

BLACKHALL BULLETIN

December 2020

PRODUCED BY BLACKHALL ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH FOR THE COMMUNITY

No. 162

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adore Him*



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Greetings to all in the Blackhall community.

“And have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them.” Exodus 25:8 NRSV

This was the direction of God to Moses whilst the people of Israel were still in the wilderness seeking the promised land. They were, at that time, nomadic and lived in tents. It was fitting then that the 'sanctuary' the Jewish people built for the Lord their God was also in the form of a tent, a Tabernacle, which could be taken with the people wherever their wanderings took them.

Eventually, once the people of Israel settled, God had them build a temple, a solid physical construction to allow the people a place to come to and worship. The temple was much more than a mere place of worship though. It became the very centre of the community. People would meet there, discuss things and make decisions on matters relating to the community and, as part of their worship, hold communal celebratory events there.



Much later on, Egypt was to feature in the story of God's 'new temple'. As we approach Christmas, many will remember the now very familiar story of Jesus' birth, 'The Nativity'. However, many people, even those who are regular Church attenders, tend to stop the story just after Jesus' birth. If we read the Gospel according to Matthew, then we see the additional story of Joseph's and Mary's flight to Egypt with the new born baby Jesus in order to avoid the wrath of King Herod. After Herod dies, the family are able to return from exile in Egypt and set up home in Galilee

As Christmas approaches, it seems to many of us that we have been 'exiled' from our Church buildings. The sanctuary has been shut for refurbishment and the time when we have been forced to worship away from the sanctuary has been extended by the coronavirus and the ensuing pandemic restrictions.

However, as Christians, we at Blackhall St Columba's, have read, in Acts 7:48, "Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands." We understand that God is everywhere in everyone. This does not mean that a sanctuary, a place to where we can go to encounter God with like-minded individuals, is not important. However, the sanctuary we are called to build for God is in our individual hearts, souls and minds. There, he will dwell among us.

Christians believe that Jesus' coming was foretold. The Book of Isaiah was written around 740BC and, at chapter 7 verse 14 it is written: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel." The name Immanuel, one of the many given to Jesus, is Hebrew and literally means 'God is with us'.

It is the knowledge and surety of God's presence that has made our 'exile' from our buildings bearable. The time of waiting is now over. Albeit with restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we are planning to begin worshipping in our beautiful, refurbished sanctuary on the first Sunday in Advent, Sunday 20th November 2020. As we are restricted in numbers, we plan to move to live-streaming our services. This should not be such a big change for many as we have been holding our services on-line since the beginning of lockdown. Because of the ongoing and ever-changing rules we follow to keep people safe, if you plan on coming to the Church this Christmas, then please do check our website at <https://www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk> first. The website will contain all the latest and up to date information on what services are available, how to participate in them and how to book a place in the sanctuary.

Our Church buildings are a key part of how we build our own personal sanctuaries which allow God to dwell within us. Our mission statement, at the Church, is "to glorify God....to proclaim Christ....to serve others". I firmly believe that it is by our service to others that we can achieve the first two parts of the statement. Christmas is a time when we can spiritually all come together regardless of how far apart we have to be physically.

It is important, during these times of uncertainty, to maintain a semblance of normality whilst acknowledging and adapting to the changes around us. The Church at Blackhall St Columba's has been here since before any of us were born. It will be here long after we are gone. The reason that the Church will survive is because it exists to serve the community of Blackhall.

As things return to a degree of normality, and I have absolute faith that things will return to normal at some point in the future, then you should make an effort to come and see what has been done to refurbish the sanctuary. We are hopeful that the changes, the removal of pews, underfloor heating, the addition of screens and a state-of-the-art sound systems etc will allow for numerous different ways for us to come together as a community. In the meantime, why not take a look at our website? It has information about how we continue, as a Church, to glorify God, to proclaim Christ and to serve others.

Best wishes and blessings to all
Fergus Cook

A new chapter in the life of Blackhall St Columba's



The Church of Scotland has a vision to ensure its churches are “**Well Equipped Spaces in the Right Places**”.

Back in 1900 when Blackhall St Columba's Church on Queensferry Road was first established, the population of the area was much smaller than it is now, but the church was very definitely **in the right place** as the area has grown around it. Each generation since then has done its bit to ensure the church has continued to meet the needs of parishioners and the wider community.

In 2017, the Kirk Session agreed to the latest enhancements to the church being undertaken, and the congregation set about raising £1.1million for the first phase of renovation work. The generosity of members was overwhelming and very quickly pledges and donations, together with the sale of a property, meant that the required funding was in place.

A design team led by Alan Thomson of Lee Boyd Architects produced an inspiring vision for the interior of the church. As well as a major cosmetic face lift, a significant part of the project was to replace all aging electrical and mechanical infrastructure with up to date, efficient and more environmentally friendly heating and lighting. This, together with a substantial investment in audio and visual equipment has resulted in St Columba's becoming a very **well-equipped space**.

There were a few important principles which we wanted to adhere to. Firstly, we had to be good stewards of the money that had been so generously given and spend it wisely. We also wanted to maintain the character of the building.

The Steering Group agreed with the Kirk Session to appoint John Dennis (Scotland) Ltd to undertake the main contract and D3 Audio and Visual Ltd to provide the sound and vision systems.

Our project plan for completion ten months from start in August 2019 was thrown into disarray by Covid 19. However, the project completed in October 2020 and the results are transformational.

The 120-year-old pews have been removed. Many of them were bought by members or others linked to the church. Most of the remainder went for architectural salvage or to projects like the Grassmarket Project where old wood is repurposed into new pieces (including a new lectern for the church). A local carpenter also made items from some of the pew wood and picture frames and chopping boards were bought by members and friends.



Replacing the aged floorboards with a light oak floor has in itself made the interior feel brighter. But the replacement of existing small-scale drop lights with 2m diameter LED “halos” has dramatically enhanced light levels in the church. Additional feature lighting in the side and balcony areas complete what has been a true transformation of the sense of light and energy in the building.

Fabric from Bute Fabrics Ltd in Rothesay was chosen for the main seating in the building. It features a finely woven design of a ram’s head, fitting well with the idea of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Replacing the pews with chairs has made the space very flexible in its use. We can move the seating into any formation we choose from full theatre style seating for up to 300, to cabaret style, or small group areas. The church lends itself to potentially having 2-3 separate groups using it simultaneously.



A resource area equipped with Video screen, white board and pin board is ideal for small seminars, or study groups, while the provision of tea/coffee making facilities makes a Café Church a clear option. Ceilidhs, concerts and other performances are also possible. An extended chancel area brings those leading worship or performing, closer to the congregation or audience.

While there have been many changes, the character of the building has been maintained with the original pulpit still in place. The chancel seating and other furniture has also been retained and the magnificent organ has been carefully protected, then cleaned and re-tuned ready for use.

