look forward to hearing from them about the work of the National Youth Assembly within our Kirk.

The Muiravonside Choral Society and Blackbraes and Shieldhill Choir are busy rehearsing for Christmas and the banner group continues to meet and welcome new members. Since the banner group began just over two years ago more than 100 prayer shawls and prayer cards have been given to members and parishioners. We also recently dedicated two new banners at the Harvest Thanksgiving service and our churches are now graced with a selection of banners all year round.

The Blackbraes and Shieldhill Guild now includes four male members and the Muiravonside Women's Group continues to meet regularly in Maddiston offering friendship and fellowship for local women. The prayer group and Bible study continue to meet and people within our Parishes are increasingly contacting Lydia our prayer co-ordinator with prayer requests. The prayer group is deeply humbled and privileged to be able to pray not just for our church communities but also for those in the wider parish. The Brownie Butterfly Garden Project is progressing and it is hoped that work on our new church garden at Blackbraes and Shieldhill should start sometime this summer.

We are blessed to have Mrs Isabelle McMillan with us for her final readership placement. Isabelle will be with us until the end of March and we are privileged to have her and look forward to learning and growing in faith together as she shares in the leading of worship and

the conduct of funerals. I know how supportive and encouraging you are to students who are placed with us and Isabelle has appreciated the warm welcome you have given her so far.

The holiday postcards which Drew designed this summer have been a huge success. Drew initially printed 40 cards and such was their popularity that they quickly ran out. If you are going on holiday please consider taking one of the postcards which includes words of blessing and friendship and details about our churches. Our cards have travelled the country far and wide from the Isle of Skye to Jerusalem! Holidays are an ideal time to enjoy worshipping in another church and also to encourage another congregation with our presence.

God is constantly calling us to be open to the creativity of his Holy Spirit which guides us to try new and exciting but sometimes challenging things. Many of our groups began with someone coming to myself with an idea. Do you have an idea which could bless our church family and parish? Is there something you could offer to our church which would benefit those in need? No matter how small and insignificant you may feel your idea is, please share it with me or share it with your elder or another member. We could never have envisaged how far reaching the ministry has been in relation to the prayer group, banner group and the Muiravonside Choral Society. They all began with an idea which God placed in someone's heart, just waiting to be encouraged and realised at just the right time within the life of our churches.

God is a God of creativity, fresh vision, new challenges and adventures. He calls us not to remain static but to continue to explore new and fresh ways of serving him and sharing the good news of Jesus with others. I encourage you to take the plunge and dare to share the idea, dream, vision that God has placed within your heart. At the end of the day we don't do it for us, we do it for him, so that others may know something more of God's love for them so perfectly manifested through the life and ministry, dying and rising of our Lord Jesus Christ.

***Wishing you a peaceful Christmas,
your minister and friend,
Louise***

Baptisms

***'Whoever welcomes a little child
like this in my name, welcomes me.'***

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Keira Tina Olsson Power
infant daughter of Benjamin and Tina
Power on 16th August 2015

Lily-Rose Sarah Templeman
infant daughter of Richard and Kelly
Templeman on 4th October 2015

Muiravonside

Struan James George Bicker
infant son of Angus and Lisa Bicker
on 10th May 2015

Lexi Snedden
infant daughter of Mark and Kirsty
Snedden on 2nd August 2015

Evan Taylor Ramage
infant son of Steven and Alison
Ramage on 9th August 2015

Weddings

***'Meanwhile these three remain - faith,
hope and love. But the greatest of
these is love.'***

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Carol Penman and David Burden
on 1st August 2015

Funerals

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

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Mr Frank Merritt

Miss Mary Forbes

Mr Thomas Donoghue

Mrs Linda Thomson

Mrs Agnes McPhee

Mrs Betty Lewis

Mr John Grant

Muiravonside Parish

Mrs Mary Patterson

Mrs Valerie McMullin

Mrs Sandra McCallion

Miss Jackie Osborne

Mr Andrew Grant

Mr Steven Jack

Mrs Maisie Corbett

Mr Robert McClelland

Mrs Daisy Ainslie



South Africa Link



Dear Friends,

July 2015

Well, retirement has set in but not much has changed except that Graham has redefined this stage in life as 'two days pay for seven days work'. At the university, he continues with research and supervision. Most of his students are Zimbabwean ministers from various denominations, who are investigating aspects of the growth of Christianity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries against the background of African Traditional Religion. One of his students is the first lady bishop in the Anglican Church of South Africa, Ellinah Wamukoya, Bishop of Swaziland. Apart from her diocesan commitments, she travels widely and communication takes place over continents. She will graduate with her Master's degree in October. She has achieved a great deal this year, especially coping with the sudden death of her son.

Work with the Council on Higher Education (CHE) continues and has involved a bit of travel, with visits to Cape Town, Bloemfontein and Polokwane, though most are in Gauteng which means no overnights. These involve site visits to theological, business and IT colleges to verify that they are offering what they claim in their applications for reaccreditation. He has also become part of a group which is studying theological colleges and their relationships with other institutions. Their report may be presented to the Minister of Higher Education for consideration and possible implementation. All of this works towards an improvement in the education system which in the past twenty-one years has had to unify and consolidate three different education systems in South Africa.

Then, he has become part of the National Research Foundation's (NRF) Specialist Committee in Theology and Religion. The group has three members and works with applications from theologians and religious studies experts who apply to be rated by the NRF. It involves selecting expert reviewers from around the world and scoring their reviews in order to come to a rating. The process takes around nine months.

Work in the congregation at Highveld continues. The Presbytery appointment came to an end, according to the regulations, and the supervising congregation appointed Graham to continue as before. In the past year we have lost three of our six elders so the remaining three have to undertake more worship and pastoral duties while we consider new elders. Graham is still working at St Andrew's Pretoria, too. He took the Easter services, the Tenebrae service on the evening of Holy Thursday, the Good Friday morning service and the Easter Day Communion. Our minister, Zwai Mthyobile, was conducting a worship workshop in Venda in the far north in Limpopo Province that weekend and his responsibilities at Khayakhulu, in the North West Province, were undertaken by one of our ministers without charge. We have also been involved in a project at St Andrew's to provide school shoes for children at a village in Venda, a very poor area of the country. A simple thing like this gives dignity to children who have so little going for them. We have also been working to provide blankets for the homeless and refugees in Pretoria. The winter here is fiercely cold for them.



