

# Places of **W**orship in **S**cotland

Scottish Church Heritage Research

www.scottishchurches.org.uk



NEWSLETTER 7

Spring 2012

## From the Chairman

Newsletter time again! There is never a dull moment in the SCHR office, help needed here or there, emails to be answered and queries to reply to, meetings, reports and much more. Time passes very quickly!

One very interesting development in recent months has been on the website. Many people must take a look—though we do not yet have a counter to tell us how many, but a good number not only look, they write with an amazing variety of queries, information and corrections. Some questions are quick to answer, but others take much longer. Soon we will turn our attention to writing up the new information and adding it to the individual sites. It is splendid to find such interest in our work and to receive so much help.

We are coming to the end of the second year of the Historic Scotland funded work in Angus, Aberdeen and Moray. A look at the website shows the huge changes that have happened in the last two years. So far some 1500 descriptions have been added, with images inside and outside. As the weather improves, our field officer, Jonathan, will start on the recording and uploading of the north Aberdeen parishes, before moving on to the final stage of this phase of the project—the places of worship in Moray.

As always, I must record SCHR's appreciation of the efforts by all our volunteers since the last Newsletter—and congratulate those whose work has been included within.

*Edwina Proudfoot*

## Programme of Events 2012

### June (date to be confirmed) - Braemar Excursion

A visit to several churches in Crathie and Braemar. We will have a short talk inside one or two of them and a walk around the buildings to examine their unique features.

### August 11th - Glenesk Walking Tour

Led by Norman Atkinson of Angus Council, this tour will explore the Glen and its hidden sites of worship. Places will be limited, so if you are interested in a unique and exciting day out, please contact the office to book your place.

### September 6th - AGM - all welcome

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in Cupar followed by a visit to some of the notable places of worship in our soon-to-be-published Cupar Guide pamphlet.

### September - Doors Open Day

After the success of the 2011 Open Day at St James the Great Episcopal Church, Cupar, we shall be conducting tours and talks again this year. Venue and date to follow.

## Tragedy—and Triumph

*Brenda Hall*

The work of a volunteer recording images and processing them for the SCHR database might seem at first to be something very detached from those who have long gone from the site being recorded. But every now and then something surfaces from a vast amount of detail, much of which seems to be of his-



torical or antiquarian interest only. When this happens it is a reminder that the site in question was a place of worship in which real people, not just shadowy figures from the past, came together to worship their God, and in which they expressed their deepest feelings of love and ad-

miration for those around them. The church seemed to them to be the right and perhaps the only place where it was proper to leave a testament to those feelings. This is reflected in nearly every church in

war memorials, and memorials to devoted servants of the church.

But recently a very poignant and rather unique memorial was recorded in the church of St Adrian in West Wemyss.

At first sight this was puzzling. The three men commemorated 'died at their post'. But the tablet gives no clue as to where this happened, or how they died. The inscription 'Pass friend, all's well' brings to mind an image of a sentry on duty. But there was nothing to suggest that John Kilpatrick, William Scott and Andrew Morris were soldiers. There was no obvious war going on in 1907, and the ages of the three men, 52, 50 and 44, did not suggest a military connection. So the next thought was a mining accident, Wemyss and Dysart being the heart of a mining area. The memorial gives no further clues about this tragedy. Yet, it must have been a source of deep grief in the community or it would not have been commemorated in the church.

More than a century on, the memorial awakened a great desire to find out more. Fortunately, the Cupar Library has the weekly *Fife Herald and Journal* on microfiche. And there in the issue for 1 January 1908, on page 6, is a lengthy account under the heading 'THE DISASTER AT WEST WEMYSS: Three men suffocated at Victoria Pit'. On 28<sup>th</sup> December 1907 John Kilpatrick was fulfilling his normal duty of checking the workings every second Sunday, and did not reappear at the expected time. William Scott, pit wright, and Andrew Morris, inspector, went down to find him. Although they gave the signal that they wished to ascend, they did not respond to the lowering of the cage for them. In fact, by the time full resources of miners and doctors had arrived, it was obvious that something dreadful had happened. The three men had succumbed to noxious gas, which had seeped into the Victoria pit from smouldering coal in the neighbouring Lochhead pit which had been closed after a fire some years before. Scott and Morris had died very quickly after going down in search of their colleague.

This is just a summary of the much longer and more detailed account in the newspaper. It was a terrible tragedy for the Victoria mine, and for the community in Wemyss. But there is a modest triumph for SCHR in uncovering the story behind the rather mystifying memorial tablet, and keeping alive the names of John Kilpatrick, William Scott and Andrew Morris who died at their post on that far off winter's day in 1907.

## The Minister's Walk, South Esk

Kari Gibson

See OS Landranger map 44, *Ballater & Glen Clova*  
Start: NO 32830 65730 finish: NO 32690 72990

After taking part in the Angus Walking Festival last year, I can highly recommend this lovely walk that follows the path the minister travelled on his pony after he had finished his sermon at Glen Prosen in order to preach to the congregation at Glen Clova.



Glen Prosen Church, by Kari Gibson © SCHR Ltd

Glen Prosen Church is set amongst trees, to the edge of the village, within the graveyard. There was a previous church on the

site built in 1602 and it was rebuilt in 1802.

The building is whitewashed and has a bell tower to the west. It has two porches, the west porch was built as a war memorial in 1920 and has a slate cross on the wall.

