



# Drumoak & Durris NEWSLETTER

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## Welcome to the Winter edition of the Drumoak and Durris Newsletter

### Hedgehogs

How long is it since you last saw a hedgehog? The UK has lost a third of its population since 2000, and their numbers are declining as fast as tigers in the wild. They are now officially classed as vulnerable to extinction in the IUCN's Red List for British Mammals. There are many reasons and it's sad to think that, for future generations, such a fate would make this lovely, prickly God's creature only a character in storybooks. Here are 10 simple tips to help them.

1. Link your garden with a Hedgehog Highway. Hedgehogs travel between 1-2 km a night searching for food and a mate. Leaving a small gap in your fence the size of a CD case will let hedgehogs through but be too small for pets. BHPT/PTES sell snazzy little recyclable Hedgehog Highway signs, for a few pounds. Ask your neighbours to do the same!
2. Create a wild corner in your garden so they can snuffle around for insects.
3. Tidy up netting and litter which can trap hedgehogs due to their spines. Even rubber bands dropped by the postie can become embedded in their skin, causing a slow, painful death.
4. Put out food and water. You can supplement their diet with wet dog or cat food (preferably not fish based). No bread, milk or mealworms, which are all extremely bad for them. For those who are into simple DIY you can make a feeding station to stop other animals having a free supper - details on the BHPS website/YouTube
5. Stop using chemicals especially slug pellets. Hedgehogs are a gardener's best friend as they eat slugs as well as many other beasties which would otherwise be devouring your prize flowers and vegetables
6. Check before mowing or strimming. Hedgehogs often sleep in long grass or hedges during daytime and won't run away if they hear a mower, resulting in horrific injuries or death. Use gloves to move a single hog to safety. If there's a family, call the BHPS for advice on 01584 890801, the SSPCA on 0300 999 999 or Google to find your local Hedgehog Rescue.
7. Be careful with bonfires or simply burning leaves. Piles of debris are irresistible to a hedgehog looking for somewhere to hibernate or nest - build it on the day of burning to avoid a tragic end, or if you have to build it before then check carefully with a pole or broom, not a spade or fork. They are usually in the centre.
8. Make a home for hedgehogs. A log pile is one of the best features for encouraging all kinds of wildlife, and easy to make. It will encourage insects and provide nesting opportunities all year around. Alternatively, you can make your own hedgehog house - download instructions from the BHPS website.
9. Keep an eye out for hedgehogs when driving at night, & let it get over the road safely if you see one. If you see it too late try to steer so it will pass under the middle of the car where it is least likely to be harmed.
10. Record hedgehog sightings, including dead ones, on The Big Hedgehog Map website. This is important in building up a picture of where they are most active & how we can encourage local populations. A hedgehog seen during the day is usually in need of help & you should contact one of the organisations above.

If you'd like to do more, you can become a Hedgehog Champion by registering on the Hedgehog Street website, where you can find lots of resources to make your gardens, neighbourhood and Parish, hedgehog-friendly zones.

Moira Grant, a volunteer at 2 local rescues and a Hedgehog Champion with the British Hedgehog Preservation Society/Peoples' Trust for Endangered Species.





*In God's grace, opening our doors and reaching out  
to bring God's love, peace and joy to all.  
Why not taste & see?*

### **From the Manse – Rev Jean Boyd**

Listening to the news just now, business leaders and suppliers are suggesting that there will be a shortage of toys and other items at Christmas time this year. As I write this (in late October), questions are being asked about what happens if we cannot celebrate Christmas in our usual way, with lots of special Christmas food, toys and other gifts. For most of us, last year's Christmas was disrupted by COVID-19 restrictions and now this year it is different again. Will Christmas ever get back to normal?



To answer this question, we must go back in time to that first Christmas and see how normal it was. So, what was that first Christmas like? Well, here is how it is described in Luke's gospel (Luke 2: 4-7)

*Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.*

There was a census, a counting of the population and Joseph went to be counted in Bethlehem. His young fiancé, Mary, who is pregnant, goes with him and there in a stable delivers the child, Jesus. Later angels appear to shepherds who visit and later still Magi (wise folk) from the East follow a star to pay homage to the child. If you read further on in Luke and in Matthew's Gospel you will find out that as a result of the birth of this child, king Herod kills many boy babies and the family, fearful for their lives, flee to Egypt as refugees. Matthew 2.

There are gifts mentioned in Matthew's gospel account of the narrative, but no special food or cosy scenes of a family Christmas get-together. This is the Christmas that we celebrate each year, a young couple with a new baby, born into a smelly barn beside animals and forced to flee to another country for their lives.

Christmas, the birth of Jesus, was never a normal event. How could the birth of God's Son, Jesus Christ ever be normal? Certainly, that first Christmas was not as expected and yet we are still celebrating it over 2000 years later, only we have added to it over the years and altered some of the meaning of it.