Many of you may well remember Shupi, the Zimbabwean lady that we have often assisted over the years. A brief reminder: she was left with 9 children from her siblings to raise and educate as her siblings and their spouses all died of AIDS-related illness. They were one of the lucky families as they had an adult to look after them. But then further disaster struck a few years ago when Shupi only in her late 30's had a massive stroke and was left totally paralysed and unable to speak. With the help of friends in the Eastern Cape, Adamson and Rebecca Mxekezo, and donations received from SA Link, we were able to help her a great deal and even get her some physiotherapy. Then she disappeared and for some time we had no idea what had happened to her? It transpired that she was taken back to Zimbabwe because there was no income apart from the donations from SA Link and it wasn't enough to sustain her and the children who were living

with her. We have now for the past few months been able to make contact with her again through one of her nephews. He is a young man in his teenage years and he came to SA to try to find work to assist the family. He contacted us and stayed a bit with us until he was settled and we were able through him to find out how Shupi was doing. Apparently the oldest nephew of Shupi, the one who was to become the breadwinner, has ended up in a mental institution and so now this second son of Timothy, Shupi's deceased brother, has now to take over as breadwinner. They have been surviving by the younger children going around hotels and restaurant yards, rummaging in their bins for food! Apparently it is such a dangerous occupation as there are many fights over the swill and he told us that people have been badly injured and even killed!

The up-side of this sad story is that we are now in contact again. Shupi is making a wonderful recovery from sheer determination. She now walks, her speech has a long way still to go, probably because of the lack of a speech therapist to help her? But, although she might not be able to work again, she has been able to take control of the household. We are hoping to be able to send her enough funds in the future to pick up educating the youngsters again as the better qualified they get the better chance of work that will bring in an income to feed all of the family.

How people manage to survive with so little is a miracle for us. When Graham retired last June we were so worried about how we would survive. But being faced with people like Shupi and her family who have nothing compared to us has given us a new and fresh perspective on our situation and has taught us to be thankful for what we do have instead of bemoaning what we don't have and to trust in God who will always provide opportunities. Most of all we are thankful for our good health as we remember the struggle she is constantly battling with on top of keeping her family together and fed.

On behalf of Shupi and her family we want to thank all of you involved in SA Link for your constant prayers, and caring enough to share what you have with those less fortunate and with your contributions we will continue to support them as best we can.

Lots of love!
Sandra and Graham



The Shieldhill Butterfly Project (SBP) has had a very busy, interesting, challenging and successful year. Thanks to the support and commitment of the SBP committee, the 1st Shieldhill Brownies, Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church, the local community, local businesses, Falkirk Environmental Trust and the CVS, we are well on the way to making the project a success, cumulating in a very beautiful church garden for community use; hopefully within the next twelve months.

The Brownies were given a challenge to help Gerry Moore design our logo, which will be integrated into the entrance gates. Drew Robertson has created our web site behind the church one and keeps it up to date as information is sent to him. <http://www.bsandm-church.org.uk>. Elaine McDiarmid set up our e-mail address sbutterflyproject@gmail.com

Vialii were the successful garden design company. The final designs can be viewed on our website and the church/community notice board. Michael Burt has been very helpful, positive and supportive of our project, working well with myself and the committee. Resolutions



Bag packing at Tescos, Redding

Ground Maintenance Ltd were the successful landscape company. Robert Arbuckle has been amazingly generous in agreeing to donate the labour costs, in support of our project. A L Gordon were chosen to manufacture the main entrance gates on Anderson Crescent, which will make an important first impression for what lies beyond.

The 1st Shieldhill Brownies have been hard at work, fundraising over £5,000 from coffee mornings, sponsored walks and bag packing to name but a few of their efforts. To date, we have received grants from Falkirk Environmental Trust (FET), Falkirk Council, Young Grow Wild Scotland and The Church of Scotland Guild.

Donations have been received from Grant Heeps (boundary fence), Klondyke Garden Centre (planting plan), Alan Churchill, Community Pay Back Scheme (cut back existing hedgerow and clear “rubble”), Avondale Environmental Ltd, 1st Shieldhill Rainbows and Guides, again to name but a few; financial or in kind.

What’s next for 2015 ~ 2016?

1st Shieldhill Brownies are excited about having a garden for play/ badge work/pitching tents etc and will fundraise throughout the next twelve months. Coming up to Christmas, why not shop on line via Easyfundraising (registration required, but no bank account details) and donate for free to 1st Shieldhill Brownie unit. The SBP committee are organising a tribute night (details tbc) and are looking for any old, broken, no longer required Gold for their “pot of gold” which is available on a Sunday morning or can be donated to any member of the SBP. All gold received will be taken to an appropriate dealer and sold for the best price at the time.

Additional details can be found on our web site and further information requested via e-mail.

My sincere thanks to everyone who has been, is, and will be involved in making our garden project a lovely, safe place for the whole community to enjoy.

Elaine McDiarmid
Chairperson



Sponsored Walk to Linlithgow

Christmas Boxes.

When I was working each Christmas my school made Christmas Boxes. These boxes, each one was a shoebox, was covered in Christmas paper and was filled with things that children would need. Our local Baptist Church minister had put us in touch with The Samaritan's Purse and it was this charity that we supported. The number of boxes that our school filled amounted to several hundred over the years. Filling a box became one of my family's Christmas things.

It makes no difference which charity runs a Christmas Box campaign; these boxes are always given to some of the poorest people. Usually the boxes are sent to Eastern Europe and parts of Asia.

These boxes are accepted with great joy as the contents make a difference to that person and show the love that has been sent over the miles to that family.

The ladies of the banner group knit wee jumpers for The Blytheswood Trust and it is usually my job to deliver bags of these jumpers to The Blytheswood Trust van. From August to November I have seen cars delivering Christmas Boxes to the van; and so I knew that they ran a Christmas Box campaign. At Heart and Sole this year I met the box organiser for this campaign and she gave me a copy of her DVD and her business card because she will speak to groups such as The Guild or to churches.