This 6.5 mile (10.5km) walk is not too strenuous, climbing a comfortable 200m to reach the summit of Drumwhern Hill at 400m. Most of the walk is on good footpaths, but some of the terrain is rough and wet in places so good walking boots and outdoor gear is recommended.

The walk starts at Glen Prosen Church, keeping the church to your right, follow a footpath that takes you into the countryside behind. The path is to the right of a small wood eventually opening up to show the beautiful views towards Drumwhern Hill. After 2.5 miles, the walk takes you gently to the summit of the hill which is a great spot for a picnic (you did bring a picnic, right?).

Refreshed, continue on until you come to a fork in the path and turn left. Follow the path as it twists and descends down into another pine wood. There is a short walk through the wood, but have your camera ready as you come out the other side, the view towards Glen Clova is well worth a photograph.

Continue along the path, crossing the main road and taking the new footbridge over the River Esk and along the other road to Glen Clova Church.

Glen Clova Hotel offers good food, drinks and a warm fire while you await your lift home.



Glen Clova Church by Adam Colliar ©SCHR Ltd

Glen Clova Church sits on a low hillock within a graveyard by the River Esk, near Glen Clova Hotel. The church is no longer a parish church, but was purchased by the local community

in 2006 for special services and weddings. This church, built in 1855 sits on the site of an earlier church from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century which was dedicated to St Mary.

It has an ashlar birdcage bell tower, was built using a variety of stones, sandstone quoin stones and a small wooden porch.

## Grave Expectations

Lorna Carr

When The Edinburgh Trams Project got underway a few years ago, my neighbour's mother-in-law and I discussed the possibility of what weird and wonderful things could be lurking under the pavements. We took a walk past the beautiful and historic South Leith Parish Church shortly thereafter and had a quick look into the trench being dug near the graveyard. It looked boring, so we moved on. Little did we know what would be unearthed there, and in other parts of the City shortly after (see *Discovery and Excavation, Scotland, 2009*, page 69).

An excavation led by Sorina Spanou of Headland Archaeology Ltd uncovered 260 graves containing 302 inhumations and associated artefacts: Singles, groups, shrouded, becoffined and dating to about the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries; some of these burials are possibly associated with the 15<sup>th</sup> Century hospital and chapel that stood on and close to the present church. Just goes to show that one can never know what untold stories lie beneath the surface waiting to be unearthed.

Another quirky example concerns a mysterious and intriguing gravestone slab found in Aberdeenshire at about this time during an excavation led by Alison Cameron. Inscribed were the words:

“This Grave Never To Be Opened”

Did the poor unfortunate succumb to an infectious disease? Was he/she suspected of harbouring devilish powers? Perhaps some long forgotten and long suffering soul in our medieval past wasn't on the best of terms with *their* mother in law?

## St Colmoc's Chapel

Jonathan Dowling

This small chapel site may, at first glance, not look particularly exciting or striking, but it represents an important and fundamental aspect of the work of SCHR – namely recording all places of worship, past and present, regardless of how much of the building remains. This particular chapel was one of a number of sites visited and recorded in Braemar by Edwina Proudfoot and Jonathan Dowling late last year.

St Colmoc's (or St Valentine's) Chapel in Abergeldie, Braemar, is a small ruined chapel, located on a prominent mound in a field near to an ancient crossing point of the River Dee. The date of the chapel is not known but it may be early medieval, based on its location, construction and size. The chapel is surrounded by a sub-rectangular retaining wall and tall trees are present over the entire mound - possibly planted during estate works for Abergeldie Castle or Balmoral Castle.

The chapel occupies the highest part of the mound, at the western end. The remains of the walls are covered with thick grass and vegetation. St Colmoc's Chapel is a good example of the sites SCHR records where little structure survives.

However, such sites are as important as the grandest churches and cathedrals.



St Colmoc's Chapel by Jonathan Dowling © SCHR Ltd



## Membership

We aim to provide a programme of events for members - including a field day, training session and local lectures. Why not become a member and help us in our work, or even send a donation? Please join and encourage friends and colleagues to become members— the form can be downloaded from the website at [www.scottishchurches.org.uk](http://www.scottishchurches.org.uk)

## Communion Tokens—a thing of the past

*Edwina Proudfoot*

Do you know what they were used for? Have you any idea of how you earned yours?

From the time of the Reformation, Communion Tokens were used to ensure church members were knowledgeable about the Bible — and they were catechised, ie given an oral examination to check up on this. If they passed they received a token, which allowed them to take communion.

Times have changed and neither tokens nor the cards which followed are used today — and many people have never seen a token. Made of lead, usually by the minister, they were varied in shape, size and detail. If you have any tokens from your church, we would welcome one for our records.



*Photographs of tokens, which have been donated to SCHR, front and back from St Monans, St Georges, Perth and Innerleithen © SCHR Ltd*

## SCHR Board

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### Past Volunteers

The work that each and every volunteer contributes, past and present, makes a huge difference to the success of the project and we acknowledge their efforts by crediting them on our website.

## New Volunteers

We are looking for more volunteers — to take photographs, scan images, help with field work and in the office. Also, charities now are required to be open to a wider demographic to form their Board. If you are interested and have a skill you could offer, we would like to speak with you. If you are interested in helping in any way, please contact us.



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