We still remember the present giving and receiving but the greatest gift ever, is often overlooked. Jesus came as a gift himself, to make us right with God and with each other. It is a phenomenal gift that is not normal or ordinary but extra ordinary. The amazing part of it too is that it is not ordered online or available at the shop, it is given directly by God. Why don't you ask for your free gift today?

This Christmas I hope and pray you have a joyful and peaceful celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, God's Son. May you be blessed as you enjoy the day with those closest to you and may you know this Jesus in your life.

May God bless you - Jean (Rev Jean Boyd, Minister of Drumoak-Durris Church)

## Important News

Many of you will already be aware of the major changes planned for the national Church of Scotland and will realise the implications this may have for us here at Drumoak-Durris Church. To summarise: -

- All current Presbytery Plans have been suspended, and the General Assembly has instructed all Presbyteries to begin work on a new Presbytery Mission Plan for approval by the General Trustees no later than 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.
- Presbytery of Kincardine & Deeside will join with others to form a new larger Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles.
- Presbytery of Kincardine & Deeside will have to reduce the number of Full Time Ministers from the current 16.8 to 10.5
- The General Trustees have instructed that only essential or urgent repair work on church buildings can take place.
- The General Trustees have stopped all work on the Drumoak Church Refurbishment Project.
- The General Assembly has ruled there can be no new calls for vacancies within parishes.
- The General Trustees have indicated Congregations will need to work towards Linkages and Unions of neighbouring churches.
- The General Trustees have forecast the closure and sale of many of church buildings.

### **DRUMOAK-DURRIS CHURCH WILL BE AFFECTED BY THESE ACTIONS**

Further information is available on the Church of Scotland website - [The Church of Scotland](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/) Alternatively, you can go to our own website [drumoakdurrischurch.org](https://drumoakdurrischurch.org) and click on the following link:

#### **General Assembly 2021: Special Supplement**

Life and Work has released a FREE four-page summary of the main decisions, debates and speeches from last week's General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

It is available [HERE](#) to view or full link:

#### **[General Assembly 2021: Special Supplement - Life & Work.](#)**

If you would like to be kept informed of what is happening in the coming weeks and months, then please register your details with the Drumoak-Durris Church Gmail account - [drumoakdurrischurch2020@g.mail.com](mailto:drumoakdurrischurch2020@g.mail.com)

Even if you know we already have your details on file, to meet the current Data Protection Regulations, the church needs to have your consent to contact you with any church business or news. So please send a message to the above e-mail address, and the church will then be able to keep you informed.

### **A note about the major changes planned**

Church, here in Drumoak Durris Church, as well as elsewhere, is about to change.

#### **What does this mean for us?**

The above article lists some of these changes but what do they mean for us at Drumoak-Durris Church and in the Presbytery of Kincardine and Deeside? This is difficult to explain in full but in short it means we will have fewer ministers in the area, all church buildings will be assessed, and some will close. It also means we need to look at how we do church and consider what shape our congregation will be in the future. Let me look at a few of these changes to explain a little of what they mean.

**Ministers:** the new allocation of ministers for the Presbytery is down from a total of 16.8 full time equivalent ministers to just 10.5. This means not all congregations will have their own minister in future. Currently in our cluster of Lower Deeside there are 5 churches/congregations including Drumoak-Durris, Birse and Feughside, Banchory East, Banchory West and Mid-Deeside. Currently this cluster has 4.5 ministers, and this is likely to change to just 2 or 3 ministers.

**Buildings:** The Church of Scotland generally has too many buildings which need to be updated for use today and this is costly. Some buildings are simply in wrong places. The Church of Scotland would like to discontinue the use of and close half of its buildings. All buildings, including Drumoak Church, Durris Church and Drumoak Church Hall, are being assessed to decide if they are 'well-equipped spaces in the right places.' It is likely that some, if not all, our buildings in this area will close. This decision will not be taken by Drumoak-Durris Church but by Presbytery with the agreement of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland.

**Congregations:** each congregation in Presbytery has been asked to consider how they would manage without a minister and how they could work in a different way. For example, could they unite with another church nearby or a group of churches to form a larger church or would they prefer to dissolve their congregation to merge with another, or something else. Staying as we are is not an option.

### **When will we know more?**

The Presbytery of Kincardine and Deeside is currently consulting congregations about the way forward for congregations and assessing buildings. The new Presbytery Plan must be agreed by Presbytery and the Church of Scotland by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

### **What will happen?**

Currently we do not know the answer to this but church here in Drumoak Durris is very unlikely to be the same as it is now. This is also an exciting time though because it is an opportunity to discuss how we can move forward as a church and how we can work with other Christians locally to fulfil the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

We would appreciate your prayers as we work with Presbytery to plan for the future of church in this area.