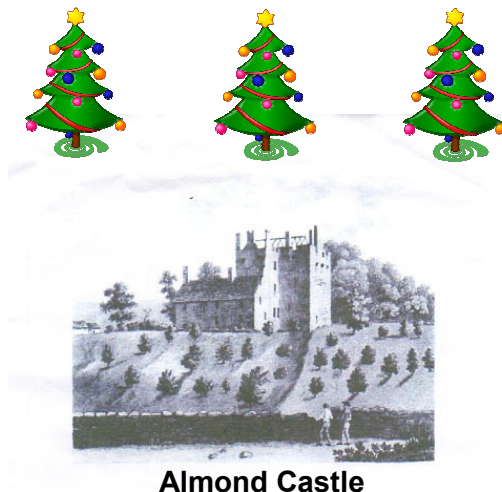
I thought that this is something that we could do. With the ladies of the banner group, I decided to organise Christmas Boxes. I think that we will have eleven or twelve full boxes by the time I have to take them to the van. In addition, there are lots of bits and pieces that can go to fill other boxes either in Denny Westpark Church; there is a collection and checking point there; or in the warehouse in Hillington; the collection point for all the Blytheswood Trust boxes.

This has been achieved with the help of people from both congregations and the boxes would not have been filled without them. The help has come in the form of stationery, soap, toothpaste and brushes, combs and socks and t-shirts to name some of the stuff. The knitters in the banner group have provided hats, scarves and teddies.

Some people have handed in full boxes and my grateful thanks to each and every one you. Without you no boxes would be filled.

I will deliver our boxes to the van on Wednesday 4th November and I am helping the folks at Denny Westpark Church on 13th November. That will be the end of Christmas Boxes for this year.

Rena



Almond Castle

Almond Castle is situated about 3 miles west of Linlithgow, just north of the Union Castle, within the grounds of a factory. It is also known as Haining Castle or The Haining.

A courtyard with a wall and ditch encloses the remains of ranges of buildings added in the 16th century. It was the property of the Crawfords who built the castle in around 1470 but passed on to the Livingstones in 1540. They changed the name from Haining to Almond in 1633 when James 3rd son of the Earl of Linlithgow was created Baron Livingstone of Almond. It was forfeited by the Livingstone Earl of Callendar in 1716 after the Jacobite Rising, and the castle was abandoned in the 1750s.

I have put this in the newsletter, as I think it brings to light the early days, and is a bit of local history within the parish, and I'm sure it will interest many in Shieldhill also. Hope you all enjoy reading it.

Andrew McDermott

Notes From a Shieldhill Garden



Galatians 6:7. Do not deceive yourselves: No one makes a fool of God. People will reap exactly what they sow.

As I potter around this garden, I often turn these words over in my head. They often make me think about the changes that I am meeting in the species that visit my garden. The lesson is that there is no cheating. What goes around comes around; one may as well get it right first time. This applies particularly in the garden, as there can be no cheating when trying to grow plants. Plants do not respond well to shortcuts and missing out one of those growing steps usually can cause that plant to fail to flourish.

Seeds are sown in the springtime. They are sown in the correct compost, potted on, hardened off and then planted out in the garden. With fertile soil and moisture, the plants will grow. They need to be checked every day until the plants are established and, only then, the level of care can be a bit less. These instructions are usually missing from 'How to Garden' books and is certainly missing from the back of any seed packet.

A garden cannot be without a gardener. This garden works as a whole, the different areas working together to provide, hopefully, some haven for wildlife.

This year with its cold Spring and wet Summer this garden had no butterflies-even the cabbage white variety was missing - and the buzz of bees was not heard until the sunny few days that we had in September. Of course, in order to have bees and butterflies in the garden, some of the plants that they enjoy have to be there. The size of your garden doesn't matter, as a flowering plant added to a window box will attract visitors.

Whenever you dig over a border or plant out some plants, you will have an affect on that piece of land. I am writing this on 19th September and this afternoon when I dug a bit of ground in preparation for the sowing of some green manure seed. I had just stepped aside and the garden robin flew in and collected grubs that I had turned over. Weeding over a flowerbed or digging the vegetable

bed will usually attract a robin, as they like to pick over the grubs that turn up. During frosty weather, turning over a spade full of soil will provide food for the insect eating birds such as the robin.

Spring flowers are an important food source for early bees and butterflies. Generally speaking, single blooms are better than double - bloomed varieties and "flat" blooms are better for butterflies. Some of the plants that are for sale in garden centres are labeled with bee and butterfly friendly labels.

Soil is magic stuff and the majority of plants need soil in order to grow. In Shieldhill the subsoil is clay and so the topsoil consists of silt, humus and worms, larvae and many hundreds of things that the naked eye can't see. There will be more life living in the soil that is in a flower/vegetable bed or under the lawn than will be under a paved driveway or under the street.

There is the big magic that is the compost heap/bin etc. Peelings, tea bags, coffee grounds and annual weeds - before they are flowering - all go into the compost bin and magically turns into a soil like mix that can be added into the garden. This enriches the soil and makes it a more fertile place for plants to grow. Worms and slugs along with a multitude of microbes work together to make this magic stuff.

We are here to care for God's wonderful planet, to help support its diversity. It has taken a good number of years to enable me say that my garden is organic. The quest is still on to be 'peat free'. That is a story for another day.



Happy Gardening.

Rena



**Our Nativity is on
20 December at 10am**



Poetry Corner

Christmas in November

We may be still in early November,
but each Christmas light glows like an ember.
You'd think mid December had come around,
all over Falkirk coloured lights abound.
Santa, reindeer and gifts - all this choice,
soon we'll have carol singers in full voice!

There's no escape even on the box,
ads rivalling epic films for all your chocs.
Celebrities endorse, your custom to attract,
every one of them seems to be in the act.
Who will be first a Christmas card to send,
although November is still not at an end?

But I finally saw in a shop the other day,
the true meaning of Christmas on display.
A nativity scene with manger and stable,
taking pride of place on an ornate table.
In this month just before the Christmas fest,
may I be the first to wish you all the best!

By Drew Robertson



I have a little GPS
I've had it all my life,
It's better than the normal ones,
My GPS is my wife.
It gives me full instructions
especially how to drive
'It's sixty k's an hour', it says
'You are doing sixty five.'

It tells me when to stop and start
and when to use the brake
and tells me that it's never ever
safe to overtake.

It tells me when a light is red
and when it goes to green
it seems to know instinctively
just when to intervene.

