

KEY NOTES

KIRKHOPE, ETRICK & YARROW PARISH MAGAZINE



August 2020



Many of you will remember Rev Elspeth Harley was our Interim Moderator for a while after Samuel Siroky left. She has now retired and Rev Margaret Steele now has the job of looking after us in Ettrick & Yarrow, in addition to Ashkirk and Selkirk. We warmly welcome her to the Valleys and to Keynotes. (NH)

A message from our new Interim Moderator, Rev Margaret Steele

Dear Friends

How long O Lord? I wonder what you have found hardest to cope with; perhaps not being with loved ones at home or in hospital, losing your job, not able to attend a funeral, not able to meet in church with friends, being on your own for so long... add your own words here.

The Bible and the Book of Psalms in particular, is the place where you find people being honest with God, bringing Him their fears, losses, laments. **We should not deny the hardness of this time.** Just as the Psalmist questions where God is on numerous occasions, we too should feel free to voice our doubts and our fears.

Yet the hope of the Gospel message is that our God remains faithful, His compassions will never fail, His mercies are new every day.

Through death and suffering comes the new life of Resurrection Power. Good Friday and the Saturday which followed gave way to the hope and vitality of Easter Sunday.

Some good has come out of the lockdown and so we give thanks for those things. Why don't you make a list for yourself?

Our church buildings remain closed for the meantime but **our church is very much alive.** In the words of the hymn, **the church is not a building the church is the people.** We live in faith that God is present with us wherever we find ourselves bringing us comfort, refreshment, strength and wisdom allowing us in turn to share HIS love with all we meet.

God's love binds us to one another as family. Apart we may be, but never alone.

It was a special privilege for me to take part in this year's online Blanket Preaching, my first attempt at recording outdoors – not without its mishaps but perhaps practice makes perfect.

As ever I welcome phone calls, emails and chatting with folk.

With every blessing - Margaret

Lambing in Lockdown - Alison Blackadder



March 23rd Lockdown and the start of lambing. For my husband Michael, lambing has always been a few weeks of isolation anyway, so he didn't know the difference. 8 weeks from start to finish, morning till night, 7 days a week. Relentless. Not to mention calving as well. Fortunately, the weather was kind and there were few casualties which meant that the usual number of spare lambs (from the triplets that are born) were not really required for any ewes that would normally be used as foster mums.

So, within a couple of weeks the number of excess pet lambs had increased. That's where I stepped in.

Having taken the decision to take 5 weeks leave of absence from work at the hospital, I found I had plenty to keep me occupied. The virus was a deciding factor there as I couldn't afford the risk of catching Covid 19 and passing it on to Michael. Who would have done the work for him? Not me!

But I had my uses! I had a set routine, which in itself might have seemed boring, but was really a bit of a life saver for my sanity, if only to keep me occupied whilst not at the hospital. The number of pet lambs quickly increased to 20 but I thoroughly enjoyed it. (Apart from being bitten by midges! The unusually warm spring weather brought them out whenever I made up the lambs' milk!).

The daily routine not only involved making up milk (up to 28 pints per feed, 3 times a day at the busiest time), but cleaning and disinfecting the milk containers.....similar to the handwashing rules we've all had to follow, to prevent infections.

Although I normally take on the pet feeding duties when I am at work anyway (for the evenings and weekends) I was really upping my game and giving Michael a break to get on with the more responsible work of lambing and calving, and fortunately we didn't have any calving issues either.

So, by the time lambing finished and I went back to work on 18th May, most of the pet lambs were by now, off the milk and onto solids....a bit like bringing up babies. I had done my bit.....and we still have 20 healthy lambs getting fed twice a day on lamb pellets out in their paddock.

So, although I had put my job on hold, I felt my time was well spent in other ways. I've never made so many pots of soup..... and pancakes!

I have also learnt new skills! Not farming related in any way. But the pandemic had meant that our normal lives were having to change and adapt! Like never before the use of technology was becoming 'the norm'. I am now very familiar with You tube and Pinterest, so much so that I can now cut Michael's hair (thanks to Amazon for the necessary tools) and he actually looks fairly presentable. Mind you, the first effort was a bit dodgy. Thank goodness he wasn't going anywhere!

'Pinterest' has provided me with patterns for face masks, and my stash of fabrics was put to good use. These online tutorials and ideas have been a lifesaver.

Like many of you I've also learned to communicate through Zoom! Something I'm sure that will continue for the future. But nothing will ever really replace the need for being in each other's company. Hopefully, as we are starting to come out of Lockdown, we can enjoy seeing our friends and family again, although I think we'll all still be a bit wary.

Who knows what the future holds. We're all living in strange times but it's been refreshing to see how well our Communities have pulled together and rallied to help each other through this time. We've all missed our coffee mornings, church services, craft groups, singing groups, WI meetings and much, much more. Let's hope it won't be long till we're back up and running.