**If you would like to be kept informed of what is happening in the coming weeks and months, then please register your details with the Drumoak-Durris Church Gmail account - [drumoakdurrischurch2020@g.mail.com](mailto:drumoakdurrischurch2020@g.mail.com)**

### **Advent and Christmas Services**



The Advent and Christmas services this year include services at Drumoak-Durris Church and also special services and joint events at Banchory Ternan East Church and Peterculter Parish Church. All are welcome to join us at these services and events.

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent 28<sup>th</sup> November at Drumoak Church Hall at 10am

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent 5<sup>th</sup> December at Durris Church at 10am

Blue service at Banchory Ternan East Church 5<sup>th</sup> December at 2pm

Fun Day at Banchory Ternan East Church on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December 10am - Noon

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent 12<sup>th</sup> December at Drumoak Church Hall at 10am

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent 19<sup>th</sup> December at Durris Church at 10am

Blue service on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December at Drumoak Church Hall at 2pm (*for those who are not looking forward to Christmas this year, come for refreshments and an informal time to remember loved ones*).



3pm all age service on 24<sup>th</sup> December Christmas Eve Service at Drumoak Church Hall: Happy Birthday Party (*come dressed up as an angel, a shepherd, a star, as a wise person or as Mary or Joseph, with refreshments and snacks*)

6.30pm All-age worship at Banchory Ternan East Church

Watchnight service on 24<sup>th</sup> December at Peterculter Church at 11.30pm

26<sup>th</sup> December service of Lessons and Carols at Drumoak Church Hall at 10am  
Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2022 at Durris Church 10am, the first service for the new year.

All of the above events are subject to COVID-19 guidelines of the time. Please check [www.drumoakdurrischurch.org](http://www.drumoakdurrischurch.org) for further updates and any changes.

## **Fundraising Events**

### **Donations in support of Afghan Refugees:**

In response to the Afghan Crisis, an amount of £126-00 was sent to UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), and an amount of £126-50 was forwarded to the British Red Cross. Many thanks to all who contributed to this collection.

### **Donations at the Harvest Thanksgiving Service:**

From the collection following Harvest Thanksgiving an amount of £76-50 was sent to Durris School, which supports ActionAid, and an amount of £76-50 was given to Drumoak School, which was supporting the local foodbank. Thank you to all those who donated.

### **Gift Day**

The General Assembly has called for a National Gift Day so that churches can raise funds for their own congregation. Our total Gift Day collection, held on 10<sup>th</sup> October, was £1107-00, which is eligible for Gift Aid, realising a total of £1383-75. We wish to express our grateful thanks to all those who gave so generously. Anyone who would still like to donate can do so by dropping off their donation to Marion McNeil, Session Clerk, 12 Keithmuir Gardens, Drumoak, AB31 5AA.

### **Blythswood Shoebox Appeal**

A total of 30 shoeboxes were donated.  
Many thanks to all who contributed to this Appeal.



### **Drumoak-Durris Friendship Club**



Amy and the Committee would like to wish the Friendship Club members well and we hope to maybe meet together around Christmas.

Find us on 

<https://www.drumoakdurrischurch.org>

## Drumoak and Durris Community Group

The Drumoak and Durris Community Group held its AGM on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November and a change in the management committee was undertaken. Duncan Wight and Sandra White wished to step down from their roles as Chair and Secretary respectively and Kevin McPhee-Smith and Robyn Campbell were voted into the positions. Duncan and Sandra will be staying on with Community Group and we would like to thank them for all the hard work they have done over the past 6 years. Also standing down from the group is Marion McNeill, who has been involved with the group as treasurer from the very beginning until last year and we would like to give a big thank you to Marion for all her involvement over the years. Elaine Harkins is now the treasurer of the group.

The group will be coming out with an event calendar for next year which will have something for everybody and, covid permitting, will be throughout the year.

After a low-key Christmas Tree switch on last year, we are happy to say we will have the switch on of the Christmas Tree lights on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December, with live music and singing. Event will be from 1630-1800 with tree switch on at 1700. More information will be put out closer to the time through the Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/drumoakdurriscommunitydeesideddcg>

Happy Christmas and all the best for New Year from DDCG

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## ILLCIT DISTILLING IN DURRIS: A SPIRITUAL TALE

In the 1838 Statistical Account there is reference to the number of inns located in the parish of Durris. The Minister noted, with a measure of disapproval, that there were four inns in the parish which, in his opinion, was too many; one, or at most two, would have sufficed. Whilst four might seem somewhat excessive given the size of the parish, it needs to be remembered that at least two major drove roads passed through the parish.