It lists the vehicles just in front
and all those to the rear
and taking this into account
it specifies my gear.
I'm sure no other driver
has so helpful a device
for when we leave and lock the car
it still gives its advice,

It fills me up with counselling
each journey's pretty fraught
so why don't I exchange it
and get a quieter sort?
Ah well, you see, it cleans the house,
makes sure I'm properly fed,
it washes all my shirts and things,
and – let's me have a shed.

Despite all these advantages,
and my tendency to scoff,
I do wish that once in a while
I could turn that damned thing off!!!

Submitted by Etta Napier



Poetry Corner



Poetry Corner

This poem was written by Robert (Rab) Reid who was a prolific writer of poetry in the dialect shown. He was one of 10 brothers and two sisters who hailed from Bainsford. The family have all long since passed away except for my 97 year old mother and uncle Rab's son Michael. The words, although written many years ago, are very reflective of this day and age.

Moir Sharp

Chasin Rainbows

Ahve' been chasin a Rainbow
Syne the day ah' wis born
When ma feet they wur bare
An' ma breeks they wur torn

Ahve' chased it in Childhood
Ahve' chased it in Man
Bit ah' jist cannie catch it
Try as haurd is ah' can

Thers' things in this life
Thit ah' jist cannie cope
Ah' see that auld Rainbow
An' ken thurs still hope

Ahve' watched that auld Rainbow
Is it crossed owre' the sky
Ah see its brow colours
Then gie' a bit sigh

Some day that auld Rainbow
Ahll' manage tae hold
Then ahll' look it the fit
Fur the Big Pot O' Gold

Whit tae dae wi' that Gold
Noo ahm' no a' that shair
Fur tae tell ye the truth
Ahd' sunet be Pair

By Rab Reid

The Moosie's Prayer

A puir wee kirk moose aa' forlorn
Its furry coat fair sairly worn
Sank doon upon it's bony knees
And prayed - for just a wee bit cheese.
The tears ran doon its wee thin cheeks
But nane could hear the saddest squeaks
That drifted on the cauld night air
Till whiles it couldnae pray nae mair.

Syne daylight cam, the Kirk bells rang
The doors swung open wi' a bang.
Communion day had come oan by
Wi wine and plates o' breid filled high.
The wee moose lay as still as daith
And watched it aa' wi bated breith.
Then thocht "If I keep awfu quate
A bit might just fa' aff a plate."

And so it gazed as roond they went
Then just as tho' twas heaven sent
Whit landed richt upon its heid
But twa lumps o' communion breid.
The staff o' life lay on the flair
Then, bounteous answer tae his prayer,
Juist as he thought "It looks fell dry"
Ae body coupd some wine forbye.

Wee mousie stated up the aisle
Wearing sic a boozy smile
The folk stopped singing, fair aghast
Tae see a drunken moose walk past.
The organist fell aff his chair
The meenister could only stare
Tae see this drunken, sinfu' moose
Cavorting in his sacred hoose.



At last it staggered up the nave
Then turned an gied a happy wave
"I ken noo when it's time tp pray,
I'll dae it on communion day!"

Submitted by Rita Braes



Guild



The Guild always looks to the future and identifies any situation which might cause a problem or provide a challenge.

A few years ago, the small island of Malta recognised that they were facing difficulties as many people fleeing from war torn countries in Africa were landing on their shores. In 2012 the Guild chose as one of its 3-year partnership projects Out of Africa into Malta, a charity helping those arriving in Malta, refugees who had lost everything to people traffickers, the desert or the sea. The Guild raised money to help build a refugee centre in St Andrews Scots church in Valetta where the refugees could find rest, be given food and advice. In two years, some refugees leaving the centre were able to benefit when they were given micro finance loans to set up small businesses and attend college courses. These loans have all been repaid and the money is passed on so that others can benefit. The problem of refugees fleeing from Africa reached a peak this summer and many other islands are facing difficulties with the numbers arriving on their shores. The Guild has been able to help in a small way and is still helping on Malta.

At the Annual Gathering in Dundee, six new partnership projects were chosen for 2015 - 2018 and presented at the meeting by their representatives. They are as follows.

Street Pastors (Ascension Trust) Guild money will help deliver training programmes in more innovative ways. Street Pastors operate in Falkirk on Saturday nights. They listen, help and care.

Breaking the Cycle of FGM (Feed the Minds) Guild support is needed to empower women and girls in Kenya to fight the horrendous practice of female genital mutilation so that they can stay at school and have better opportunities in life.

All friends Together (Prospects) The groups are known as Friends of Jesus. Guild money will help to set up more groups and promote the inclusion and contribution of people with learning difficulties in church life.

Caring for Mother Earth (Christian Aid) This year marks the 70th anniversary of Christian Aid. The Guild will be working with Christian Aid Scotland and the church of Scotland in Bolivia bringing more awareness to communities of climate change. Families will be taught how to use solar powered ovens which will make life much easier for them.

Let's Stick Together (Care for the Family) In society today families are of various shapes and sizes. The cost of family breakdown is estimated at £42bn per year, mainly occurring during the early years of parenthood. With the support of volunteers Guild money will help thousands of families in communities across Scotland stay together.

Haiti Project (Mission International) This project was featured at a recent Guild Project meeting. The island although it shares a border with the prosperous Dominican Republic, is the poorest country in the west. On 12 January 2010, an earthquake, which only lasted a few minutes left 200 000 dead and more than a million homeless. The world moved on and their situation did not make news any more but living in Haiti is still very difficult five years on. People there live on \$1 daily and only 48% of the population can read and write. They are sorely in the need of help.

Mission International is a small Christian charity based in Dundee, begun in 2006, their one goal being to be ambassadors of the poor. Working with the local church, the Guild hope to build a new multipurpose facility for the people in the town of Quanaaminthe - a town in Haiti. As well as being a church sanctuary, the building will be a school for 250 children and a community centre. Lives can be changed. The children can benefit from education which is taken for granted in our country. Hopefully Haiti will be a better place to live for future generations and the cycle of poverty can be broken.

The final total for the projects 2012-2015 is £775,076.90. Since the beginning of the new six project model, £4,000,000 has been raised by the Church of Scotland Guild. These are incredible totals. This organisation has made life better for many both in this country and further afield.

