

# *The Bulletin*



## **Cruden Parish Church Summer 2020**

[www.crudenchurch.org.uk](http://www.crudenchurch.org.uk)

Registered Scottish Charity SC006408

Dear Friends,

As you are all aware we are living through an extraordinary period of history. Who could have ever imagined that a such a small virus could wreak so much havoc. Communities in lockdown, public gatherings banned, schools and churches closed and a surge in the numbers of people who have sadly lost their lives. Not to mention the economic damage which has seen businesses go under and thousands of people lose their jobs.

For me the cruellest aspect of the lockdown has been the separation of families. Grandchildren separated from grandparents, people unable to visit loved ones in hospitals and care homes and only a small handful able to attend funerals. It has indeed been a cruel time, with so many of us deprived of the experience of family and community.

Here in the North-East we have got off lightly. We live close to many open spaces, where the beauty of the outdoors has taken the edge off the lockdown. Our medical services and carers have all been working hard but not been overwhelmed. The communities within our parish have pulled together to support those unable to go shopping or collect prescriptions etc. In our secular, materialistic and selfish age, it is reassuring to know that 'push come to shove' there is a still a depth of human kindness and community spirit.

Within Cruden Parish Church we have, so far, got through the pandemic with relative ease. To the best of my knowledge, the number of members who became infected with Covid-19 has remained in single digits and all recovered. I have only had to conduct a small number of funerals, unlike some of my colleagues down south who have been inundated. Our income, although reduced, has not collapsed like some congregations. Although unable to gather on a Sunday morning, through the use of computers and the internet, we have been able to hold a weekly Bible Study, Coffee Morning and Evening Service, plus a daily reflection posted on our Facebook page and website.

So what next? Where do we go from here? There is not a lot I can say at the time of writing as there is no clear end in sight. I suspect that later in the summer we may be able to return to church under certain circumstances, but who knows when social distancing will end. We will of course in the meantime continue our online activities and possibly even hold one or more outdoor services. The church building may be closed but we are still open for business! And who knows how our society has been changed? Will there be a national reshaping of values and priorities? Will people be more open and considerate of spiritual things? Or will things go back to where they were before all this started? I await to find out.

Best wishes

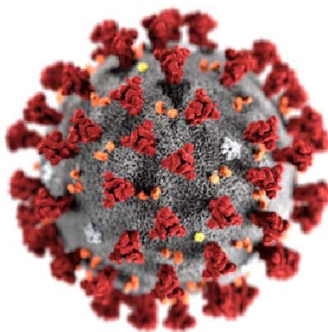
**Rev Sean Swindells**

## GOD & COVID -19

At the time of writing we are slowly emerging from the health crisis caused by the Corona Virus. We're not there yet, but things appear to be heading in the right direction. Some parts of the UK have witnessed some terrible and distressing scenes. Hospital staff and others pushed to the very limits of their professional ability and families reeling in grief, even denied the opportunity to say a final farewell. Even the funeral directors have struggled to cope with sometimes a three-week delay to arrange a funeral.

Also, I do not think we can make a realistic assessment of the situation, based on our experience in the North-East.

Fortunately for us, we have not seen the worst of the pandemic. To the best of my knowledge we have not lost a single member to Covid-19. Those who have become infected can be numbered in single digits and all made a full recovery. For that we are very thankful. There has been a lot of debate and speculation about faith in this time. A very small number of fringe groups have described Covid-19 as God's judgment on the West. Others have talked about people becoming more open to spiritual things. Some churches have reported a significant surge of



interest in online services and reflections. I also came across an article by the Dean of Litchfield Cathedral, who observed how some 'born again atheists' were now turning to prayer.

Whilst there has been an upturn of people accessing religious broadcasting, it is difficult to predict whether or not this interest will continue once people's fear and uncertainty is eased. In the same way, we have witnessed a remarkable

awakening in the values of community. It is wonderful that so many stepped forward to volunteer and help and support neighbours. Hopefully this will continue post Covid-19. Time will tell.