Drovers moving south with their cattle and then returning to north Aberdeenshire after their journey were likely to have been thirsty from their travels. So, it would not be entirely surprising if there had been a number of inns where the fords crossed the Dee. But the river was also used by loggers bringing timber down the Dee to Aberdeen. And it is known that there was at least one a logger's inn located at the ford opposite Dalmaik farm. It is a moot point as to how much of the liquor dispensed was lawfully made! What is known is that there was another source of alcohol in Durris parish. That fact was reported, not in the local press but in the *Oxford University and City Herald* of the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1812!

*On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> inst. a discovery was made of an illegal distillery situated on the burn of Sheeoch, which runs through the Grampian hills, in the parish of Durris in Kincardineshire by Mr. Gillespie, Officer of Excise. The situation of the hut was so aptly chosen, and the hut itself so carefully built and covered with heath, that its roof appeared to compose part of the surface of the hill, and it could not have been discovered by an indifferent observer. It was 20 feet long and 14 broad. The still contained about 35 gallons, and the quantity of wash discovered amounted to 275; so that the weekly consumption of the distillery could not have averaged less than 20 bolls of barley. Mr Gillespie was aided in giving effect to the discovery, which he had made, by a party of the Kincardineshire militia staff.*

A search of local newspapers covering Kincardineshire and Aberdeenshire for December 1812 revealed no mention of this discovery. That does not mean that no local papers covered the story, simply that no newspaper archival evidence was found. What is not in doubt is that long-term community collusion in various parts of Scotland – including Durris – allowed the development of very effective and long-lasting hiding places for large amounts of spirit. Routines for raising the alert included optical signalling via fires, smoke, and flags. Also, close relationships were developed with local members of the judiciary, and even certain members of the Excise service!

Inevitably, situations arose when none of these preventative strategies were of any use, and amid enormous demand – particularly in Scotland's thirsty port towns – whisky had to be smuggled from the interior to the coast by unarmed men and women in broad daylight and in plain sight of the authorities. Such expeditions led to the exercise of great ingenuity: with women wearing two-gallon 'belly canteens' made of sheet iron, simulating pregnancy bumps; phoney funeral processions convened simply to move whisky from point A to point B in the coffins or hearses; and bottles concealed in the heavy black knapsacks of pseudo-soldiers, and even in unplucked dead geese!

*slaintè mhaith*

**Robin Jackson**

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### Durris WI

This September we managed to meet up for our first face to face WI meeting. It was so lovely to catch up with members of our group at our Back Together Blether. Some of us hadn't seen each other since March 2020, so it was nice to chat and find out what we had all been up to and discuss and organise this year's syllabus.

In October we enjoyed a fun night of Bingo and Beetle at the Hall organised by the committee.

Winnie Reid was presented with the Aileen Melvin Cup. This is a new competition cup awarded annually for the single bloom competition, which is run monthly over the year at each meeting. At the November meeting, with Christmas approaching, we plan to make our own Christmas Wreaths.

Our December meeting will be in the form of a Christmas and Birthday meal out at a local venue.

If you fancy coming along to our meetings, please get in touch with any of our members or contact us through our Facebook page Durris Womens Institute.

New members and visitors are always welcome

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## RIVER DEE RADIO

### **River Dee Radio celebrates!**

Most of the regular readers of the Drumoak and Durris newsletter, we hope, will know about River Dee Radio, Deeside's local community radio station. Last month River Dee Radio celebrated five years as an internet-based radio station. Quite an achievement for the group of presenters that have been creating programmes throughout the initial years and the pandemic. If you're new to River Dee Radio you can tune into your favourite programmes from anywhere in the world, at any time. All you need is a computer, mobile phone or tablet to download the River Dee Radio App.

The weekly schedule continues to change on a regular basis with new shows and new presenters. We hope you can find time to listen to our quality programmes. Presenters have continued to create weekly shows from home and regular listeners to River Dee Radio will know that we provide a wide range of music to suit all tastes from Easy listening to Rock and Roll, Country and Classical. We also provide local information, local interviews and promote events, sports, arts and businesses. Recently we have added weekly shows in Jazz, Rockabilly and Blues music and a programme entitled "A Time to Read". One of our new presenters lives in Drumoak, Gordon Watson who produces a weekly programme called Rock Billy Boogie. An hour of Rockabilly music.

November and December are busy times for the station, and we look forward to celebrating St Andrew's Day and the Festive period. We would encourage listeners to get in touch with RDR. We are offering you the chance to send a message or request a song to thank businesses, organisations and friends for all their hard work during 2021. We will gladly send your best wishes all over the world. We are, also, very happy to promote local businesses, local community events and local activities. Just use our email address [riverdeeradio@gmail.com](mailto:riverdeeradio@gmail.com) or our Facebook page to contact us and we'll get in touch and place a message/music request on one of our shows.