Lorna Coulter



Safeguarding



Safeguarding is about protecting children and adults at risk, both in or known to Church Congregations. We have a duty to ensure a safe Church for all.

Abuse is incompatible with our Christian values and is never excusable. The Church's first safeguarding priority is to prevent abuse where possible. Harm or abuse cannot be eliminated, but the Church's safeguarding structures demonstrate that we will minimise the risk of harm occurring. If harm or abuse occurs, with appropriate support and training, it will be recognised and reported. Appropriate and timely action will be taken. This includes working with the police and social work services where appropriate.

The Safeguarding Coordinator

All Kirk Sessions must appoint a Safeguarding Coordinator. Your Safeguarding Coordinators are:

Sandra Allison for Muiravonside

Yvonne Elder for Blackbraes and Shieldhill

The Safeguarding Coordinator is appointed to act on behalf of (not instead of) their Kirk Session, to help to ensure that the instructions, recommendations and legislation relating to safeguarding practice in the Church are implemented.

The Safeguarding Coordinator will receive reports of any witnessed, suspected or reported harm or abuse of children or adults at risk.

If you suspect or witness harm or abuse, or it is reported to you, you must immediately report it to your Safeguarding Coordinator. Trust your intuition or gut feeling about the person or the situation – if it looks or feels wrong then it probably is. Your concerns or suspicions will be sensitively and appropriately investigated. We would much rather that you spoke to your Safeguarding Coordinator if you are not sure about something rather than wait until you're absolutely sure. Not sharing a concern may result in the suspected abuse continuing – sometimes indefinitely – with all the consequent damage that this entails for the person affected.

The Safeguarding Panel

Every congregation must have a Safeguarding Panel, made up of at least three people. The Safeguarding Panel will support the Safeguarding Coordinator with the safe recruitment of volunteers to work with children or adult at risk in the congregation.

They also ensure that procedures are followed and records maintained to the satisfaction of the Presbytery.

Blackbraes and Shieldhill are looking for a fourth Safeguarding Panel member – training is available to equip you with the knowledge and skills for this role. If you are interested in joining or have any questions, please speak to Louise or Yvonne.

Guild Diary	
15 -22 November	Guild Week
2 December	Ivy Blair - Prospects
5 December	Panto
9 December	Christmas Party
13 January	National Youth Assembly Sophie, Victoria and friends
27 January	The Potato Man John Marshall
17 February	Salvation Army 150 Margaret Ross
2 March	Old Falkirk High Street John Reid
9 March	Folk Night Ian Scott and friends



- ✓ DO YOU LIKE TO TRY NEW AND EXITING ACTIVITIES?
- ✓ ARE YOU AGED 7 (OR NEARLY) TO 10 YEARS OLD?
- ✓ DO YOU LIKE TO HAVE FUN AND PLAY GAMES?
- ✓ WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS?



- ✓ DO YOU ENJOY A CHALLENGE?

Contact; Elaine (Brownie Guider)

Mobile; 07789023616

E-mail; 1stshieldhillbrownies@gmail.com



Brownies have been busy working on their interest badges and have achieved their badges to a very high standard (Speaker, Swimmer, Dancer, Friend to Animals, Hobbies, Artist, to name just a few); they certainly have lived up to their motto ~ "Brownies Do Their Best".

In February, to celebrate World Thinking Day, each Brownie brought in a food from a different country, which they were able to try. Some foods were tried for the first time and liked, while some were clearly disliked; their facial expressions were quite funny.

As part of our sleepover in the church hall, we all went on a 'badger watch' to Muiravonside Country Park. Much to the delight of the Brownies, after patiently waiting for a long time, they saw a badger feed on the peanuts the Park Ranger had left out for them. The chocolate fountain was also great fun and very, very messy.

Our summer trip was to Lochore Meadows Country Park in Fife, where, unfortunately the weather was wet, windy and not so warm. That said we did some pond dipping, enjoyed the adventure playground and even went for a paddle ... it was CHILLY!!!

Our Christmas trip this year, by tram from Ingliston, is into Edinburgh's Winter Wonderland for ice-skating, other attractions and food. We are also Carol singing at FVRH Larbert to raise funds for the Shieldhill Butterfly Project.

So, what for 2016 you might ask?

Well we have a weekend pack holiday to PGL Dalguise in the Easter holidays, lots more fundraising activities, new Brownies to welcome in January, baking, visit to the Time Capsule, Coatbridge, interest badges to work towards and lots more exciting activities and challenges for you to enjoy.



Pond dipping



Brownies have fun!



Chocolate fountain
for our sleepover



At the country park

A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, September 2015

Both Louise and I had a wonderful experience in the Holy Land in September on a Pilgrimage with McCabe Pilgrimages led by Rev. Iain Paton and his wife Marjorie. It was not only fascinating but truly inspirational with many very holy moments.

We were fortunate in being assigned a first class guide whose knowledge of all religions, biblical places and historical events seemed limitless. For the first few days we were based in Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. While there we were able to visit Capernaum, Nazareth, Cana and Mount Tabor considered to be the place of Jesus' transfiguration. We were led to places believed to be where Jesus performed some of his miracles and preached "the Sermon on the Mount". Louise led a Communion Service at the lakeside which the whole group found very moving as we were reputed to be in the area where Jesus performed the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. At a nearby kibbutz I was able to sample "Peter's Fish" which is a typical catch from Galilee. I enjoyed it but as its eyes and fins were still there in front of us Louise decided to give it a pass!

Both of us found the visit to Capernaum particularly moving and symbolic. There has been significant excavations so one can see the large synagogue towering over Peter's house in which Jesus would have stayed and the domus ecclesiae of the early Christian converts. It was truly a special place where you really felt you were walking in the footsteps of Christ and the first apostles.

On leaving Galilee we travelled through part of the Palestinian West Bank and on our way visited Jayyous. This had been the Guild project from 2009-2012 and it was really good to see that the project is going from strength to strength and supporting the Palestinian community and particularly the young children. It was most striking to see how impoverished the Palestinians are compared to those in the more Israeli dominated towns. We saw at first hand how the gross injustice breeds resentment and ultimately drives the Palestinians to violence as they are treated as second class citizens.