I hoped people would come in and say ‘wow’ when they saw what had been done. One of the first people outside the project team to come in was the organ tuner, and he said just that....it made all the hard work worthwhile.

It may be some time before we can use this fantastic space to its full potential, but we are definitely now equipped for the 21st Century.

Fay Stirling
Project Manager

Fresh Start managed to reopen their warehouse for starter pack donations on a “RING BEFORE YOU BRING” basis at the end of October. The phone number is: 0131 476 7741. As restrictions may have changed please visit Fresh Start’s website for the current position and a list of the items which are needed for starter packs. Fresh Start can **only** accept items on the list as space in the warehouse is limited. See here to find items on the list: <https://www.freshstartweb.org.uk/>

WE HOPE TO RESTART THE WEEKLY COLLECTION IN THE CHURCH HALLS BEFORE TOO LONG.

COOKERS FOR CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN 2020

This year has been tough on everyone and many people will be feeling added pressure with further lockdown measures coming into place that will put their livelihoods in jeopardy.

Christmas is meant to feel like a joyous time to celebrate and have fun, but imagine not being able to make Christmas dinner, or even make a simple meal for the family every night?

Cookers for Christmas aims to help people who have moved into their new tenancy following a period of homelessness and provide them with the white goods they need in their new home.

We know that everyone is struggling more than ever this year, but we would really appreciate any support you can give. Please help to make someone's Christmas that little bit more special this year.

<https://www.justgiving.com/cam.../CookersForChristmas2020...>



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THERE WILL ALWAYS BE CHRISTMAS



but

unfortunately, there will be no WAƒCH Committee Christmas Fair at Blackhall St. Columba’s this year. We have had to give up any hope of having over three hundred happy people in the church premises on 28th November due to the continuing pandemic.

We had not chosen a charity for this year as we did not wish to cause uncertainty or disappointment. However, we will be planning our usual program of events to raise funds to support a local charity next year in the fervent hope that life can get back to some form of normality. We hope that the community and local businesses will be able to support our fundraising as they have done so wonderfully in previous years.

Last year WAƒCH Committee events raised over £8,000 which was shared between Kindred and Beach Wheelchairs Portobello. Kindred continue to provide support for families of children with complex needs and Beach Wheelchairs are using our donation to purchase a new chair and accessories for children.

On a recent visit to Portobello I saw some of the wheelchairs including a well-used version of the children’s chair.

George Millar

Convener WAƒCH Committee



WAƒCH WAƒCH WAƒCH WAƒCH WAƒCH WAƒCH



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“In the Bleak Midwinter.....”

It’s chilly November now and, by the time you read the winter edition of our Bulletin, you may well identify with the opening words of Christina Rossetti’s poem. Set to music for The English Hymnal by Gustav Holst in 1906, it has become one of the carols that regularly features in Christmas services throughout the UK – you may even have heard it sung already, as we look forward to this year’s celebrations.

Yet, chilly or not, today the woods around Blackhall are still glowing with their autumn leaves – every shade, from golden brown to russet red –with a colourful rustling carpet as we walk through. In many of our gardens, too, there are still late apples, ready to be stewed and enjoyed in a crumble or as a heathier dessert with a little yogurt or crème fraiche. It’s been a beautiful season, a time of “mellow fruitfulness” despite the often wild weather, but the cycle of nature is taking its course and many of the trees will soon be bare and barren.

Yet life goes on and as the fallen leaves turn to leaf mould, they become soil through which new plants will emerge. The trees themselves, though seeming dead for a while, continue to grow from the roots up and, before we are even aware of them, tiny tight buds form on the branches, ready to blossom again in their time.

Chekhov, the Russian playwright, encourages us to “appreciate there will be times when the trees will be bare, and look forward to the time when we may pick the fruit again”.

In our own lives, too, there come times that seem barren - challenging times when joy seems elusive and peace is hard to find. Yet these are the very times when we grow as people, when we develop courage to face circumstances that cause us to fear, when we gain strength to cope with the demands that are made of us, and resilience to enable us to encourage others.

Of course, it can be so hard to face difficulties on our own. However positive we try to be, we may come to the end of our inner resources – and often our usual “supports” prove to be least effective when we need them most. That’s when turning to faith may be the very best step we can take. Many of the writers of the Bible compare people to trees, being rooted and grounded in “living water”, growing and bearing good fruit. And even if our belief is barely tangible, our faith hardly discernible, it can have a big impact on our lives if we allow God to intervene.

As Christine Rossetti concludes, in her simple yet profound final couplet:
“What I can, I give Him...
 .Give my heart.”

Just look forward in faith to all the new life that is in store.

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KNIT AND NATTER

We are all still disappointed that we can't meet up on a Monday evening, but as they say, "That's Life", so we just have to follow the rules and hope for the best.

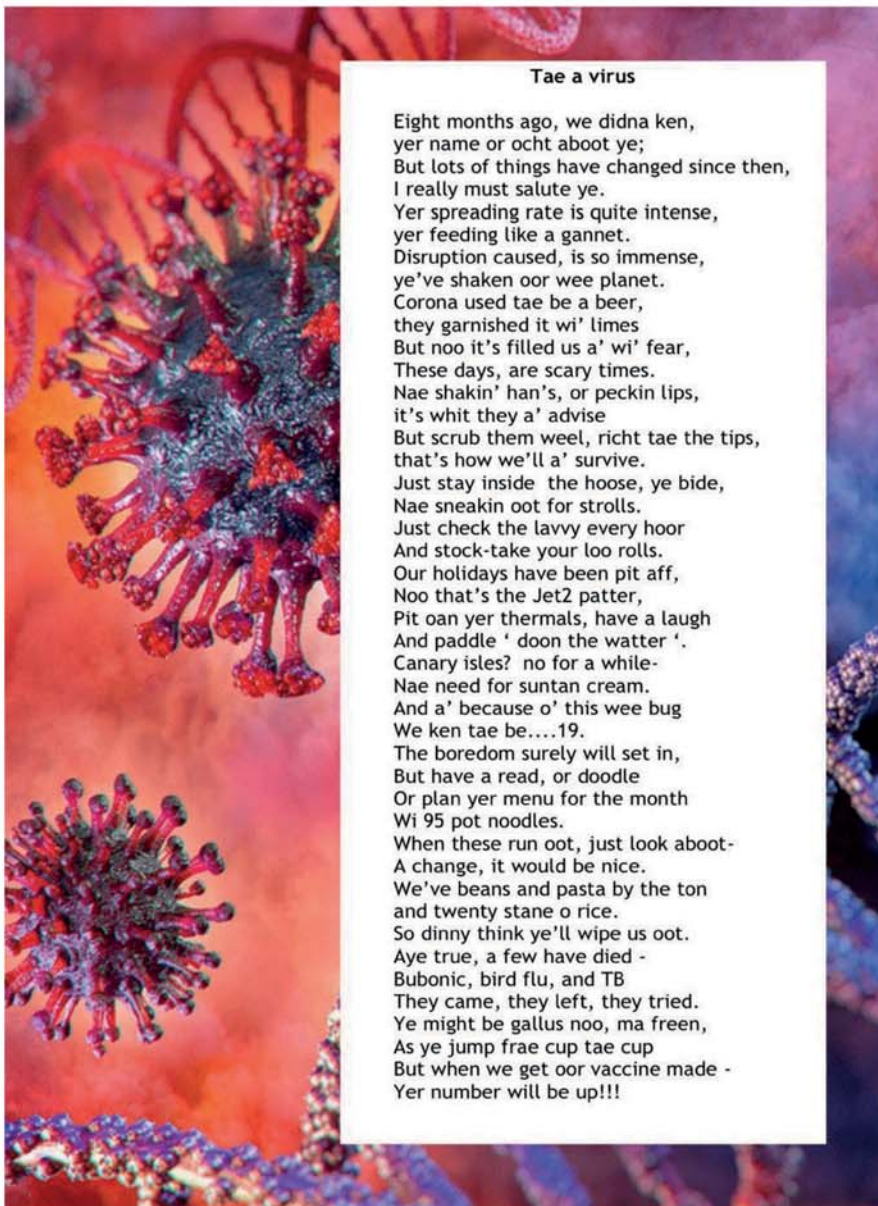
I have started gathering in all the lovely knits that have been made at home and will soon be delivering them. As childcare settings are being expected to spend as much time as possible out of doors we have been asked for blankets, hats, mitts, scarves and anything else to keep the children cosy.