So what can we say with confidence and clarity. A few thoughts. First, I do

not think for one moment that Covid-19 was 'God's will.' The American author Philip Yancy makes this observation:

*'Many things happen in this world that are clearly against "God's will." Read the prophets, God's designated spokesmen, who thunders against idolatry, injustice, violence and other manifestations of human sin and rebellion. Read the Gospel accounts, where Jesus upsets the religious establishment by freeing people from*

*disabilities the divines had deemed  
“God’s will.”. Providence may be a great  
mystery, nonetheless I find no  
justification for blaming God for what  
God so clearly opposes.’*

Second, I think Covid-19 will speed up the decline of the traditional church. For many years the Church of Scotland has increasingly been over dependant on a small group of elderly people who have been generous with their time and money. The lockdown, the need for self-isolation and continued social distancing will I think be the tipping point for many already struggling congregations. There are also serious financial constraints facing the national church. Too many congregations, like the Parish of Cruden, are supported from central reserves. This cannot go on for much longer.

Third, I think Covid-19 will speed up the renewal of the church. The lockdown has caused us to think on our feet, adapt and do things in a new way. Some churches have taken the lead in serving communities with food deliveries etc. Within our parish, members of the church have been at the forefront of community organisations offering help and support. This witness will not have

gone unnoticed. I think after years of faith being mocked and questioned and dismissed as irrelevant, the church will finally be recognised as having something worthwhile to say.

My final observation is that I think God has one or two surprises up his sleeve. I don’t think we are on the cusp of revival or spiritual renewal, but something is stirring. Here we are yet again reminded that God’s ways are not our ways. Philip Yancy again offers this insight:

*‘Over time, both through personal experience and my study of the Bible, I have come to know certain qualities of God. God’s style often baffles me: God moves at a slow pace, prefers rebels and prodigals, restrains power, and speaks in whispers and silence. Yet even in these qualities I see evidence of God’s longsuffering, mercy, and desire to woo rather than compel. When in doubt, I focus on Jesus, the most unfiltered revelation of God’s own self.’*

I think we could be in for a very interesting Autumn!

**Rev Sean Swindells**

(Quotations from:  
*Reaching the Invisible God* by Philip Yancy.)

## **We remember the deaths of these church members**

Mr Henry Paterson, Bayview Care Home, Cruden Bay

Mrs Anne Smith, 25 Gordondale Court, Aberdeen

Mrs Anne Taylor, Kirkburn Court Care Home, Peterhead

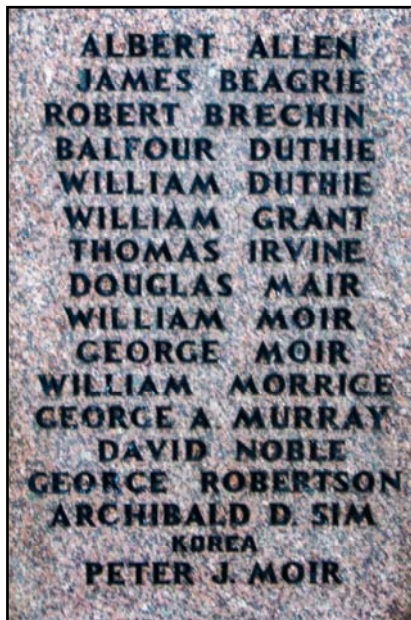
Mrs Betty Mathers, Bayview Care Home, Cruden Bay

Mr Jackson Simpson, 108 Braehead Drive, Cruden Bay

## Snapshots from the War

VE day is past and we look forward to remembering the final ending of conflict in the Second World War on VJ day on 15 August. There will be family memories of the events of that summer of 1945. On a personal note, I think of my father returning from the Prisoner of War camp in Germany just a few days before VE day and marrying my mother just a few days later.

I have been asking around to try to find memories of the War time in Cruden. Clearly many people would have served in the forces, land, sea and air, and the names of 15 men who died are recorded on the War Memorial Gate at the Cruden Cemetery. Here are just a few snapshots to try to paint a picture of those far off days.



Among the first to serve was Bill Milne from Hatton. Many will remember him as a church elder and the piper who led the parades to the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. He served in the Gordons and was one of 10,000 men captured, still only 16 years of age, at the defeat at St Valery in 1940, immediately after Dunkirk. Bill was sent to a POW camp in West Prussia where he remained until 1944 when he escaped just before Christmas. He headed east and met up with the Red Army in Poland. The Russians though he was a German deserter and were all set to shoot him. Fortunately an English speaking Russian officer arrived and he was saved, but told he had now to join the Red Army. So the Hatton loon was kitted out in a Red Army uniform, Cossack hat and all. He eventually got away from the Russian army and made his way to Odessa on the Black Sea and made his way home.