For the rest of our trip we were based in Jerusalem at St Andrews Guest House which is attached to the Church of Scotland of the same name. While there we ventured out of the city to Bethlehem, the

baptismal site at the River Jordan, Masada, where Herod the Great built his desert fortress but we were able to take the cable car! In temperatures over 100 degrees we also visited the site at Qumran where a shepherd boy by accident found the Dead Sea Scrolls and went on to the Dead Sea, the lowest point on the surface of the earth. Many of us took the chance to float in the water. The salt concentration is over 60% and you CANNOT sink and it was a definitely a most strange feeling as you lay there.

We spent a couple of days in and around Jerusalem and the old city. Jerusalem is such a divided city where there is tension simmering below the surface all the time and we saw during our visit how it can quickly erupt when one group challenges another. On our visit to the Temple Mount where the old temple stood and now stands the golden Dome of the Rock one of Islam's three most holy places we were ushered off as a group of Jews clashed with some Moslem worshippers. We also visited a number of churches many of which are decorated in the Eastern Orthodox tradition with lots of icons.

The sight of the Orthodox Jews at the western or wailing wall was quite challenging for many in our group as it separated men and women who were required to worship at different parts of the wall. It is the most holy place for Jews as the wall represents all that is left of the old Temple and the Holy of Holies which was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD. We also spent time in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which one tradition claims was the site of the crucifixion and the resurrection. However I found the site of the garden tomb next to the Place of the Skull more moving and symbolic as it was much more how I would have thought the place would have been in Jesus' time. This is regarded as an alternative site from another tradition for the place of resurrection.

However I think the 2 places which meant most to us in Jerusalem were Gethsemane and the environs of the ruins of Caiphas the High Priest's palace. In the garden we reflected on the isolation of Jesus as he faced his trial and death and were surrounded by ancient olive trees some of which could be 2000 years old. And we



Gethsemane

stood on the uncovered Roman road on which Jesus would have walked from Gethsemane to his audience before Caiphas. This was truly a most spiritual experience.



At St Andrews, Jerusalem

I have only touched on a few aspects of our pilgrimage and it will remain a pilgrimage which we will never forget. I finish with the thought our guide Oliver Miller left us with. He said that he hoped that Christians would visit the Holy Land whenever they could and also remember those Christians living there because they are threatened there by many. We cannot presume that with all that is happening in that part of the world that the objects and sites which are of the utmost importance to our Christian heritage will always remain. So I would urge you to pray for the Holy Land and those Christians who live there for their protection and for courage to speak of their faith in difficult situations and to consider a visit yourself at some time.

David McClements

Dear Friends

I would like to express my thanks to everyone at Blackbraes and Shieldhill, and Muiravonside Churches for the warm welcome and encouragement that I received when I started my placement at the beginning of October.



Training for Readership includes: A six-month assessment placement, followed by two six-month training placements, five residential conferences and three years academic study. Having completed everything else I am now at the final stage of my journey as this is my last placement before I am hopefully 'set apart' next year. I am looking forward to learning from Louise all that she has to offer, and hope too that I may be able to be of service.

Over the next few months I hope to get to know you all better.

God bless.

Isabelle McMillan



Drew's
view

Hi Everybody,

I decided to do something a bit different this time and have written another story with fictional characters. However, the events described could actually happen when God's love is involved! Have a nice Christmas when it comes.

Blessings from Drew.

Love is Patient... Love is Kind

The advert was on page twenty of "Life and Work." Steve Wilson almost missed it as he quickly skimmed through the pages over a cup of coffee, sometimes turning over two pages at a time. There was a photo of a very grand building which looked like a restored castle that was perhaps now a hotel. What caught his eye was that the picturesque turrets and surrounding grounds were covered in a frosting of snow, giving the place a really seasonal feel which was very apt, as it was only a week to go until Christmas. In the background, there was a long stretch of water which was unmistakably Loch Ness.

The "hotel" was actually a new Christian Retreat Centre which had been set up a few months ago by one of the companies that run all the major Christian get togethers in Britain. Steve had been to a few of their events and from experience knew that they hired the very best speakers.

The castle looked absolutely idyllic. Some of the happiest times during his childhood had been spent fishing on Loch Ness with his father. It was such a contrast to his life just now, fraught with problems at work, as well as increasing worries about his future. Gazing for a long time at the picture, he thought if there ever was a place he would "retreat" to, it would be there. The area held lots of good memories of times when things were so much better.

Steve looked at the dates of the next session - lunchtime on December 21st until late morning 23rd. Approximately 48 hours. That was fine as he had already finished up for Christmas and was making use of extra holidays that still had to be used up. The main theme they were going to examine was "The Meaning of Christmas," with lots of speakers and plenty of Christmas carols thrown in! But what clinched it for him, was that on the second day, there was going to be a short break from the Christmas theme. Instead, they would be examining his favourite passage of Scripture from 1st Corinthians 13 - the one about love being the most precious of God's gifts to his people starting with the sentence, "Love is patient, love is kind."

This little piece of Scripture had helped him so many times. It had comforted him when he was sad. He had also rejoiced in these words when things were going well. Often, when he had been on the verge of simply just giving up, he would turn to this passage and find the resolve to go on.

Now, he was going to have a chance to find out more about it at a place he loved and which had so many associations with the past. What a nice lead up to Christmas! Without any hesitation, he phoned the number in the ad and was delighted to find that there were still one or two places available.

Just for fun and probably as an ice breaker more than anything else, the company gave each guest the option of sending a small photo of themselves which would be put up on a large board in the reception room. It was just so that people could put a name to a face, so to speak, as they were getting to know each other. This wasn't compulsory, but Steve didn't mind and sent one off!

December 21st dawned crisp, cold and frosty but with a pale wan winter sunshine that somehow made you forget all about the cold. It bathed the frozen fields trees and mountains in a subtle background light making them look rather like a delicate oil painting. Steve loved this type of weather and made good time as he left central Scotland behind.

He had packed his small tape recorder, as he found it very handy in conferences and could play back all the important points he'd forgotten. So far, no one had ever objected to him taping them and he always asked their permission. He arrived at the Retreat Castle just before noon. To his delight, the frosting of snow was all around the grounds and the loch was cornflower blue in the distance.

Steve soon got signed in at reception and was taken to a grand reception room with a large open fire and extremely comfortable leather sofas. It was very tastefully decorated for Christmas with a huge tree, lots of tinsel everywhere and a manger scene which had beautiful hand crafted figures.