This is just a very small selection from our fabulous members.

If you would like to know more about Knit and Natter, please contact me at

stcknitnatter@gmail.com

Lilian Cockburn



Tae a virus

Eight months ago, we didna ken,
yer name or ocht about ye;
But lots of things have changed since then,
I really must salute ye.
Yer spreading rate is quite intense,
yer feeding like a gannet.
Disruption caused, is so immense,
ye've shaken oor wee planet.
Corona used tae be a beer,
they garnished it wi' limes
But noo it's filled us a' wi' fear,
These days, are scary times.
Nae shakin' han's, or peckin lips,
it's whit they a' advise
But scrub them weel, richt tae the tips,
that's how we'll a' survive.
Just stay inside the hoose, ye bide,
Nae sneakin oot for strolls.
Just check the lavvy every hoor
And stock-take your loo rolls.
Our holidays have been pit aff,
Noo that's the Jet2 patter,
Pit oan yer thermals, have a laugh
And paddle ' doon the watter '.
Canary isles? no for a while-
Nae need for suntan cream.
And a' because o' this wee bug
We ken tae be....19.
The boredom surely will set in,
But have a read, or doodle
Or plan yer menu for the month
Wi 95 pot noodles.
When these run oot, just look about-
A change, it would be nice.
We've beans and pasta by the ton
and twenty stane o rice.
So dinny think ye'll wipe us oot.
Aye true, a few have died -
Bubonic, bird flu, and TB
They came, they left, they tried.
Ye might be gallus noo, ma freen,
As ye jump frae cup tae cup
But when we get oor vaccine made -
Yer number will be up!!!

Prayer

Chain



The Prayer Chain is a group of Church members who keep people and their concerns in our prayers. We do this by praying daily for each person on our Prayer Chain list.

Names often come through a family member, friend or Church Elder but my come from the person themselves.

Those on our list do not have to be Church members

The list is confidential and requires the permission of the individual.

Reasons for being included are varied, for example things such as health, stress or relationships.

No details need to be given.

Whatever may be worrying you or someone you know be encouraged to pass it to the Prayer Chain by contacting:

Lesley MacKenzie either by

phone on 07935 327 787
or email lesleymack@hotmail.co.uk



Blackhall St. Columba's Art Club

The Art Club had prepared a Covid-19 risk assessment, defined a number of rules to keep members safe and even created the membership cards ready to start in September but a week before we had planned to restart the club, it was determined that we could not do so within the Scottish Government guidelines. This was a big disappointment but with the current increase in infection rate, it has proved to be the right decision.

Valerie, the Art Club Chairperson, continues to send out regular e-mails to club members and as many of us find it difficult to get the enthusiasm to paint on our own, will be sending out projects to members to complete over the winter months. This should generate lots of paintings for our next exhibition, hopefully in May 2021.

We wish all our members and friends a Healthy and Peaceful Christmas and hope to see you in person in 2021.

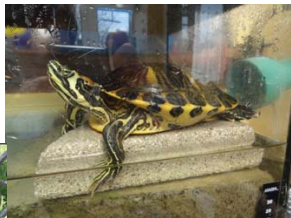
TUESDAY TOPICS

We hope all our members and friends are keeping safe and well.

Regular readers know that normally Tuesday Topics meets in Blackhall St Columba's Church on alternate Tuesdays at 7.30pm for a talk or presentation, followed by a chat over coffee, tea, and biscuits. However, we advised in the September Bulletin, we could not start in September, and we hoped to re-start in late November, but that was not possible.

We hope to be back in 2021, and as soon as we are able to provide any information about meetings next year, we will contact all members, and will update the Church website, www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk, under Community Activities, Tuesday Topics.

The Editor suggested we include a piece about any pets who helped us through lockdown, and so our President, Eleanor, has shared two pictures of her pet, Bubbles, a Red Eared Turtle. Eleanor says he is actually quite amusing, and swims right over to us if we walk past and loves a chat.



When his tank needs cleaned out, he gets out in a fenced area to run around the grass.



We wish all our members and friends a safe happy Christmas and a good 2021.

Jacky Cowie, Secretary

Eleanor Lowrie, President

CAMEO CLUB

At the time of writing, it is uncertain when our fortnightly meetings will resume. Members will be contacted when it becomes possible.

The family of a long-standing member, who sadly passed away in recent months, has expressed their gratitude to Cameo. They said that Cameo does a "grand job offering a valuable social get-together of local people who might otherwise not manage to meet up".

We would also like to pay tribute to the late Violet Troup who entertained Cameo with skilful festive floral demonstrations just before Christmas. We appreciate how generous she was with her time and talents. Our sympathy to Angus and family.

Hopefully 2021 will see us bringing more activities to keep our spirits up. We look forward to meeting up once again.

Margaret Brown 332 5957
Fiona Drinnan 343 6762

North West Heritage

- Edinburgh Villages

As mentioned in the previous edition of the Blackhall Bulletin meetings of the group have not taken place this session. A survey was undertaken of those members who have email with regard to arranging Zoom (or similar) digital meetings but there was no enthusiasm expressed for this idea. The syllabus from January is also in abeyance until we receive instructions as whether meetings can proceed. Church halls are not yet open for group meetings so at the time of writing it is looking more and more unlikely that the history group will meet this session. It is probable that speakers may not want to make presentations to groups and members may still be anxious about returning to organised events. Perhaps by the time of next issue there will be more to report regarding the situation. It is hoped that all members will be able to celebrate the forthcoming Christmas season with some semblance of normality and that 2021 will prove a much happier year for all!