Birds in our gardens – the Song Thrush

There are two different species of Thrush in and around the Valleys – the Song Thrush and the Mistle Thrush. The Song Thrush is a bit smaller than a Blackbird, and has a brown back with a pale belly covered in black drop-shaped dots. This is the bird that comes to our gardens. The Mistle Thrush looks superficially similar but is much bigger and bulkier, and the plumage is paler, with colder tones. I was taught to look for “white armpits” when thrushes fly. White under the wing = Mistle Thrush! This is a bird of the fields and hills.



As I write this, the Rowan trees opposite my house are filled with Blackbirds and Thrushes stuffing themselves with the orange berries. Song Thrushes will eat all kinds of food, but normally earthworms make up a large part of their diet. They will also eat snails. To get at the meat inside, they take the shell and crack it open by banging it against a stone 'anvil'. This behaviour is unique to these birds.

Living up to its name, the Song Thrush has a beautiful, loud song heard at its best in the spring of the year. An individual bird has about 100 different phrases to draw upon which it does at random and then repeats each unit several times. Blackbirds, also great songsters, tend not to repeat phrases – helps to identify a hidden singer!

Song Thrushes can be very early nesters and the young may be on the wing by the end of March in a good season. The nest, built entirely by the female, is low down in any suitable cover, including trees and shrubs, among creepers on walls, on ledges, and on the ground amongst thick vegetation. It is a neat structure of twigs, grass and moss, cemented together and thickly lined with mud, dung and rotten wood, often mixed with leaves. It can take three weeks to complete. Sometimes the same nest is used for successive broods.

The chicks are fed primarily on worms, but slugs, caterpillars, and even fruit can feature in the diet. When ready to fledge the youngsters creep and flutter from the nest, and remain in nearby cover for a few days, still flightless although they learn fast. They are often left in the care of the male, while the female prepares for the next nesting effort. Nestlings from later broods can be found until August so check first before cutting your hedge!

Song Thrushes establish a breeding territory, essential for pair formation and nesting, in the late winter or early spring. Hence all the singing! They also have winter territories, often established in the late autumn or early winter. Most birds are then solitary but in bad weather will gather in larger groups with other birds.



Song Thrushes are sensitive to hard winter weather and if really severe, many birds move southwards, even as far as north-west France and northern Spain. Considerable numbers of paler greyer continental birds normally spend the winter in the UK or can be seen as they travel south for

Iberia where they still run the risk of hunters and the surviving appetite in Mediterranean countries for thrush paté.

Song thrushes live an average of 3-4 years, but a few can reach quite an advanced age. The oldest known wild individual was 13 years, 9 months old. Mortality is high and its causes many and varied. Only 20 per cent of fledglings and 60 per cent of adults survive to breed the following spring. Long-term monitoring shows that the population in England declined by more than 50 per cent between 1970 and 1995 and the bird is red listed as a bird of serious conservation concern.

The decline in song thrush numbers has probably been caused by the removal in many areas of hedgerows and wet ditches useful for feeding and nesting sites and drainage will reduce the number of earthworms and other crucial invertebrate prey available to Song Thrushes on farmland. Grazed permanent pasture (especially cow pastures) and woodland are important

habitats with plenty of food for Song Thrushes. We are lucky in the Valleys that these places are still available for them and our Song Thrush numbers are good.

Throstle as a name for the Song Thrush goes back to at least Chaucer's time but the other well-known regional name is Mavis, a term which is still in use in parts of Scotland – even in Ettrickbridge! It is said to be derived from the French *mauvís* or to be of Celtic origin but the exact meaning is unclear.



Just a final thought, so many of us love to hear Song Thrushes singing in spring and to watch them fly to their nests with beaks full of food for their chicks, so please take care in your use of pesticides. The birds love to eat worms and snails and really the Song Thrush

should be the main killer of the slimy pest in our gardens!

Nora Hunter, with help from Birds Britannica, BTO, RSPB

James Hogg

Plans for the 250th anniversary celebrating the birth of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, have been put on hold although some events may still happen later in the year. Meanwhile the James Hogg Exhibition in old Ettrick School is open by appointment only until the end of October. Please call 01750 62210 to arrange if you would like to visit.



WHAT AN AMAZING COMMUNITY EFFORT!!

Firstly, a HUGE thank you from Ettrick & Yarrow Community Council for all those who volunteered through lockdown to help us get food and prescriptions to the residents of the valleys. It was a mighty effort, and so many people played their part in helping it work. We think ours was one of the most active Community Resilience Responses in the Borders and it certainly helped reduce the number of people needing to go out and about during what was a very difficult time for us all.

We do have a great community with a massive community spirit and it was amazing to see the many ways in which people all pulled together. We still have a legacy of people going shopping for others – which is brilliant and will also be reducing journeys and helping the environment.