He immediately spotted the board with the pictures of the guests and their names written below. Curiosity made him walk over and scan through the faces which all looked cheery as if they had been looking forward to the prospect of the retreat as much as he was.

He didn't know any of the people of course, but for some reason his eyes kept returning to the photo of a lady who had medium length chestnut brown hair and a lovely smile. It said her name was Annabelle Colquhoun. The strangest part was that each time he looked at her face which still didn't hold any recognition for him, he heard a woman's voice reading the passage from

1st Corinthians. It wasn't a mature voice though, like this lady would have. Instead, it was the voice of a young woman, probably in her teens and she was reading it beautifully - almost angelically.

Steve gazed at the photo for a long time, but still couldn't say if he'd met her before. There was something in a misty corner of his mind about the name - Annabelle. Once more, he heard the young voice. Intrigued, he made mental note to look out for her when she arrived. In fact, more people were arriving at this very moment.

She was one of the last people to turn up and was gazing at the board with the photos as well. Then she turned round and the mist cleared. She wasn't Annabelle Colquhoun back then, just Anna! She must have thought "Annabelle" was too long or too grand and she was known as Anna! - Anna Morten! Back then, she had long blond hair. That was what had thrown him. The last time he had seen her was almost exactly thirty years ago at University!

She spotted him immediately, hesitated for a moment, then came over. Her first words to him were:

"You know I'm sure I've seen you somewhere before." Then recognition dawned.

"Steve...Is it really you? Oh dear, I'm so sorry, of course it is. It's so nice to see you again. The last time I saw you was at a service in the University Chaplaincy. All those years ago! I did quite a few readings there!"

The young voice in his mind reading from 1st Corinthians. "Of course!" Steve thought. It was her! He could now picture her as she was back then. She was so relaxed. Not in the least bit nervous. And wow, how she had read it!

Steve told her so and she looked genuinely touched. He recalled too that although they knew of each other, they were studying different subjects and their paths had hardly ever crossed except at the weekly Chaplaincy Service. Their conversation turned back to the present and work. Steve asked her what she did for a living.

"Promise me you won't laugh when I tell you."

"I'll try not to. Is it really that bad?"

Steve tried to think of some of the more way-out professions he had seen on programmes such as "Britain's Funniest Jobs" and waited to see what she

would say. "I must steel myself not to laugh," he thought and of course, this almost made him laugh out loud before she even had a chance to tell him!
"I'm an actress."

"Ah... that's not so bad!"

It was a bit of an anti climax. Steve had thought she was going to say that she did something really exotic - a honky-tonk piano player perhaps, or maybe an escapologist!

"The reason I'm so wary is that usually, when I tell people what I do, they laugh and think I'm kidding them on. Or they'll say something like, "I've never seen you on the telly!"

Steve, who was just about to say these very words, stifled a cough and remained silent for a second. Instead, he said:

"Oh... I remember now. You were in a drama group at University called "Soap" or something? That's fantastic you carried it on."

A smile creased Annabelle's face and she burst out laughing.

"It was actually "S.U.D.S" - Stirling University Drama Society!"

She added:

"I'm actually a supporting actress in the London theatres. I love it. The wonderful thing is that everyone remembers the star. They never remember the supporting actor or actress. So I enjoy complete freedom and anonymity. I can walk down the street without hardly anyone recognising me, but still enjoy a job that I love without the pitfalls of fame."

Steve nodded and said "That does have its advantages."

"I live in Inverness, but with the airport being so close I can be in London in a couple of hours. I have a small flat down there, but when the play I'm in finishes its run, I can escape back to Inverness and peace and quiet for a little while."

While the buzz of conversation was going on around them and with the firelight from the open fire flickering like angels in flight she continued:

"I'm between plays just now and the company that's running the Retreat Centre have hired me in a professional capacity to read the passage from Corinthians tomorrow to set the scene for the main speaker."

Steve noticed as she said this she had her fingers crossed confirming for him the rumour that all actors are superstitious! Then she added:

"When I read about the rest of the Retreat, it looked so good I decided to attend the whole thing and combine work with a bit of rest. I've got to go back to London on the 23rd to an audition, so I'll have to leave very early on the last morning, but I'm booked on the evening flight back to Inverness, so I'll be home well in time for Christmas ."

The rest of the day was wonderful. There were all sorts of presentations but the best part was when Annabelle joined him for dinner. They had a lovely evening, sitting by the open fire reminiscing about their time at University and how things had changed. Steve learned that ten years ago Annabelle had lost her husband due to cancer. His own father had died this way and he had felt so helpless that he couldn't do anything to save him just like her.

The next morning the moment had finally arrived. Just before Annabelle went on stage, Steve asked if it would be OK to tape her reading. She gave the go-ahead and again looked very touched that he wanted to do this. Annabelle was then on centre stage in the small auditorium that the guest speakers used. She had memorised the piece, so she looked directly at the audience and began:

"Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail."

Every word, every syllable was said with a warmth and feeling that words just couldn't describe. Everyone could feel it. God was here and he was using Annabelle's voice to convey his gift of love through Paul's words. This was the greatest of good at work.

"Love is eternal. There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge, but it will pass. For our gifts of knowledge and of inspired messages are only partial; but when what is perfect comes, then what is partial will disappear."

Steve looked around the audience who had attended because the passage meant something to them. They wouldn't be here otherwise. Perhaps it was the favourite piece of a loved one, a mother, father, a brother or a sister. Perhaps it had helped them as it had helped him. He noticed there were tears running down every face including his own. But they were tears that heal.

"When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; now that I am an adult, I have no more use for childish ways. What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face-to-face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete—as complete as God's knowledge of me."

Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love."

There was a silence for a second or two. Then applause. Then the whole audience was standing up and applauding. They would never forget this experience. Neither would he.

After the session, Annabelle looked really tired asked if she could take the tape recorder to her room and listen through her reading as it helped her to evaluate her performance and areas where she can improve things. She was very nervous that she would press the wrong buttons and promised to be very careful. Steve said "No problem at all!"