Charlotte Cowe
Secretary



Badminton Club

The badminton club hopes to restart sometime next year if this possible with the Covid regulations. We hope you are keeping fit and safe. We look forward to being able to meet up again and play badminton.

Best wishes, Linda

Blackhall Community Trust



Like many organisations, Blackhall Community Trust has been doing what it can in these challenging times. We continue to wish everyone in the community well and hope you are keeping safe.

We held our online AGM in September. Attendees unanimously agreed that Blackhall Community Trust should organise the Christmas Tree in Blackhall dip as we did last year, to give us all some festive cheer. We can't hold the event but at least the tree will light up our community.

We're delighted the Craighleith Blackhall Community Council is kindly paying for the tree, and Cloudberry is very generously providing the lighting supply. Blackhall Community Trust will pay for the tree installation and the supply of the lights with funds carried forward from last year's Christmas event.

There has also been some recent progress with the Community Asset Transfer of Ravelston Park Pavilion from the City of Edinburgh Council to Blackhall Community Trust, on behalf of the local community. We hope this will come to a positive conclusion by spring 2021.

We can still be contacted by email via blackhallcommunitytrust@gmail.com.

It is free to become a member of BCT – email us to join via blackhallcommunitytrust@gmail.com. Also email us and let us know if you would like to sign up for our enewsletter. Visit our website www.blackhallcommunitytrust.org.uk or follow us on Facebook @blackhallct or Twitter [@BlackhallCT](https://twitter.com/BlackhallCT).

Violet Troup

24/7/40 – 19/10/20

Regular readers of the Bulletin will be familiar with Violet Troup's name as Flower Convener of Blackhall St Columba's and will, like all at St Columba's be sad to read of Violet's death. But although Violet was a 'weel kent' face, perhaps the community in which she lived and worked for most of her life know little about this remarkable lady.

Violet was born in North Berwick moving to Edinburgh when her father's surveying work brought him here and the family settled in Davidson's Mains. After finishing school, she undertook her teacher training at Moray House. Graduation brought Violet to Davidson's Mains Primary School where she taught until her son was born in 1973. She did continue teaching as a supply teacher in Edinburgh until 2000.



Violet met her husband Angus at the church youth fellowship, and they married in 1965 sharing 55 years together. She was a proud mother, mother-in-law and grandmother.

St Columba's was a very important part of Violet's life. She used her skills in all areas of the Church life. She began as a cub mistress, becoming Commissioner for Edinburgh and being awarded the Silver Acorn for her services to Scouting and was invited to the St George's Day parade at Windsor Castle. But that was not all. As Flower convener she and her team dressed the church for all the seasons and for weddings as well as distributing flowers after the services. She also chaired the Edinburgh Floral Art Club twice. Members of the Club were sorry to hear of her death, and much appreciated her commitment to the Club and send their sympathies to her family. For an Easter Service one year she arranged for a donkey to visit on Palm Sunday with the intention of it walking down the aisle. However, the donkey had other ideas and could not be moved more than a few steps.

Violet was a renowned baker and used her talents for a variety of fund-raising events in the church. She loved to be involved and help young and old. She was regularly involved with Venture Week teaching crafts, even when an unexpected number of children arrived, she was undaunted. She also was a regular visitor to Abbeyfield Care and used her baking skills there too for special events.

Sadly, her health deteriorated in the last year or so and lockdown heightened this change, and she was unable to celebrate her 80th birthday in July. She was admitted to the Western General and after a few weeks passed to rest there.

Because of Violet's love of her community, I thought this page an appropriate place for us to remember her and extend our sympathies to her family.

THE POINSETTIA AND THE IVY, WHEN IT IS MISTLETOED?

As Christmas approaches our minds are drawn to what plant to choose for decorating our homes. If one goes back fifty or more years Azalea indica or a Cyclamen was the preference but with more homes having central heating, which often creates a drier atmosphere, the ease of keeping these pot plants was diminished, and with modern breeding and selection techniques the Poinsettia became the plant of choice.

Now many folks have queried with me why such an awkward common name was chosen! The reason is that Joel Roberts Poinsett, who was the first United States Minister to Mexico, was responsible for introducing them in the 1820s into the United States. Initially, one of the major issues when they were first grown, was their habit of dropping their leaves randomly, often due to changes in temperature and sitting in a draught. However in the mid twentieth century the Ecke family majored on the selection of new clones which did not drop their leaves so profusely and nowadays the Eckes are responsible for the vast majority of varieties being grown and sold. Their popularity spread throughout North America (*I can remember in the 1960s my cousins who run a nursery in Ontario telling me how to grow them*) and into Europe with Rochfords House Plants, and, where I worked for Christmas 1970, promoting them using the Mikkel varieties, and by the late 1960s the Poinsettia was not just red, but pink, white and various bicolours.



Now as Christmas approaches the ‘folk’ story originating in Mexico may give an added dimension. Maria and Pablo, two poor children, lived in a tiny, rural village in Mexico and with great anticipation each Christmas they looked forward to the festivities in their village church, which included a full-sized Christmas Grotto to which those from far and wide would bring their gifts. And so, one Christmas Eve Maria and Pablo wandered sadly, with no gifts to give, to the church. Suddenly beside them stood an angel who said, ‘just pick those green shoots from the roadside and I will bless them for you’. Doing as they were told; they picked an armful and on arrival at the church they placed around the manger. Immediately the priest told them not to desecrate the Grotto, but, as if by magic, the tops of dull green shoots turned bright red and crown like flowers appeared at the tips, and all of the villagers looked on in awe. The symbolism is that the crown like flowers recognise that Jesus Christ is the King, and red being the colour of majesty.

It is possible to keep a poinsettia from year to year, but personally unless you really are wishing a challenge, I would discard it into the compost bin or brown bin. To produce poinsettia to ‘flower’ for Christmas involves using plant regulators to ensure the growth is restricted plus control of day length. To achieve results in year two you may need to resort to covering the plant with a large paper bag and even putting the plant into a cupboard - my view is why bother!

Another plant we associate with Christmas is Holly with the prickly leaves symbolising the crown of thorns and the red berries the drops of blood from Christ’s Crucifixion, however from a pre Christian stance the holly was regarded as symbols for fertility and eternal life; while another druid related plant is mistletoe is meant to ward off evil spirits although I prefer the Norse understanding that it brings love and romance. But the cross over between pagan, druid, and Norse plant associations with those of a Christian perspective can cause family disputes; as a family with strong highland roots, we would use holly to decorate but ivy was not to be used. Was it because of its links to debauchery and witchcraft, or that overwinter the birds were able to nest in the growth plus eat the berries, which are of course toxic to humans? I prefer to consider the latter as it is ecologically sound as being the real reason.

