



CARLOPS CHURCH

In the community, for the community

Newsletter

Volume 17, Number 8; August 2023

Services, August 2023

Services held in church and available via Zoom
Request link from sessionclerk@carlopschurch.org

6 August 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley
13 August 10am: David Henderson-Howat
20 August 10am: Dr Peter Worthington
27 August 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley
3 September 10am: Prof Murray Campbell

Join us, in the church, and in other activities

We promise you a warm welcome

www.carlopschurch.org

Carlops is one of the West Tweeddale linkage of churches

www.westtweeddale.org.uk



Our Minister

“A picture is worth a thousand words.” Or is it?

A picture is worth a thousand words, or so I am told. I say that as I think more and more about our compulsively visual culture, which relentlessly reduces everything we see, think, feel or do to that which can be photographed and self-published on any one of numerous social media platforms. We are, it seems, a culture in the grip of what one writer called obsessive *aesthetic consumerism*.

The thing about pictures of course, is that they have no real context. They are merely an edited version of a given reality. They may enchant us, but they lack that capacity to convey a sense of the ineffable and the transcendent that words, written and spoken, engaging with and enriched by our imaginations, can convey to us. Such portals to the transcendent can be found in the captivating words of the poetic and are inherent in the eloquence of great writers. Iris Murdoch's novel *The Sea, the Sea* is one such example. There she writes:

“As I lay there, listening to the soft slap of the sea, and thinking these sad and strange thoughts, more and more and more stars had gathered, obliterating the separateness of the Milky Way, and filling up the whole sky. And far, far away in that ocean of silver, stars were silently shooting and falling and finding their fates, among these billions and billions of merging silver lights. And as curtain after curtain of gauze was quietly removed, and I saw stars behind stars behind stars ... and I saw into the vast soft interior of the universe which seemed to be slowly and gently turning itself inside out. I went to sleep, and in my sleep, I seemed to hear a sound of singing.”

The Irish poet and Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney made the telling observation, *The biggest change in my lifetime has been the evaporation of the transcendent from all our discourse*. I agree with Heaney; our public language is almost exclusively devoted to the commercial, the pragmatic – used to sell us something, or persuade us to do something. So engulfed are we by this transactional language that people find it hard to speak publicly about the more mysterious dimensions of the human experience, those liminal moments when we are inexplicably aware of the ineffable. Those who do – the singers and poets – stand out and are even more sought after. King David is one such poet. He manages to capture what it feels like to be caught up in thoughts of God's overshadowing caring presence in his Psalm 139. Emily Dickinson is another who captures a powerful sense of the transcendent in her poem *This world is not conclusion*.

Do yourself a favour this week: nurture and nourish your soul by taking the time to reflectively read these poems aloud to yourself and let them revitalise the language and sense of the transcendent in your own life and discourses.

Peace

Tony

News



Mark Hepworth, Linkage administrative assistant

I was born in Newcastle Upon Tyne and spent the first few years of my life in South Shields and Somerset. My family came to Scotland when I was eleven years old, and I was educated at Stranraer Academy and Peebles High School. I have had a variety of occupations since leaving school. These include: a year spent in Bordeaux as an English teacher; in London pubs; a tourist guide in France; fuelling aircraft at Edinburgh Airport; working for a stockbrokers; and seven years as a croupier in casinos, including five years spent at sea on various cruise ships.



I am married to Natalija and we lived in Edinburgh before coming to West Linton in 2014. We have two children, aged ten and eight. Our family regularly attend services at St Mungo's in West Linton and delight in living in the beautiful surroundings of the village. Aside from the usual pleasures of life, I am passionate about reading (anything which sparks an interest), eclectic music, the French language, creative writing, and attempting to hone my parenting skills! My greatest ambitions are to see my novel published and to visit the painted monasteries of Bucovina.

I am greatly looking forward to my new role as administrator in West Tweeddale hope to be of service to the linkage.

Mark Hepworth

From Carlops Kirk Session

Thursday 29 June 2023

Carlops Kirk Session met in the Church and via Zoom. Rev Dr Foley chaired the meeting.

Session membership

Session wishes to invite new people to join it and participate in its work. Members agreed who should be approached. Rev Dr Foley was asked to talk to these people to explore their willingness to participate and to invite them to become elders of Carlops Church, or, failing that, to participate in the Session's work in some other capacity, eg associateship.

No names, no pack drill, for the sake of proper confidentiality until individuals have been approached. Watch this space!

Safeguarding

Murray Campbell confirmed that, as Trustees of Carlops Church, Session members need to receive training in safeguarding. This is a legal requirement. Information about courses and dates is awaited. More intensive training is required by those working directly with children and/or vulnerable adults; this too, is under review, with a revised programme anticipated shortly.

Finance

Mary McElroy, Treasurer, reported that for the first six months of 2023, income has exceeded expenditure by some £1,000. She noted however, that income and expenditure do not occur evenly across any year, so no assumptions should be based upon this, and no reliable picture will be available until 31 December.

Property

Gill Gold confirmed that replanting of the slope behind the church has been completed and that Gavin Marshall has volunteered to provide labour and equipment to clear the area of any undesired plants. She reported that repairs to the church's front doorstep are complete. Gill and Douglas Gold were thanked for their continuing care of the building.

Eco Group

Anna Woolverton reported. Members of the Group are involved with planting, bee-keeping and related developments in the Rock Field. She hopes to convene a meeting of the Group soon. Members welcomed this, noting that regular meetings help generate ideas and activity, and are important to keep eco-work at the forefront of people's minds.

The success of social events – Coffee drop-in, Soup lunch, and the new, weekly Cuppa and company – was noted with satisfaction. However, Fair Trade activity is at a lower than desirable level and will benefit from increased support.