At dinner she joined him and disaster struck. Steve didn't realise that after a performance an actor can be very fragile. It takes a lot out of them. Heaps of adrenaline are used leaving them totally washed out. Sometimes it can take a long time to come back down to earth. He made the mistake of going on and on about how good her performance was. All of a sudden she stood up and said;

"Steve, I know you liked what I did today, but tomorrow I've got a big audition and I'm worried sick. She was close to tears. I'm terrible company when I'm like this so I'm turning in early. Good Night!"

She then ran off before Steve had a chance to say anything. He never saw her the rest of the evening.

The next morning, Steve went to reception to see if Annabelle was still there by any chance, but she had gone. She had checked out at 6.00 am to catch her plane but had left the tape recorder for him. Steve had forgotten all about it. Much to his dismay, there was no note.

The drive back home was so different for Steve. The beautiful scenery wasn't noticed as his mind raced. They could have had a wonderful friendship - maybe something more. And he had blown it! They hadn't even exchanged email addresses or phone numbers. Probably they both thought there would be time later. He simply had to find her, even if it was just to say he was sorry and to wish her well.

Once back home, he searched for her on *Facebook* and *Twitter*. Actors love publicity! But there was no sign of her. But of course she would probably use her stage name which he didn't know. He didn't think she would use the name "Colquhoun" as it would be difficult to pronounce or spell outside Scotland.

She would probably be ex directory, but he would check this out when he could obtain an Inverness phone directory. He thought on contacting the company that ran the Retreat but knew they wouldn't give him any info. Companies are very big on data protection and quite rightly so. They wouldn't know he had struck up a friendship with her and would think he was just some fan trying to find out where she lived.

As bed time approached, Steve resolved to search his way through every theatre website in London and buy all the publications which centred around the London theatre scene. Maybe there would be a picture of her. Maybe not. She was between plays just now. He confided in himself that he would just have to wait until the New Year and might find her when a new play was running.

Steve began the next day, December 24th - what should be a day of great cheer and anticipation, still filled with a sense of melancholy and deep regret. Then he remembered the tape recorder that was packed in the neat little pocket inside his attaché case. The voice that he loved so much! The reading! They would still all be there! At least he would always have that and could listen over and over again. He had a feeling he would be listening to this tape for the rest of his life. He simply had to find her, if only to apologise and tell her how much their brief time together had meant to him.

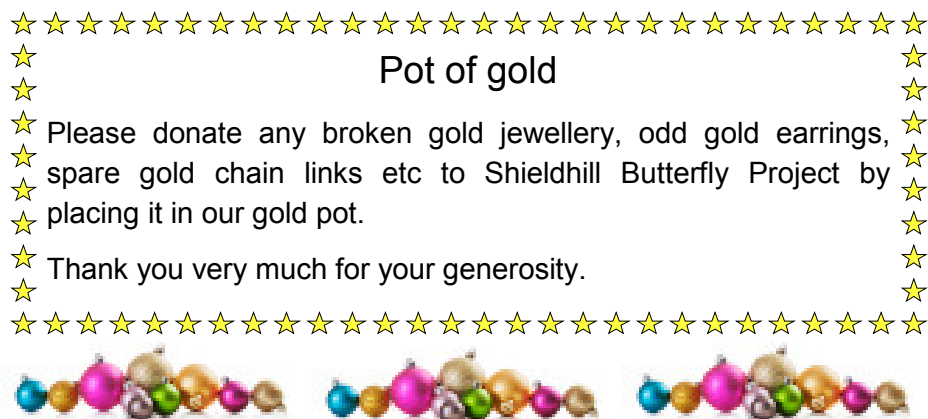
The voice in the attaché case had travelled one hundred and seventy miles from Loch Ness, but this time it didn't read from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. Instead this truly angelic voice which in just a few short years would land her a part as the supporting actress in one of the most successful plays ever to grace London's West End, simply said:

"Steve. I'm so sorry. I was just so tired. Could we start again? Our time together was wonderful and too special to end like this." She then gave him her phone number.

She had probably thought a note might be forgotten about at reception, or mislaid. But she knew the tape recorder wouldn't, as Steve would want to collect it. He remembered how nervous she had been about working the machine in case she jinxed it. Somehow she had managed to press the right buttons and leave this message. A wonderful Christmas present bringing joy that words just couldn't describe and which would change his life forever.

He wasted no time in dialling the number.

Love is patient... Love is kind...



Christmas Services	
Sunday 6 December 7pm	Christmas Concert led by our young people Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Sunday 13 December 3.30pm	Muiravonside Choral Society Christmas Concert
Sunday 20 December	Nativity and Family Service at Blackbraes and Shieldhill Family Service at Muiravonside
Thursday 24 December 7pm 11pm	Christingle at Muiravonside Watchnight Service at Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Sunday 27 December	Lessons and Carols at both churches

Colour me in!



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



Join us on Wednesdays
7.30pm in the church hall
We'd love to see U

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE GUILD AT WWW.COS-GUILD.ORG.UK



Muiravonside Women's Group

This group meets alternate Wednesdays in Maddiston Salvation Army Hall at 7:30pm. Come along and enjoy fellowship, a speaker and a cup of tea.

Contact Etta Napier - tel 713258 for more information.

Muiravonside Fund Raiser- Santa Drive

In Rumford Chapel Hall on Thursday 26th November at 7pm.

Tickets are available or pay at the door,
Come along and enjoy the good fun.

Muiravonside Choral Society

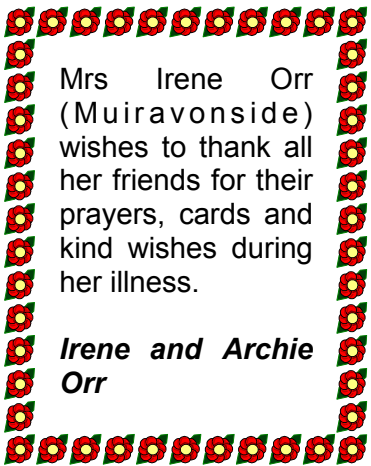
Annual Christmas Concert will be held in Muiravonside Parish Church on Sunday 13th December at 3:30pm. All welcome.



Fundraising

The Butterfly Project are singing carols at Forth Valley Royal Hospital on 15 December at 4.30pm.

Please join us if you can - we need all the help we can get!



Mrs Irene Orr
(Muiravonside)
wishes to thank all
her friends for their
prayers, cards and
kind wishes during
her illness.

***Irene and Archie
Orr***