Joyce Willox's father, George Shewan has left a written account of his life.. When war broke out George was working on his father's farm near Newburgh. He writes: "In 1940 I joined a section of the army called the LDV (Local Defence Volunteers). Some people called us the Look, Duck and Vanish Squad. There were quite a few men in it who were too old to go to war. There were also young men who worked on the land and they were exempt." The LDV later became the Home Guard. Despite training with rifles and grenades George records that

although called out quite a few times, they were not involved in “anything serious”.

Betty Morris (Carle as was) was about 10 when the war started. She lived in Earlston Road in Cruden Bay and her father worked at the Brickworks. Since there were no houses then between Earlston Road and the sea she remembers watching convoys making their way up the coast. If bombs were dropped, she could see the explosions.

Her father, Bill Carle was an ARP (Air Raid Precautions) Warden in Cruden Bay. Wearing his tin hat with the W painted on it, he would cycle down to the harbour, blowing his whistle to give warning of air raids. He also was charged with making sure that no lights were visible to guide the German bombers.

George Shewan writes that it was the same on the farm: “In 1939 the war came. I remember Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announcing on the wireless on Sunday 11th September at 11 o'clock that Britain was at war with Germany. Then the blackout came. We had to close all our curtains and have small lights on, such as candles and lanterns in the cattle byres and among the horses in the stables. We had to make sure no lights could be seen from the air as the German bombers would drop their bombs if they saw any.”

Bombing was always a concern. George wrote about one memorable incident: “On the 12th of July [1940], as we were coming out from our dinner at 10 minutes to one o'clock, we saw a German bomber coming in from the coast. We knew it was a German bomber by the sound of his engines. It was a Heinkel. The Spitfires caught up with him, but he dropped his bombs in Aberdeen just before the Spitfires shot him down at the Ice Rink in Anderson Drive. All the German crew were killed and a lot of other people. Aberdeen was bombed quite a few times.”

Betty's dad, Bill was not just a ARP Warden. He was in the Royal Observer Corps too and would do duty at the lookout post on the Ward Hill above Port Erroll Harbour. He had to know all the aircraft by sight and Betty would help her dad by holding up cards which had pictures of the different kinds of aeroplane to see if he could identify them. But she never went up to the ROC post. That was off limits for her. Not surprising really when you realise that later in the War a top secret and revolutionary LORAN (Long Range Navigation) transmitter station was located up on the Ward Hill to guide the bombers in their night raids on Germany.

It seems strange now to think of Cruden Bay as being a target for bombing, but about 13 incidents of bombs being dropped in the area are recorded. Mostly





these resulted in minor damage or injured animals, but on 2 April 1941 a high explosive bomb hit the engine house of the brickworks. The Manager, James Gray (78), an elder at the Old Parish Church, was killed, and the foreman John McLeod died in the ambulance between Peterhead and Ellon on his way to hospital. Betty showed me an old photograph of all the workers at the brickworks, including her father, and pointed out the two bosses who were killed that night. For security reasons there would often be no mention of the bombings in the press. The death notices of both these men simply refers to their “sudden” death. Perhaps it is no surprise that Cruden Bay was bombed when you remember that Peterhead was the place which recorded the highest number air raids (28) after London.

I don't know if there were evacuees in Cruden Bay or Hatton, but George Shewan's farmhouse was a temporary home for 10 children and mothers from Glasgow.

“Then the evacuees came. They came up from Glasgow by train to Aberdeen and buses collected them from the station and took some of them out to Slains School. As we had a large house, we had about eight or ten children. Some mothers also came to look after them. They also went to the school. I remember when some of the Glasgow children found out that milk came from a cow, they would not drink it as at home it came out of a bottle. They stayed for some of the winter months and were very intrigued with the snow. Some of them had never seen snow before so we learned them to make a snowman and have a snowball fight. Some of them soon drifted away back home again. There are one or two who stayed for a good while”.

The Big Cruden Bay Hotel, once the playground of the rich and the famous, but now having fallen on hard times, did War service. It was requisitioned by the Army and used for initial training for the Gordons as well as the temporary base for No 1 Scottish Military Hospital before it moved to Cairo in May 1940 where it remained for the rest of the War.

There were Norwegian troops living at the Hotel at one time and Betty speaks about going up from the school with a group of children and being entertained to Cocoa by the Norwegians. She recalls that there was romance in the air too, and two local girls married Norwegian soldiers stationed there.