We are aiming, by the time you are reading this, that we will have a new website address. This will be [www.riverdeeradio.org](http://www.riverdeeradio.org). There you can listen to the live stream, find the weekly schedule and listen to previous programmes. There is also a weekly roundup of programmes if you've missed them and lots of information about downloading the app and links to Facebook and Mixcloud.

We are always looking to extend the team, so if you are interested in joining us whether as a presenter or technical support just use the email address to contact us.

And finally, River Dee Radio wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe and healthy 2022.

### **HOMEOWNERS – IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**In February 2019 the Legislation relating to smoke detection in your home changed.**

**All domestic properties in Durris/Drumoak could be affected.**

**You need to have the following: -**

- **One smoke alarm installed in the room most frequently used for general daytime living purposes.**
  - **One smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallway and landing.**
    - **One heat alarm installed in every kitchen.**
    - **All fire alarms are to be ceiling mounted and must be interlinked.**
  - **Carbon monoxide detectors are to be fitted where there are carbon fuelled appliances (such as boilers, fires, open fires, heaters, stoves, or a flue).**

### **The Regulations come into effect in February 2022.**

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## Tales from the Riverbank by Robert Harper

The River Dee 2021 fishing season ended once again on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October with just over 2000 salmon and grilse caught. This was a little better than 2020 but considering 2020 lost ten weeks with lockdown, it's still not a very rosy picture. The spring fishing was disappointing having looked promising early on with cold conditions and big snow fields on the higher ground, alas end of February saw a big change in rising air temperatures, snow melt in a big way, snow that we had hoped would keep water levels good through to at least end of April but within 10 days most of the snow had gone. The Lower Crathes height gauge showed spate heights varying between 6ft and 14ft for this 10-day period. Then we had that long period of dry cold weather resulting in the river heights drop to low levels, fishing conditions were far from good. The Autumn on the Dee was a story as with many rivers a lack of fresh salmon entering the systems. Thankfully the summer months did produce fish for several beats including Park with a very good July 94 fish, August a great 135 fish and 128 during September and October, giving a season total of 401. Lower Blackhall and Banchory had 116 for July and finished with 198 for season, very well done to both beats.



***April 2021 Low Water.***



***21st Feb 2021 Durris Bridge over 12ft.***

Jim Paton a very good friend and ghillie colleague retired during the season from Upper Drum & Lower Durris, wishing Jim a long and happy retirement, Jim's waders have been filled by his son Terry who has been ghillieing on the Dee for several years now and a spell on the River Tyne. Here at Lower Crathes young ghillie Daniel Wright has also moved on to a new job on the river Tay. Good luck to Terry and Daniel in your new positions.

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## Durris-Kirkton Hall

Despite the Hall being closed due to the current pandemic, the management committee have been kept busy maintaining the Hall.

Over the past year, while the Hall has not been in use, we have had the main hall, stairwell, upstairs meeting room and toilets redecorated. We have also had some external work done with the outside south and west wall of the hall being repointed.

The committee have been busy attending to the garden over the summer, weeding the borders, planting up some old tyres with some bedding plants and creating a wildflower space. The shed has been re roofed and painted and the garden furniture has been restrained.

We also have a new resource for the community to utilise in the form of a book swap project.



The Book Bothy arrived at the Hall in September and is located in the Hall carpark. The door is unlocked, and we invite all members of the community to come along and donate books to the Bothy or collect books.

The Hall has also had a deep clean prior to opening up again for public use.

Since September some of our regular user groups have been meeting back up at the Hall and we have had some new users booking events with us too.

The Bowling Club meet every Tuesday evening and the WI meet on the second Monday evening of each month at 7:30 pm.

Our AGM is booked for the 8th of December at 7:30 pm to which members of the community are invited along. We currently have 2 members leaving the committee and we are actively seeking new members for the Hall Management Committee. Please get in touch with us if you would like to get involved

[duurriskirktonhall@gmail.com](mailto:duurriskirktonhall@gmail.com)

Meanwhile we would like to welcome you all back to the Hall and wish you all a lovely Christmas and a Happy New Year.





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## Vitamin Dee

As I stepped slowly into the cold water, I felt it bite... taking control of my breath I allowed my body to calm so I could carefully submerge myself.... slow, deep, breathing... in a moment or two the familiar feeling of being enveloped in the cold water made me smile...



Cold water swimming has had something of a revolution in lockdown. While needing to be undertaken safely with respect for the power of nature & our own vulnerabilities, the benefits are becoming increasingly recognised.