The now-redundant Ettrickbridge hub team!

We took the decision to suspend our 4 hubs at the end of July, which coincided with the easing of shielding, and offered to make alternative arrangements for people who still need help and support. Both pharmacies in Selkirk will deliver prescriptions to the valleys, so please use them and support this critical service – we don't want to lose it. Contact Lindsay & Gilmour on 01750 21723 or Right Medicine 01750 21230.

If you need help getting your shopping, the Community Development Company has now extended its shopping service to the **whole of both valleys**

(see their update elsewhere in Key Notes), and the electric vehicle drivers are happy to save you a trip into town. Call on 01750 62210.

For any other help, please contact Barbara Harrison (01750 52260) as we are confident that we can make suitable arrangements for any reasonable request!!

Here's hoping that we don't have to go back to those tighter lockdown days – but if we do, at least we know that we have an amazing community that can pull together and take care of each other.

Ettrick & Yarrow Community Council

Ettrick & Yarrow AGM - Mon 7th Sept 7pm

EYCC decided to delay our AGM, which was due in June, due to Covid-19 but are now holding it using Zoom conferencing on **Monday 7th September at 7pm.**

If you would like to join us, please e-mail Barbara Harrison and she will send you a link to join the meeting - bckharrison@btinternet.com. If you don't already have it, you will need to download 'Zoom' on to your computer, laptop or phone. It is better if you have a camera on your computer device, though not essential. If you have never used Zoom before, Barbara can talk you through how it works and let you have a practice link up ahead of the meeting.

We hope as many people as possible will be able to join us. You don't even need to leave your armchair!!

Open to Worship?

As we publish the latest edition of Key Notes the vast majority of Churches across Scotland remain closed. Less than 10% are currently open even for private reflection – and even then, with very strict distancing and extensive cleaning controls in place.

Professor Jason Leech, Scotland's National Clinical Director has been clear that indoor singing is completely off-limits for the foreseeable future. In a recent interview he talked about how this is affecting his local Baptist church which he attends.

The Churches are closed – but in many ways have never been more open.



The lockdown has necessitated many organisations rushing to embrace technology in a way which they have never done before. Schools' lessons, business meetings, dance classes and church services have moved quickly on-line and in doing so have allowed their members, pupils, and attendees to continue to experience and take part

in their normal activities – albeit in a different way.

This has allowed many people to take part at a time and place which suits them. Will this become the new normal?

Ettrick and Yarrow Churches have – in conjunction with our friends at Selkirk and Ashkirk - been providing on-line services throughout lockdown. These services are available to view on YouTube (no licence or password or registration required). More recently we have also introduced a telephone listen service for those who do not have internet access.

We are now considering the future and planning for the day when, eventually, we can resume some normal worship services back in our buildings. Central to our thinking is how we continue to offer the opportunity for wider participation. We are actively considering 'streaming' live services of some services as well as offering recordings of service which anyone can watch later on 'catch-up'.

facebook



Facebook: Etrick and Yarrow Churches

YouTube: Etrick and Yarrow Churches

Web site: www.etrickandyarrow.church



Churches all over the country have reported strong viewing figures for their social media posts and on-line services. In many cases more people are viewing on-line church services than would usually attend in person. What lessons should we draw from this?

In some cases people are joining services from churches where they used to live before they move to another areas; in some cases people have extended

family connections; and in other cases we simply don't know – perhaps people could never attend on Sunday due to other commitments – possibly people feel 'safer' to try (again?) "Church" in the privacy of their own home.

Simply call **01750 383 347** to listen to our church service. Anytime. Anywhere



We would love to hear views and ideas as we reflect and consider the future. What works for you? What would you like to see available? How can "Church" best make itself available to you? Please drop us an email at ettrickandyarrow@gmail.com or speak to your elder or Margaret, Nora, or me. Thanks

Andy Wright

Crisis Grants

The Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company has funding to help the community and mitigate the effects of the corona virus restrictions. If you have suffered a loss of income due to the lockdown, live in either the Ettrick or Yarrow valley and are struggling to pay bills then you may be eligible for a crisis grant. Please email crisisgrant@ettrickandyarrow.org.uk to get more information and an application form. These are also available on the EYCDC web site at <https://ettrickandyarrow.org.uk/>. Only one application per household but applicants can apply more than once. All applications are confidential and the independent panel aims to approve grants within 7 days.

Caryl's Recipe - Easy Scones



Ingredients

3 cups Self Raising flour
1 cup double cream
1 cup lemonade. Not diet!!

Any size cup will do,
provided you use the same
one for each ingredient.

Method

Heat oven to 200C

Add the flour to a mixing bowl. Make a well in the flour and add the liquids. Bring together with a knife and knead together for about 30 secs. Roll out on a floured surface to roughly 1 inch thick and cut out. The making takes not more than 4 mins.