Whether a Blackhall Christmas in 2020 has a Poinsettia in focus surrounded by gifts or whether raids in the byways and highways to gather greenery is whatever is your preference, although one final consideration is making a holly or greenery wreath. This link to the National Trust gives some easy to follow instructions <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/12-easy-steps-for-making-your-christmas-wreath> and, as these restrictions continue, why not have a go so that while, ‘at the rising of the sun’, we are all walking around Blackhall for our daily exercise our community will enjoy our handiwork and think of ‘the playing of the merry organ, sweet singing in the choir’ as we celebrate Christmas 2020.

John MacLennan

OUR PETS AND HOW THEY HAVE HELPED US DURING LOCKDOWN 2020

The months since lockdown began on 21st March have not been easy for any of us, but for those of us lucky enough to have pets, they have certainly helped us to cope. Here are some of the stories of how they have helped. If you would like to tell us how your pet has helped you, please email a photo and a few sentences about how they helped you to us at bulletin@blckhallstcolumba.org.uk. We will try to include them in the March issue.



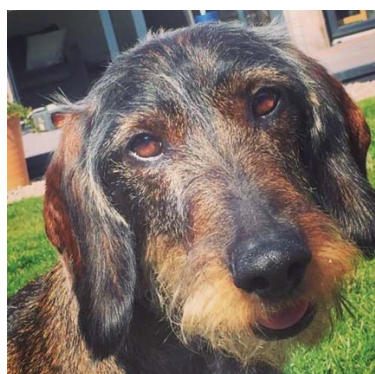
This Brandi. This photo shows her supervising me when I'm working at my desk. She knew something had changed as we were at home much more than usual. When she is awake, she spends most of her time with us which was difficult when we were in different parts of the house. She likes gardening, when we do it and will sit outside on our bench in the sun or outside her door (cat door).

Brandi Hewatt



As the new Church Secretary in post and after only a few weeks of training I found myself in my new office; at home and working from my Kitchen. It was quite a daunting time as well as a challenge with starting my new job - and I missed my new colleagues. However, I had the company of my 'wee team'; my two wee Budgies. Branston (Green) and Eric (Grey) - both 3 years old and the very best of friends. They kept my spirits up through the long drawn-out days of lockdown with sweet chirps and songs and letting me know when the Postie was coming up the street (excellent security).

Branston and Eric McGonigal-Paget.



It was lovely to start the Couch to 5K with Haggis at the beginning of lockdown but then I tore ligaments and could hardly walk! So he then turned into my companion when I could only sit with ice packs on! He also came with me when I started home deliveries from Cloudberry which was

nice..... Haggis is a wire-haired dachshund who is nearly 5 now, he is a very anxious dog who is actually scared of other dogs and some people so his best line of defence is attack (unfortunately!) But he is a loving dog although a bit loud at times!

Haggis Pearson



Kiera has helped us by making sure we get plenty of fresh air. Here at Ruby Bay at Elie. You can't be a fair weather walker if you have a dog. She might have just turned 14 but still makes sure we get out every day.

Kiera Cockburn



Lewis and Tilly Harland

Lewis (3 years old) and Tilly (12 years old). They helped us through lockdown because we were able to enjoy the lovely scenery with them when taking them out on daily walks and they kept us company through a difficult time.



Meg was my reason for getting out twice a day during lockdown and meeting lots of other "elderly" people who were supposed to be shielding!

Meg Macleod



Macduff has kept me sane-ish. During lockdown he has had to adjust to being big brother to 2 new puppies in my extended family. One is another cocker spaniel and they now get on well and have even been seen to play. The other puppy is much bigger – a Visla who

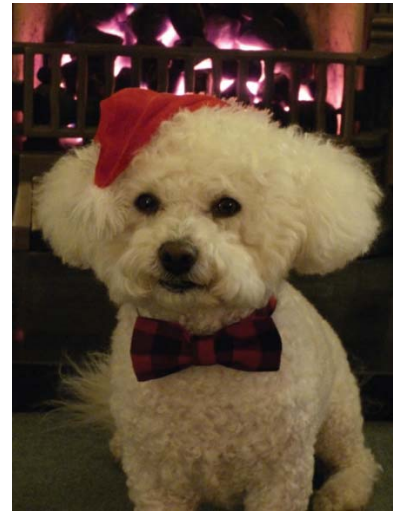
seems to grow and grow seems to just grow and grow with no ability to calm down! Macduff is not a fan.
Macduff Williamson

Our mini Australian Labradoodle, Skye, joined our family this summer and has been a fantastic addition to Team Thomson. She has forced us out for walks and has made us appreciate what we have. She is a great companion to Niamh and Lucy (age 9 and 7) and gives us unconditional love. We can't imagine life without her!
Skye Thomson



Rhubarb Turnbull

This is Rhubarb, my 'grand puppy', a 5 month old working retriever owned by our elder son and his wife. I am on chemo for myeloma for the fourth time and she brings me great joy as she flies round the corner of the house and throws herself at me with enormous happiness and love. We aren't allowed to hug family but I can cuddle her with all the healing powers she brings.



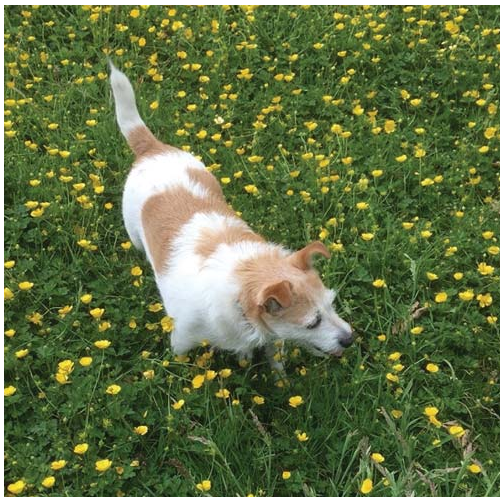
Murphy Wilson

And finally, here's my Bichon Frisé, Murphy all dressed up for Christmas. During lockdown (which suited him as he has separation anxiety) Murphy made sure I had my daily walks for exercise, made me laugh with his antics and cuddled up beside me to watch telly.