Dating back hundreds of years "sea-therapy" with bathing huts is well documented. The healing effects of "blue-spaces" are less well known. In this fast world we live in it's easy to let the "fight or flight" (or Sympathetic Nervous System-SNS) response become overactive. Studies have shown that being able to harness our breathing in scenarios which "stress" the body...such as cold-water swimming... help us to remain calm in other situations & is common to the benefits of yoga, mindfulness & hypnotherapy, boosting the opposite of the SNS, the Parasympathetic Nervous System, allowing us to relax.

The cold water itself appears to have many benefits. A "cold-shock" protein has been identified in the blood of regular cold-water swimmers at the University of Cambridge, thought to slow the onset of dementia. The mood boosting effects are well documented with neuroscientists identifying increased levels (250%) of dopamine -giving us feelings of pleasure & reward- as well as serotonin, improving our mood & easing tension. Other seen to benefit are those with difficult menopausal symptoms as well as joint pains, including those with long-Covid. The bottom line is that after a cold-water swim you feel pretty good!

However, as with any sport in the great outdoors, it has to be undertaken carefully. Hypothermia & Swimming induced pulmonary oedema are amongst the risks, even in those well adapted to the cold. For this reason, those who swim through winter do so in groups, taking responsibility for themselves, ensuring their whereabouts are known, not under the influence of alcohol or jumping in but thinking of entry & exit points, river speed & turbulence, before entering the water. Ensuring visibility in the water, considering a bright swim hat or tow-float & having warm, dry clothes to change into quickly afterwards are important. Of course, you should seek medical advice if you have health concerns before entering the water. Some who take to the water are stronger swimmers, preferring a longer swim in wetsuits, others preferring a wee "dook" to brighten the day. Remaining aware of individual limits is crucial & that every swim is different, depending on how you are feeling that day, water & air temperature etc. This is vitally important to avoid feeling very uncomfortable afterwards. There are many local wild water swimming groups on-line happy to accept new members. [Check out www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com), [www.rnli.org](http://www.rnli.org), [www.wildswimming.co.uk](http://www.wildswimming.co.uk), Cold Water Swimming Webinar with Prof Mike Tipton & Dr Heather Massey (Jan 2021)for more information.

There are obviously benefits being amongst the beauty of nature, out of the water. When people are feeling low or anxious it's common to ruminate on negative thoughts. One study has shown that just looking at awe inspiring views activates areas of the nervous system which control relaxation. Cognitively this gives the brain a "rest" & feels restorative. Spending time in beautiful places creates a sense of wonder, with a growing body of research suggesting significant effects on mental & physical health. When you do find yourself struck by an incredible view, take a few moments to allow it all to sink in, the constancy & vastness can feel comforting.

Rhythms & patterns in plants, ice crystals & trees have a soothing effect on our brains. These are known as fractal patterns- repeating smaller & smaller copies of themselves which are familiar, soothing & mesmerising. The phytoncides (chemicals secreted by trees & plants) reduce the stress hormones we secrete- reducing our blood pressure & improving our immune system, thanks in part to an increase in "natural killer" cells. The outcome of this is a reduction in "fight or flight" activity- calming the nervous system, leaving us feeling calmer & more relaxed.

So, whether we want to just look & enjoy, allowing our minds to settle & become more mindful, or want to join with others in safely enjoying the cold water suffice it to say we are lucky in Deeside having these options available with Vitamin Dee on our doorstep.

Dr Jennifer Sudder

[www.promoting-health.co.uk](http://www.promoting-health.co.uk)

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### [Peterculter Medical Practice Article 3](#)

At the practice we are continuing, as you all are, to work and live within the government guidance relating to Covid 19. Please continue to follow the guidance to seek a Covid 19 test for any new symptoms of cough, fever or loss of sense of smell (even if you have been double vaccinated). Remember lateral flow tests are not reliable if you have symptoms - if you have any one of the main symptoms of Covid 19 you must book a PCR test. This can be organised via the NHS Inform website or by calling 111.

Annual reviews are running for chronic conditions such as asthma, COPD, high blood pressure and diabetes. As always, the practice will contact you for these, but this may not be when you would usually expect. This is because these were paused for a period last year.

Flu vaccinations are being organised centrally, not by GP practices, so if you have any queries, please contact 0800 030 4713 for Aberdeen City and 0330 128 9919 for Aberdeenshire. We would like to encourage everyone who is entitled to the flu vaccine to consider the benefits of getting it.

As always at this time of year, we are seeing increasing numbers of contacts about children with coughs, colds and sore throats. Generally, the vast majority of these childhood illnesses are caused by viruses not bacteria and, as such, do not require antibiotics (which do not work on viruses). The main measures we recommend are giving paracetamol to keep temperatures down and ensuring they drink plenty. More information on how to care for children with these types of illnesses, and when you should contact us, can be found in the 'when to worry' booklet available on our practice website. The local pharmacies are also able to give advice on these and other minor illnesses.