Place on a baking sheet and cook for about 15 mins.

Cool and eat same day but they can be frozen immediately and popped into microwave before eating, to warm up.

As this is a Cornish recipe put Jam first then cream!

Caryl Thompson

Uncontrolled Camping in the Upper Yarrow – please give us your ideas!

Many residents, especially those living in the upper Yarrow Valley, will be aware that there has been a huge increase in visitors to the area following (and even before!) lockdown easing. Day visitor numbers are up and lots of people appear to be taking their tents to the Scottish countryside and pitching up all over the place – especially around St Mary's Loch and the Megget Valley. Some of them are noisy and many have been leaving a trail of waste and damage behind. This is also happening in other rural areas of Scotland, but does not make the situation any easier for those living near to the 'hot spots'.



The Community Council has worked closely with the local community, Wemyss & March Estate and Scottish Borders Council to do our best to ameliorate the situation this year. We initially arranged for rubbish (which had helpfully been collected by locals) to be uplifted and for a special squad to clean up the places that were used as toilets. We have since worked with Wemyss and March and SBC to re-open the toilets at 'The Green' and put in place regular rubbish collection arrangements.

The Warden Service re-started on July 15th and Chris Amy has been working hard to encourage more respectful behaviour, especially from overnight visitors. This is paid for by the Community Council and Wemyss & March Estate and the Community Development Company is funding some additional hours this year. We have put up lots of 'no fires' and 'please take your rubbish home' signage.

We have had a positive response to our request for help from the SBC Community Action Policing Teams and our local Councillors will be putting a

motion to Full Council calling for (a) continued support this year to manage the situation as best we can; (b) proactive assistance to work with all our partners to come up with longer term solutions; (c) the Scottish Government to help manage this situation at a national level and make resources available to help with these challenges and to fund the development of appropriate infrastructure.

We think that many more people have now 'discovered' the beauty of the upper Yarrow Valley and that this year's trend is likely to continue. So, we are starting, now, to look at ways in which the situation can be better managed in future years for the benefit of the local community. We plan to put together an initial discussion document to identify **all** the possible measures that **could** be taken to help the situation – on the basis of 'nothing ruled out or in' at this stage. We would really like to hear your proposed solution(s), so please give us all your thoughts and ideas about how this influx of visitors can be better managed in the coming years.

Barbara Harrison,
Secretary, EYCC

bckharrison@btinternet.com or phone 01750 52260 or 07845 677104



Community Transport

The Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company (EUCDC) electric vehicle has been busy throughout the lockdown period with deliveries and picking up essential items for valley households.

Although the wider organisation of food deliveries

has now been wound down, the EYCDC will continue to pick up shopping from Hawick or Selkirk on request or deliver from the Honey Cottage caravan park shop. The electric vehicle drivers are happy to save you a trip to town and will deliver direct to your door. Items should be ordered and pre-paid direct where possible.

This service applies to both the Ettrick and Yarrow valleys. The drivers will also be happy to take you to hospital or doctor appointments by arrangement and hope to start a weekly service for both valleys carrying passengers. This will be planned after consultation and to fit with existing services. Please call 01750 62210 to arrange transport in advance or email info@ettrickandyarrow.org.uk

Boston Hall



Like other meeting places the hall has been closed since March. We hope to hold the AGM sometime in September and will advertise the date on the Valleys Facebook page when it is arranged.

There is still some uncertainty about whether or when the winter activities can resume and again, we will keep in touch through Facebook.

Although there have been no Flower Show or Ettrick Sports this summer the usual work of lambing, clipping and hay-making has carried on, keeping all the farmers busy. Social distancing is often what they do anyway! Fingers crossed we are heading the right way and can avoid any second wave of the virus.

Hall enquiries to Irene on 62219

Poetry Corner



ETTRICK

Wild Ettrick, wild Ettrick
Your blue water gleams
An azure-cloaked lover
That rides through my dreams
The heath's at your stirrup
The broom's at your knee
You sing in your saddle
 A love-song to me

Through green lands you led me
In lone ways apart;
In long days you told me
Things dear to my heart;
In dream – time, in silence,
With haunting refrain
You murmur them over
 And over again

Wild Ettrick, wild Ettrick
Love-rider in blue,
Ah! Swing me to saddle
 And take me with you
To glens of remembrance
And hills of desire,
The stars over Kirkhope
 The moon on the Swire.

Will H. Ogilvie



Key Notes seeks to serve as a platform for sharing information and views of individuals, groups and communities so please use it and write to us.
Email: keynotes_editorial@btinternet.com

Opinions expressed in contributed material within KEY NOTES do not necessarily reflect the views of the Interim Moderator and Kirk Session of Ettrick and Yarrow Parish Church.