Murray Campbell and Rennie McElroy reported that Carlops has been invited to lead a session with an eco-focus at a Presbytery conference in the autumn.

Planning

Rennie McElroy reported. Julie Gamble and Rennie are preparing a revision and update of the current, 2016 plan. The whole community has been asked for comment and ideas, and in addition, Julie and Rennie have spoken directly to some twenty people. Comment received to date supports

Carlops Church's existing policies and activities, with some new ideas. There is still time to put your ideas forward; contact Julie or Rennie soon.

Julie and Rennie expect to produce a draft in late summer; that will come to Kirk Session for discussion and eventual approval. It should then be made widely available.

Presbytery

Murray Campbell reported that the Church of Scotland has approved our Presbytery Plan after extended and rigorous debate between representatives of Presbytery and of "121".

Other business

Rev Dr Foley reported ...

- Mark Hepworth has joined the linkage as our new Administrative Assistant.
- Dr Foley continues to seek funding for some youth development work.
- West Linton Boys' Brigade seeks new leaders. Anyone who could help, please contact Dr Foley in the first instance.
- Broughton congregation hopes to divest itself of the present church and a new, flexible "sacred space" is sought.
- Skirling congregation is considering some refurbishment of its building.

From the Eco Group

Sunday 16 July 2023

The Eco Group met after morning service on Sunday 16 July 2023. Convenor Anna Woolverton said that activities were progressing satisfactorily. There have been fewer "strictly eco" events in Carlops Church in recent years (eg, litter picks, Earth hour observations), but she cited the social events *Cuppa and company* and *Coffee drop-in*, and the welcome accorded these by the community. She also noted eco-activities in the Rock Field, including bee-keeping and horticultural work.

Anna reminded members that the annual Carlops eco service is normally delivered in September or October. There was discussion about possible topics. Climate change has been addressed several times recently, and some proposed that a theme which lent itself to a positive, affirming approach might be welcome. No firm decision was made; suggestions for topics, and offers to help design and lead the service, are invited – to Anna Woolverton please.

Former meetings marking earth hour and links with West Linton primary school were mentioned; Sustainable West Linton now operates links with the school. Alex Gray spoke of his work in connection with developing a world-wide, computerised, species database; he thought the project might offer possibilities for an explanatory talk in Carlops. This was welcomed. Rennie McElroy noted that the reinstatement of Carlops' "Friday evening talks" was the most common suggestion he and Julie Gable have received during their consultations about the Carlops Church *Forward plan*.

Members agreed that it would be helpful to meet again soon, after the holiday season.

The Column



A-I on Carlops

The June 2023 Column told the tale of my computer guru's foray into artificial-intelligence-generated text, and our shared reaction to it. I decided I should try A-I too. Might it ease the perennial problem of the empty editorial drawer? I asked Microsoft's Bing chatbot to provide "450 words about Carlops, Scotland". See below, entirely unedited by me (proving that there's a first for everything!) and complete with references. Tell me what you think.

Rennie McElroy Editor

Carlops is a small village in the Pentland Hills, within the Scottish Borders area of Scotland, close to the boundary with Midlothian. It lies between West Linton and Penicuik. The village was founded in 1784 and developed cotton weaving, coalmining and limestone mining¹. The name derives from the Scots "Carlins Lowp" meaning the Witches Leap. This is due to two exposed rock faces that are about 20m in height and 20m distance from each other³. Folklore maintained that witches would leap from one face to the other, over the chasm, for entertainment of an evening¹.

Carlops is also known for its connection to Allan Ramsay, a 18th century Scottish poet and playwright, who wrote his most famous work, *The Gentle Shepherd*, in Habbie's Howe, a scenic spot near the village that includes a small waterfall, cave and unspoilt woodland². The Allan Ramsay Hotel in Carlops is named after him and dates back to 1792¹. Carlops also has a community hall that hosts various events and activities throughout the year.

Carlops is surrounded by beautiful countryside and offers various walking opportunities. One of them is a circular walk that takes in the North Esk Reservoir, a fairly little-visited spot in the southern Pentlands above Carlops; one of the many burns tumbling down from the moors into this body of water is the source of the namesake river². The walk also passes by Spittal Farm, where C. T. R. Wilson, winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1927, was born¹. He retired to Carlops and died there in 1959.

Another attraction near Carlops is Auchencorth Moss, a peatland site that is part of the UK Environmental Change Network. It is used for monitoring and research on climate change, air pollution and biodiversity⁴. The moss is home to various plants and animals, such as sphagnum mosses, heather, cotton grass, curlews and skylarks.

Carlops is a charming village that combines history, culture and nature in a picturesque setting. It is well worth a visit for anyone who wants to explore the Pentland Hills and enjoy some Scottish folklore.

References

(1) Carlops - Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlops>

(2) Carlops | Towns & Villages - Scotland Starts Here. <https://scotlandstartshere.com/point-of->

[interest/carlops/](#)

(3) Walk: Gentle shepherds & leaping witches – Carlops circular | Scotland

<https://sobt.co.uk/walk-carlops-circular/>

(4) A bad witch's blog: Scottish Folklore:Witches' Leap at Carlops.

<http://www.badwitch.co.uk/2018/08/scottish-folklore-witches-leap-at.html>

A Chatbot

Diary



Forthcoming events

Cuppa and company Thursday 3 August 2023, 2-4pm

Cuppa and company Thursday 10 August 2023, 2-4pm

Cuppa and company Thursday 17 August 2023, 2-4pm

Cuppa and company Thursday 24 August 2023, 2-4pm

Cuppa and company Thursday 31 August 2023, 2-4pm

Coffee drop-in Saturday 3 September 2023, 10.30am-12noon

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Material for next issue

To Rennie McElroy by Monday 21 August 2023