Dr Jennifer MacDonald

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### [Crathes Hall – November 2021 update](#)

#### **Join Us!**

Crathes Public Hall Trust has changed its constitution to become a membership organisation.

Membership is FREE and open to anyone over 16 who supports the hall and lives in Crathes or the surrounding AB31 postcode area.

Become a member and have a say. More members will help us with funding applications for the new hall. Join from the website <https://www.crathes-hall.co.uk>



In addition to our ongoing work to seek funds for the new hall, we are in discussion with the NTS about the potential purchase of Station wood, 2.2 acres of woodland surrounding the hall. This would become a community woodland and with community support, we may be able to access funding for this project. To offer your support and ideas or to find out more sign up to our mailing list, link also on the website or email [mail.cratheshall@gmail.com](mailto:mail.cratheshall@gmail.com)

The hall is very busy with regular groups and with 2 music events in November, Dowally on 12<sup>th</sup> and Madam Tsunami on 27<sup>th</sup>. There is a children's puppet show on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November at 3pm. All details on the website or the hall Facebook page. Our famous Crathes Fly resumed after lockdown for the first time on Saturday 2nd October with 35 folks attending and next Flys are on 6 November and 4 December.

The Hogmanay Ceilidh is SOLD Out but look out for other ceilidhs in the hall in 2022.

Consider getting a table of friends together for our fundraising black-tie ball to be held next year on 1<sup>st</sup> October at the Marcliffe Hotel, with a fabulous band Slinky. TICKETS: £1000 FOR A TABLE OF TEN, OR £100 PER PERSON

Contact: Neil McHattie on 07980 618890 or [neil@crathes.com](mailto:neil@crathes.com)

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### Park Bridge Update November 2021



We are delighted to have some positive news to report! Following a further letter from Park Bridge Action Group to the CEO of Aberdeenshire Council, we have been advised that £750,000 has been allocated in the budget for 2024 for the repair of Park Bridge. This is great news because we now know that the bridge will be maintained. However, the less good news is, so far, the intention is to keep it closed to traffic. We will be lobbying

hard to ensure that if this sort of money is being spent, the community is able to use the bridge for light vehicles. We think there will be a lot of support to re-open it with this sort of funding. In fact, we think it's madness to spend this amount on the bridge and not put it back into service!

Some of you may have noticed that the council has done some work on the bridge, some of the pointing has been done and drainage added to the north abutment. While this is encouraging, the work is not quite as effective as it could be as surface water needs to be prevented from running down through the stonework of the abutments and this can still happen. We appreciate that it is a start though and our understanding is that the council intend to do more this winter. In addition, the council have appointed a new engineer who has responsibility for Park Bridge and is in communication with us. There are now 4 engineers for the 1500 bridges in Aberdeenshire, so we don't expect the new engineer to be solely focused on Park Bridge, but we are encouraged that he's in touch with us.

So, three things have happened since the last update that are moving in the right direction. We'll get there!

We can be contacted on [info@parkbridgeactiongroup.com](mailto:info@parkbridgeactiongroup.com) or visit our website at <https://www.parkbridgeactiongroup.com> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/SaveParkBridge>

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






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## Walking with Peter Richardson

Our No Name Walking Group has enjoyed a mixture of enjoyable, challenging, relaxing, gentle walks since May this year. As has been described before, we walk every Tuesday alternating between "longer" walks of about 15k to 28km and "shorter" walks of up to, but rarely exceeding, 12km. The motto for the latter is "on the hills, around the hills, between the hills but not up the hills"; these walks suit companions who have some or other fitness problem and who want to be out in the hills but can't climb them.

Compared to the hills elsewhere in Britain, here in Aberdeenshire we are blessed with an abundance of hills within easy reach and yet an absence of crowds. Saying that, we were surprised one day in June to walk up to Carnferg from the Boat Inn in Aboyne and to meet a group from the Legion, two cyclists at the monument (must have been tough going even with 64 gears), two walkers and four ponies and riders. And again, in June, on a walk along the north bank of Loch Muick to Glas Allt Shiel, we came across hordes of walkers. Talking of Loch Muick, on another occasion we took a shorter walk along the south bank to the bridge over the Black Burn. On that occasion the weather was not so fair but so long as one has the right clothing the weather is not a problem.



*Loch Muick, looking back to  
Broad Cairn and Glas Allt Shiel.*





There's no charge for joining in the walks but over the years we've developed the habit of dropping a couple of pounds into a kitty which we then disburse, mainly to the Mountain Bothy Association and to the Braemar Mountain Rescue Association. The latter hosted us to a tour of their premises in Braemar and gave us a very enlightening talk describing their work. We came away with several tips, including but not limited to even in summer take more clothes than you think you need; take more pairs of gloves, summer or winter; don't rely on water alone, you need essential salts; always, always tell someone where you are going; know how to use a map and compass; have some or other signaling device.