As well as our own dog Quincey, we had a four-legged lodger with us. We had recently become boarders for Guide Dogs and Jimmy arrived for "a few weeks" at the beginning of March. Having our dogs really has kept us going and gave structure, routine and such enjoyment to our days as we had the best of reasons to go our every day.
Quincey Laidlaw

Fiona Cooke's Millie who made sure Fiona got exercise every day



Millie Cooke

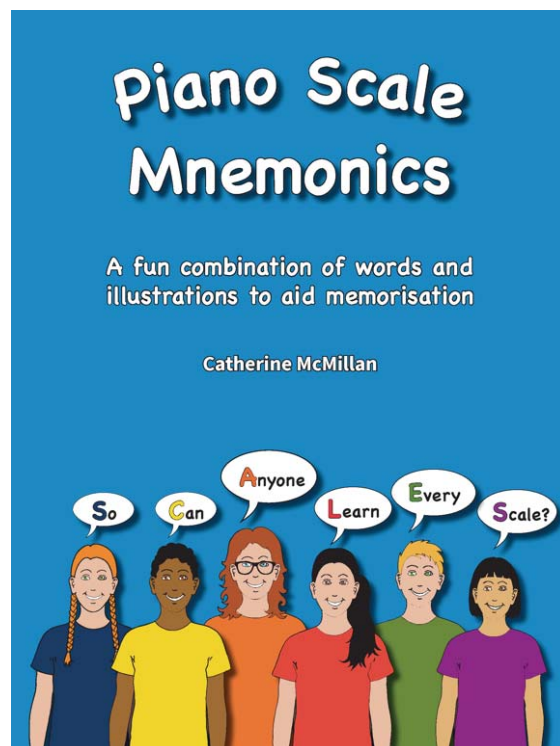


Times are difficult just now, but we want to wish all our readers, contributors and advertisers the Merriest possible Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Are you learning the piano and having trouble remembering those pesky scales ? Read on and find out how Catherine McMillan used her lockdown.....

I'm a piano teacher and artist living in Blackhall and during lockdown, self-published my first music book to help pupils remember their scales. From initial concept to publication took nearly 4 years! The idea for a book about scales grew from my own teaching, and the difficulties pupils would have in trying to recall the notes within scales, in particular, the flats and sharps in each. I started to create mnemonics that were specific to each pupil, and it was encouraging to see how much this helped. I started to wonder whether I could make this approach more generic, and also group the mnemonics into categories, depending on whether they began on a white or a black piano key, and on whether they were major or minor. It was very important to me as well, that the mnemonic reflected the order of sharps and flats in a scale, as the scale is played. So began the LONG process of creating the mnemonics - some took weeks; others months! Once complete, I created colourful and fun illustrations for each, to reinforce the mnemonic and to further help recall. Thereafter, my husband Sam did an absolutely magnificent job pulling together everything into a suitable publishing format. Now that the book is published, I'm hoping everyone will see that learning scales can be both fun and easy!



The book is 56 pages long and covers all scales up to Grade 5 for both ABRSM and Trinity College exams, plus the majority of others required for more advanced grades. It costs £12.95.

You can find out more, plus order directly via <https://www.pianoscalemnemonics.com>

For those living in Edinburgh I'm very happy to drop off; otherwise a small amount to cover postage and packaging will be added.



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Blackhall Nursery News December 2020



Blackhall Nursery is situated within the wonderful nature resource of Ravelston Park and Woods. At Blackhall Nursery, we put the children at the heart of everything we do. We provide a safe, healthy and happy environment where children grow and develop through play and active learning.

The Nursery year began in August with 28 children joining us following a prolonged period at home due to Covid restrictions. The transition back into Nursery has been smooth with the children excited to be able to spend time with their peers. Time has been spent getting to know each other and learning through play and enjoying time outdoors- in the garden, in the park and learning ball skills with a visiting football coach. We are now heading in to, what is normally one of our busiest times of year. Things will look a little bit different this term as we will not be able to put on the much anticipated annual Nativity play but we will begin next week by painting Poppy stones to commemorate Remembrance Day before moving on to making our own paper for Christmas cards and then a plethora of festive activities!

Blackhall Nursery is a registered Scottish charity working in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council. We offer full day (6 hours) places for 3-5-year olds during term time.

We are a feeder nursery for Blackhall Primary School and **all places are free and funded by the City of Edinburgh Council**. The Nursery enjoys an excellent reputation within the community but don't take our word for it, please take a look at the parents' comments on our Care Inspectorate report available at www.careinspectorate.com.

You can place your child's name on the Nursery waiting list from their 2nd birthday by downloading an application form at www.blackhallnursery.co.uk or by contacting the Nursery for an application form on 0131 332 8296.