The war ended and people resumed normal life. In this 75th anniversary year of the end of the hostilities, I realise how little remains. The grand Cruden Bay Hotel is no more; the Golf Course Clubhouse and housing have grown where once it stood proud, overlooking the dunes. The Brickworks has gone. What does remain are anti-tank blocks lining the Water of Cruden; the odd pill box

appears and disappears under the sand; ruined brick structures hide their original use up on the Ward Hill. There will be photographs of people in uniform, medals gathering dust in drawers and memories of the stories that those who were involved in the War told the generation that followed. But as Betty remarked about her Dad, “He didn’t speak about it much.” Then there are the empty places in the family stories of those who did not come back.

So there you have it, just a few snapshots to remember that wartime generation and perhaps jog some of your family memories.

**Fred Coutts**

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## **Financial wellbeing of our church**

During this time of lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic our church faces all the same challenges as the rest of society, it has to respect all the restrictions that we are all faced with on a daily basis. From the church’s point of view the most notable being that we cannot meet for worship on a Sunday morning, also all other church activities have been suspended. We are however looking at new ways of keeping in contact with as many as possible as detailed elsewhere in the Bulletin.

Church of Scotland finances are a complicated business and difficult to explain, however all congregations are expected to make a financial contribution to central funds, based on their income, to ensure that ministers can be paid and the wider work of the church funded. At the 2019 General Assembly a Radical Action plan was approved as a result of which the costs of the central church were to be reduced by 25% over a two year period. Plans were well advanced before the lockdown, but are now having to be revisited with even bigger cuts now being envisaged.

Of the monies that congregations send to the central church 85% goes to fund parish ministers, it is therefore important during this time of lockdown that we remember one of the vows that we made when joining the church to give a fitting proportion of our resources for the work of the church

At this time of lockdown it is important that we all continue to help maintain the financial well-being of our church and you are encouraged to contact

**Mrs Rosemary Pittendrigh** about your contributions to the church.

**(Slains View, 21 Links View, Cruden Bay AB42 0RF Tel: 01779812220)**

*Dear friend you are being faithful to God when you care for the preachers that come your way ..... please continue providing for these preachers in a manner which is fitting to God So that we ourselves should support them so that we can be their partners as they teach the gospel. (3 John 5-8)*





Among the many things affected by the lockdown, was Christian Aid Week and the London Marathon. Having been so generously supported by friends and the congregation, I had raised about £2,300.00 for Christian Aid and was looking forward to

pounding the streets of London. A new date has been scheduled for October 4th 2020, but I suspect it will be postponed till next year. (If not, I'll have to spend my summer holidays in training!) My intention is to run the marathon next year and continue to support Christian Aid.

One of the reasons I want to continue my support is because millions of refugees continue to be stranded in camps, informal settlements, and unfinished buildings. Living in the direst conditions, they could be some of the worst hit by Covid-19.

So here is a request of volunteers for the next Cruden Christmas Caper – a 5k fun run along the beach on Christmas Eve and in the New Year a repeat of the Great Hatton Boot-camp and Buttery morning!

**Rev Sean Swindells**

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## THE PROBLEM WITH SQUIRRELS

The Presbyterian church called a meeting to decide what to do about their squirrel infestation. After much prayer and consideration, they finally concluded the squirrels were predestined to be there and they shouldn't interfere with God's divine will.



Photograph by Ian Smith

At the Baptist church the squirrels had taken an interest in the baptistery. The deacons met and decided to put a water slide on the baptistery and let the squirrels drown themselves. The squirrels liked the slide and unfortunately, knew instinctively how to swim, so twice as many squirrels showed up the following week.

The Episcopal church decided they were not in a position to harm any of God's creatures. So, they humanely trapped their squirrels and set them free near the Baptist church. Two weeks later the squirrels were back when the Baptists took down their water slide.

But the Catholic church came up with a very creative strategy. They baptised all the squirrels and made them members of the church. Now they only see them at Christmas.



## REBUILDING THE CHURCH

*1776, July 14, This day the minister intimated to the congregation that there would be no more public worship in this church till it is repaired (it being to be pulled down this week), but that there would be one diet of public worship at the Manse next Sabbath, about the ordinary time, and every Sabbath thereafter (if the weather be good) till the church be repaired.*

So read the Kirk Session minutes. It is not clear when the old church that was then being demolished had been built or what it looked like, but it is fairly certain that it was on the site where the present church stands, having stood there since sometime before the Reformation. It had replaced an older building which had stood on ground somewhere behind the Chemist Shop in Cruden Bay.