Most walkers know of the BMRA, but the MBA is less well known. They maintain about 100 bothies in Scotland which are open to anybody without charge. That being said, it does take money to keep the bothies watertight and weatherproof and we're glad to have donated £165 since March this year, as well as some of our group being members. Two remote bothies in our area are Corrour Bothy and the Shielin of Mark. Corrour Bothy is a long hike of about 28km there and back from the Linn of Dee, but the Shielin of Mark is 10km give or take a few hundred metres from the Spittal of Muick car park. (One might ask; why is it the Spittal of Muick with two "t"s but Spital Cottage at Dye?) Few of the bothies have anything more sophisticated than a spade for "the conveniences" but the Corrour Bothy has a chemical toilet. The volunteer work force empty the bags (don't ask) at appropriate intervals and store them nearby ready for the annual helicopter lift off. No doubt the pilots have a pithy name for that run.



Every year, we climb a couple of Munros. This year, we went up Beinn Bhreac and Carn a'



Choire Bhoidheach. Both are very satisfactory walks with no technical difficulty. Well, not if you avoid coming straight down from Meall an Lundain.

Getting to the Angus glens, Glen Clova and Glen Lee for example, is a bit of a longer drive but they are well worth the effort. From the Clova Hotel, there is a very interesting 16km walk

around Lochs Brandy and Wharral going up the west side of Brandy via the Snub then round to Green Hill, above Wharral, White Hill, The Goet, Ben Tirran and down to the road. There's an evocative memorial overlooking the lochs to Marine Luke Ireland who died on a training run in November 2014.



The weather stayed remarkably fair for most of October which allowed us to have a very satisfying 18km circuit starting from Kieloch taking us past the cottages at Balnoe and Balmore to Auchtavan and returning via Invercauld. The morning was misty with drizzle but yet again we finished in bright sunshine. At Auchtavan there is a cottage known as the Queen Mother's Cottage, and the "hingin lum" cottage and a Horse Mill which have been restored by the Braemar Community Ltd and are open to the public on certain days – the Horse Mill is always open. This is a walk which anyone can do, no need for a guide but as always have the appropriate clothing and footwear.

For a change of vista, we visited the Forvie Nature Reserve and then walked through Collieston to Old Slains Castle, not to be confused with New Slains Castle. The history of these castles is redolent of the turbulent times in Scotland. The New castle started as a tower house in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and was rebuilt in the 1830s as a baronial mansion. It is also linked to Bram Stoker and possibly the octagonal room in "Dracula" is modelled on the octagonal hall in the castle. The Old castle, of which only a ruin of one wall remains, dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. As most readers know, the Ythan estuary is home to as many as 2,000 grey seals; we saw one in Haughey Bay.



***Posing beside Old Slains Castle.***  
***seal.***

***Haughey Bay, without the solitary***

Over the years we've developed a habit of a walk which combines long and short and allows walkers of all abilities to walk together. The longer walk is from Inverbervie to Johnshaven and the shorter is from Gourdon.





Bards Bridge, Haughs of Benholm

The two groups meet in Gourdon and go on to Johnshaven for lunch in the Anchor Hotel. On the route, one passes the Haughs of Benholm, upstream of which lies Benholm Mill. Until recently, there was a visitor centre with a coffee shop and a sort of museum there but sadly it's all closed now.

We welcome everyone. All we ask is that you want to walk, you're happy to walk whether it's fair weather or not, that you have a sense of humour and, most importantly, that you will take responsibility for yourself. If you're interested, please get in touch with Ronnie Mitchell or Peter Richardson.

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[From the Editor](#) Thanks to all the different contributors over the year, it makes really interesting reading. Many thanks to all the distributors of the newsletter, without you there would be no newsletter.

We would like to thank all our advertisers and wish a happy retirement to Val Muir who has supported us for a number of years.

Next year we will, hopefully, get back to 4 issues and bring you more and varied content.

Remember, this is your newsletter so if you have an article on any subject, please drop me it to me

[editorddnews@btinternet.com](mailto:editorddnews@btinternet.com)

Happy Christmas and all the best for the New Year from the Editorial Team.

Many thanks

Kevin

# Gardening & Odd Jobs



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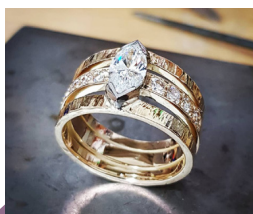


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#### DRUMOAK & DURRIS NEWSLETTER

This Newsletter has been published quarterly for over 20 years. Firstly as a community service by Drumoak-Durris Church of Scotland, and more recently by the Drumoak & Durris Community Group. It is produced and delivered FREE by volunteers to all households in Drumoak and Durris.

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