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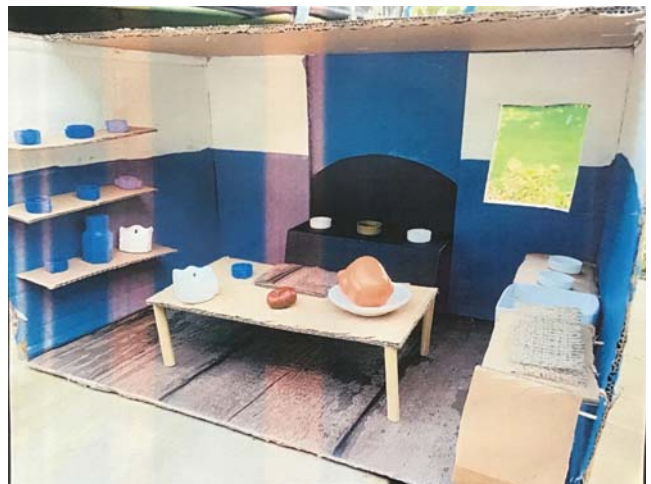
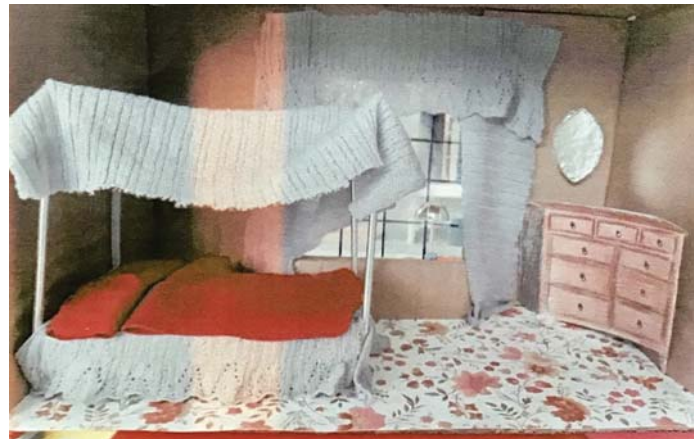
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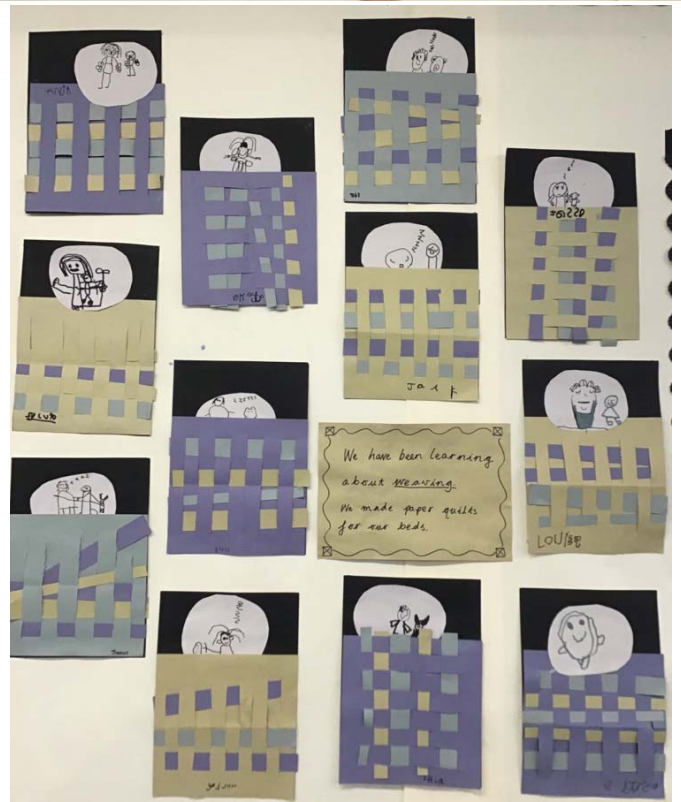
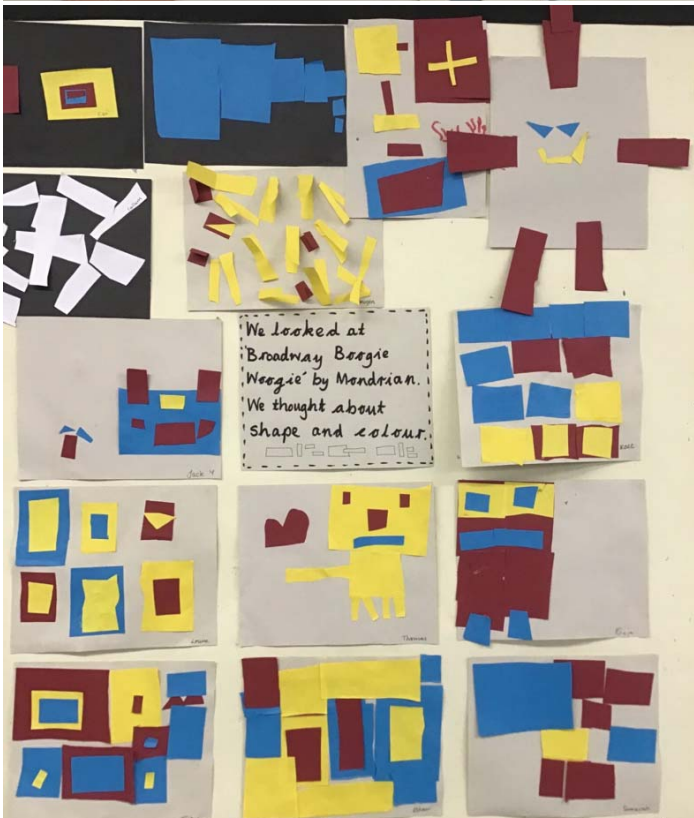
BLACKHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

P5/4 and P5 have been enjoying learning about the Victorians as their topic. As part of their learning, children created their own Victorian rooms out of boxes and things they could find at home and took photos of these to create a class house.



BLACKHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

P1A have been enjoying doing art with Mr Galloway. They did some wonderful pieces inspired by 'Broadway Boogie Woogie' by Mondrian. The children also learned how to paper weave and looked at pattern to create some rainy umbrellas.





Blackhall Guiding

Most units have started to meet again either via zoom or outdoors. We look forward to seeing what 2021 brings. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and all the best for next year!!



202 Rainbows have enjoyed 6 weeks of meeting outdoors and had brilliant fun with chalk drawings, games & Time travelling (seeing what young girls used to do over the last 100 years) and thus gaining an Outdoors and Skills builder badge. Nicola McDermid- 202 Rainbow leader



202a Brownies have been meeting each week on zoom. We've been doing lots of craft but especially enjoyed making armpit fudge. Pam Crawford - 202A Brownie Leader



202 Guides have been canoeing this term, had our first outdoor meetings and had a Camp Skills Builder afternoon, as well as continuing our Zoom meetings. Lorna Kelly - 202 Guide Leader.



Rangers are doing both Zoom meetings which have included virtual escape rooms and murder mysteries as well as meeting in the park for campfires and s'mores. We're looking forward to completing some badge work on the beach soon! Chelsie Wyatt - Ranger Leader.

Volunteer with Girlguiding Edinburgh?

Could you spare some time to volunteer with us? It's an exciting time to be part of Girlguiding as we get to grips with our most exciting (and biggest) programme overhaul in 100 years!

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<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-volunteer/>

GGUKBlackhallDistrict@outlook.com



As we near the end of 2020 I look back at a very different Scouting Year from any I have ever known!!

The Group had great expectations of all sections attending a District camp with approximately nine hundred Scouts, Cubs and Beavers. The Beavers were to have a night away at Dalguise Outdoor Centre in Perthshire, the Cubs a camp at Bonaly and the Scouts were to represent the Group at the District Camping competition, an annual event which we have not been represented at for some years.



Sadly, none of these events took place. Our Scouts also suffered a great disappointment when their planned trip with the 30th Davidson's Mains and the 122nd Comley Bank Groups to Kandersteg in Switzerland summer 2021 was cancelled. Travel aboard not allowed by the Scout Association, understandably so.

At short notice Section Meetings came to a full stop, was this to be the end of scouting for the foreseeable future? Nothing daunted the Cub and Scout leaders turned to Zoom and regular meetings have been held throughout the summer. We did have a virtual presence at the Really Big Camp, Beavers were sleeping in cupboards, whilst Cubs and Scouts had tents in back gardens and some extraordinary places! The Scouts made a 'necker throwing' video which was really clever and enjoyable. All the leaders did an amazing job keeping all their members up to date with everything that was available to them during lockdown. We are now allowed to meet out of doors, so all Sections meet in Ravelston Park. Hopefully we shall soon be allowed to meet back in the Church halls.

All the Section Leaders have spent the last few months catching up on their training and congratulations go to David Duffy Scouts, Angela Khaleeli Cubs, and Nail Tosh Beavers who have all gained their Wood Badge during lockdown.

All Sections need help at times and without volunteers there would be no Scout Group, so we are always looking for people willing to become leaders or to help on the odd occasion. Over last year we have gained six leaders and lost three.

Our Group Executive has been busy checking outdoor and in door Risk Assessment's to enable the Group to return to face to face Scouting. They are now going to have to find premises to store all our equipment, some of which at the present time is with other Groups in the district. Previously not a problem as we had storage under the Church. Unfortunately, the refurbishment has now made this impossible.