The builders worked hard: in less than 4 months the new church was ready. It was described as “a plain, substantial edifice” of no ecclesiastical pretensions. This then is the older part of our present church building. Inside it had a central pulpit and galleries round three sides. Later additions would come with an enlarged gallery to the north, accessed, from the two towers; a session house/ vestry; and the extension which houses the organ on the south wall.

The stone for the new church was cut from one block of granite, the “Grey Stone of Ardendraught” which stood on a hillock on Aulton farm. This had been used

as a landmark by fishermen at sea and “Hallowed Fires” had been lit on top of the stone in olden days to ward off evil spirits. Some might think the removal of the stone was “cultural vandalism”, but the church folk in 1776 gave no thought to that, or indeed to the later removal of the circle of seven or eight stones by the tenant of Stones Farm at Hatton in 1831 to make way for ‘improvements’.

There is just a tiny link with the old demolished church. If you look at the dressings at the top of the windows on the south side of the church you will see different stone, reddish limestone, rather than granite. This may be stone reused from the demolished mediaeval kirk.

I hope the weather was kind to the congregation who worshipped outside that summer and autumn. The Manse round which they gathered was on the ground immediately to the north of the church where later a new Manse was built in 1791. On the first Sunday in the new church building, 3 November 1776, the Minister, Rev William Hay who had been minister in Cruden since 1743 through the turbulent Jacobite period, gave out his text: Psalm 84 **”How amiable are thy tabernacles O Lord of Hosts.”** Mr Hay preached only 16 times in the new church. He died on 27 April 1777 aged 72.

I am very grateful to Jim MacDonald who has provided the beautiful drawing of what the church building might have looked like as the congregation gathered for their first service there in November 1776.

We have not been able to worship in our church building these past weeks. Perhaps when lockdown restrictions are eased we may find ourselves worshipping outside, like the Cruden congregation in 1776, before eventually retuning to our building. I wonder what text Sean will give out on that Sunday?

**Fred Coutts**



*When you can't  
put your prayers into words,  
God hears your heart.*

**Minister:** Rev Sean Swindells

**SSwindells@churchofscotland.org.uk**

Parish Office: **01779 841964** Mobile: **07791 755976**

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<b>Session Clerk</b>	Robert Esson	
<b>Treasurer</b>	Rosemary Pittendrigh	
<b>Contact Elders</b>	Betty Forrester	Hatton
	Beatrice Fawkes	Hatton
	Joyce Willox	Hatton
	Muriel Cantlay	Rural
	Robert Petticrew	Rural
	Robert Esson	Peterhead
	Maureen Esson	Cruden Bay
	Kate Clark	Cruden Bay
	Kathleen Craig	Cruden Bay
<b>Gift Aid Treasurer</b>	Muriel Cantlay	
<b>Bulletin</b>	Fred Coutts	
	<a href="mailto:bulletin@crudenchurch.org.uk">bulletin@crudenchurch.org.uk</a>	
<b>Christian Aid</b>	Rosemary Pittendrigh	
<b>Cleaning</b>	Rosemary Pittendrigh	
<b>Communion</b>	Adrian Smith	
	Joyce Willox	
<b>Flowers</b>	Betty Forrester	
<b>Guild</b>	Muriel Cantlay	
<b>Life and Work</b>	Rosemary Pittendrigh	
<b>Messy Church</b>	Kathleen Craig	
<b>Organist</b>	Stephen Calder	
<b>Presbytery Elder</b>	Katherine Hyman	
<b>Press Officer</b>	Mary Bratton	
<b>Roll Keeper</b>	Mary McNaughtan	
<b>Safeguarding</b>	Kathleen Craig	
<b>Teas</b>	Beatrice Fawkes	
<b>Transport</b>	Robert Esson	Hatton
	Rosemary Pittendrigh	Cruden Bay
<b>Walks</b>	Maureen Esson	
<b>WFO Treasurer</b>	Carol Paul	

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**Committee Conveners**

<b>Education &amp; Worship</b>	Katherine Hyman
<b>Finance</b>	Rosemary Pittendrigh
<b>Membership and Outreach</b>	Kathleen Craig
<b>Property</b>	Peter Slamaker
<b>Social</b>	Betty Forrester