The Group Chair Alistair Reid received the prestigious award of a Silver Acorn for his services to Scouting. Al has been involved for many years and has held many different posts. He was to be presented at the St George's Day parade at Windsor on the 23rd April which of course didn't happen.

Hopefully in the months to come the 'new normal' life that we shall all lead will enable Scouting to adjust to new ways of organizing our Group meetings.

My thanks go to all my wonderful leaders who during the last eight months have worked diligently to keep in touch with their Troop, Pack or Colony. I have bombarded them with e-mails every day and they have never complained, to me anyway!!!

To close I would like to pay tribute to someone who's footsteps I have followed in Scouting since I joined in 1963. Violet Troup has 'Gone Home' after giving many years to the Brotherhood of Scouts. When Violet called a meeting, no one failed to attend, her home baking was second to none! Happy memories.

Diane Ross MBE
Group Scout Leader.
Deputy District Commissioner Craigalmond.

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PINK PANTHERS EXPLORERS

Over the last 6 months the Pink Panthers have been up to lots of different activities both online and face to face. Our leaders have done an admirable job of putting together a well-rounded program that felt as close to the normal explorers as possible. Some of the memorable zoom nights earlier on in summer included a joint night with the Cramond explorers doing an online London monopoly run through google maps. Musical bingo was another very enjoyable activity but the activity that stands out most from last term has to be the fire logs that Fraser made and sent to every explorer so we could all cook together, on the fire, over zoom. We also did an individual scavenger hunt which meant we were all running taking pictures around Davidsons mains and Blackhall while on zoom, which I'm sure was a very interesting sight.

Over summer the restrictions for scouts were relaxed meaning we could go back to face to face scouting, with some extra guidelines in place of course. We started this with the 7 hills of Edinburgh challenge, on the 12th of September some of our explorers cycled the 7 hills of Edinburgh which was extremely impressive as it was a challenging cycle and all the explorers managed to complete their routes. Over the autumn term we have been playing team games and enjoying being able to see each other in real life again, even if it is in a socially distanced fashion. We have also been practicing our fire building in Davidsons Mains park for when we can finally get back to camping. Finally, we have been practicing our map skills on Corstorphine hill with an orienteering course and learning how to fast map a route as we go.

We have had some new explorers and leaders join us this term and we now have a grand total of 64 explorers and 5 leaders. We have also recently hosted an online recruitment night for some more adult volunteers whether that be through becoming a weekly leader, unit admin, an adventure leader, quartermaster or part of the fundraising committee. We have been developing our fundraising committee in order to update and buy new kit to prepare for future camps.

As you may know many of the scout outdoor centres are struggling to stay open right now. So, we plan to spend a day at Bonaly doing work such as cleaning out the roman baths, splitting wood and some building work to help out. Bonaly is such an important part of the local scouting community. We also plan to host a fire madness night which should be great fun. As well as looking forward to Christmas, and hopefully a better 2021, with our annual Christmas party the only difference being that it will be outside, let's hope it's not too chilly.



BLACKHALL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Little did we all think that the restrictions would still be affecting ‘the horti’ and holding our monthly talks would not be possible. However, we have found that our monthly newsletter, which is circulated via email, and also posted on Facebook has fulfilled some of the gardening needs of ‘the horti friends’. We are fully aware that we are not alone in this scenario of Zoom and Microsoft Teams as the means for keeping our gardening appetite seasoned, but, already the committee are thinking about organising a range of visits starting in mid-Spring to the Botanic and perhaps a session with the ‘Caley’ volunteers at Saughton. Our planned talks for winter 2020-21 are just being rescheduled for winter 2021-22.



Of course gardening is the one hobby that can be carried out even with Covid 19 restrictions, and, in next couple of months, by walking around Blackhall the signs of spring will be showing with the winter aconites, the buds of Viburnum bodnantense and its delicate aroma, and Hamamelis mollis (Witch Hazel) with its four yellow ribbon shaped petals.



Perhaps the horti is just in hibernation before blooming forth in the spring?

John MacLennan
 Hon. President
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Blackhall Probus Club



The Blackhall Probus Club is part of a UK-wide group which organizes social events for retired gentlemen in the local area. With a membership of around fifty, we normally meet on the first and third Thursday of the month from October through to April at the Blackhall Bowling Club on Keith Row at 10:00 to chat over tea/coffee/biscuits before listening to a talk given by experts and enthusiasts across a diverse range of subjects. We also organise two lunches and a summer outing each year to which partners are invited.

Due to Covid-19, our programme has been curtailed this year but we have recently started monthly Zoom presentations which have been well received by our members. Talks so far have included topics as diverse as “*The life and times of Deacon Brodie*” and “*Edinburgh surgeons and the link to golf*”. We hope to re-start our face-to-face meetings sometime next year, subject to Government restrictions being lifted, but in the meanwhile our monthly Zoom presentations will continue.

We are always pleased to welcome new members, so if you would like to join us for our Zoom presentations, please contact the Secretary for more details.

Keith Gilroy, Secretary,
Blackhall Probus Club.
Phone: 0131 312 6060
Email: ksgprobus@virginmedia.com

CRAIGLEITH MEN'S PROBUS



Many of us hardly expected Craigleith Men's Probus to be facing a winter of no actual or physical meetings, and I, for one, am missing my fortnightly diet of chocolate digestives with a welcome mug of coffee, in fact, it is not the same sitting at home doing that, especially as someone seems to count them!

By the time of publication of the Bulletin it is hoped that a series of Zoom style talks will be taking place but learning how to use such technology is not for the faint-hearted OAPs! If you would like up to date information of the talks being arranged, please just email us at infocpc21@gmail.com, or phone any member of the committee.

Like many other similar groups, contact has been maintained by phone or face to face visits to our members and by doing this we have ensured the true spirit of being a Probarian is kept.

John MacLennan: Past President

<https://craigleithprobud.myfreesites.net>.



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Church Secretary
 Ms Joy McGonigal-Paget
 in Church Office from
 Tues-Fri 10.00-12.30p.m.
 Tel/fax 332 4431

DEADLINES

Kirk News – Sunday 6th December

Please send all items to the Editor;
 Christine Denham, c/o Church Office
 Home tel: 336 5943 or e-mail:
kirknews@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

Blackhall Bulletin- Sunday 31st January 2021

Please send all items, including **Advertising Enquiries** to the Editor: Barbara Wilson, c/o Church Office
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READING THE BULLETIN FOR THE FIRST TIME?

Welcome to the area. We do hope you enjoy living here. To help you find your feet, Blackhall St Columba's Church website gives you all you need to know about activities happening there for young and old. From leisure activities like painting and dancing to our youth groups and junior singers. You can find it all at www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk or contact the office by phone (see above) or e mail secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk or



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