

# The Deeside Tattler

February and March 2026



St. Kentigern's, Ballater.

St. Kentigern's, Ballater, St. Thomas's, Aboyne  
with St. Ninian's, Braemar





Without the third force you simply have a tension between a the two forces, as St Paul found in his own experience. “For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.’ (Romans 5:22-23) And by the ‘law of sin’ he is referring to the passions that are the emotional drivers of our ego personality.

Couples having an argument or people who take different sides on an issue on which they disagree the same problem exists. And whilst a compromise, is better than just continuing to argue, it rarely satisfies both parties.

Democracies with only two parties or those that may have more, but that operate on a first past the post voting system that favours the two main parties are rarely able to reach a consensus, because there are only two forces, the government and the opposition.

However, we need to understand that the resistant or denying force is not a problem to be overcome, but an essential to a new arising; no resistance, no new arising. The enemy is not the problem, but the opportunity. Hence, the problem will never be solved by silencing or eliminating the opposition, but only through enlarging our hearts sufficiently to hold the tension between opposites so that new possibilities open up.

In order to be able to discern what the third force is one has to be in a state of relaxed but attentive presence, with a mind that is open to seeing options that are counter intuitive. The third force is invisible to human beings in the ordinary state of consciousness. This is due to the way we have been educated; we are ‘hard wired’ to think in dualistic, either or ways.

It is the conscious and voluntary struggle between the “yes” and the “no” that calls for the third impulse, the reconciling impulse. For St. Paul, that third force was the reconciling power of grace that operates under a different law, not the outward laws of religion, which is ineffective as a third force, but the law of the spirit that gives life.

Under that law the active and passive roles are reversed. Ego becomes passive and divine essence active. Resistance is felt and acknowledged, but not in control. Instead, the evolving essence, the divine psycho-spiritual DNA with which we are born, emerges as the powerful active force and we are given the courage to face the reality of our divided nature and the many contradictions of our ego personality so that our true self, reflecting the glory of God, can grow.

In the next issue of the Tattler I will be continuing the theme of the Law of Three, with reference to the Holy Trinity.

### Ken Webb

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### Morning services

We are continuing with our Morning Worship services with lay teams from both churches visiting each other’s churches every month.

On Sunday 7th December Sue and Warren led the service, accompanied by their guide dog puppy, Quincy.

The title of the service was ‘Advent is an adventure’, and this included a large map of the world, and encouragement for people to pray about different countries or people abroad.

It was an enjoyable and informative service, with some amusing input from their canine companion.



Sue and Warren,  
with Quincy

Unfortunately, by the first Sunday in January, the snow had come! The service was still lay-led by Sabine and Susan, but on Zoom - reported elsewhere in this magazine.

The first Sunday in February is Candlemas, a Festival of Light, which marks the end of the Christmas season. We will celebrate this with a Christingle, again lay-led and probably rather informal. We missed the chalking of the door because of the snow in January, so - no promises - it may be that we will catch up with this at the beginning of the service.

## Zoom meetings



When the snowy weather made the prospect of a normal church service increasingly challenging, we decided to have our lay-led January Morning Worship on Zoom as a joint service, harking back to Covid days. Thanks to Sue and Warren, who set it up, we managed to have our service, including talks about the Epiphany from both the leaders, Sabine and Susan. About 20 people's joined us.

Sabine and Susan enjoyed hosting the service from Susan's home.



The following week the weather conditions hadn't improved much, so for the safety of everyone, Rev Ken Webb took a service for both churches via Zoom. We had an alternative Holy Communion service. Though we were not be able to share in the normal Eucharist, Ken invited us to have a small glass of wine/sherry or grape juice plus anything that would do as a substitute for a wafer of bread, to use as a symbolic act of communion. This was slightly different from the full Eucharist and so the Eucharistic prayer was different to reflect that. We were also invited to have a candle ready to light at the beginning of the service.

Ken shared the words of the Liturgy on his screen for all to see, and that and his address were also available as captions for anyone who is hard of hearing. Ken also arranged a choir on line, who sang the hymns for us to sing along, making them more enjoyable.

It all worked well, and about 24 people came, including some who are not able to come to our services in church because of health issues. Thanks go to Ken, for setting this up for us, and for his continued support to both our churches.

Ken Webb,  
speaking on line



## Crib Services

There was a good turnout for the St Kentigern's Crib Service, led by Sabine Muir and Carole Nicoll. The congregation was encouraged to bring along their favourite soft toy animal and participate with the crib animal's noises. They didn't disappoint! With a revised Nativity script by Sabine, featuring the loudest donkey in the world; the sheep, cows and camels also did their best to be heard.

The church looked lovely for Christmas, with our beautiful Christmas tree from Dinnet Estate, floral displays by Maggie Jaffray Ewen and Sabrina Humphrey, and stylish pew end greenery displays by Jane Farthing.

It was magical.

Carole and Sabine after the service,  
posing in front of a specially decorated tree.



St Thomas's also held their popular Crib Service on Christmas Eve. A crowd of over 84 people, children and adults, streamed in, mostly at the last minute, when there was a rush to get enough chairs out for everyone! And they all sang lustily a total of five well-known carols, with the telling of the story between, while the children brought forward the appropriate figure they had been given, Mary, a shepherd, a lamb or whatever. And when the angel appeared, there was Sam, suitably dressed as an angel. Sue, who led the service, chose to dress as a star!

An angel and a star,  
posing in front of the Christmas tree,  
generously given as usual  
from the Glen Tanar Estate.



## The Feast of the Three Kings and Its Enduring Traditions

Epiphany, celebrated on January 6th, marks the end of the Christmas season with a feast of history and culture. The gifts the Three Wise Men brought are deeply symbolic. Gold represents Jesus's status as a king, frankincense (an incense) points to his divine nature and role as a priest, and myrrh (an embalming oil) foreshadows his eventual suffering and death. From the gift-giving Día de los Reyes Magos in Spain to Italy's legend of La Befana, learn how the world honours this day of revelation.



Every year, as the buzz of New Year's Day settles, many cultures around the world prepare for one last festive celebration to conclude the Christmas season. This day, known as Epiphany, falls on January 6th. It is a day rich with history, tradition, and meaning, honouring the moment the Three Wise Men, or Magi, visited the infant Jesus. For many, Epiphany is as significant as Christmas Day itself, marked by special foods, family gatherings, and unique cultural customs. Whether you know it as Día de los Reyes Magos, La Befana, or the Feast of the Three Kings, this holiday offers a beautiful glimpse into the diverse ways people celebrate faith and heritage.

Epiphany is one of the oldest Christian feasts, with its origins dating back to the 2nd or 3rd century. The word "epiphany" comes from the Greek word epiphaneia, meaning "manifestation" or "revelation." Originally, the feast celebrated several key moments in the life of Jesus when his divinity was revealed to the world: his baptism in the Jordan River, his first miracle at the wedding in Cana, and the visit of the Magi.

Over time, the Western Christian church began to focus the January 6th celebration specifically on the journey of the Three Wise Men—named Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar in tradition—who followed a star to Bethlehem to honour the newborn King of the Jews. They brought with them symbolic gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. This event represents the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles (non-Jews), symbolizing that his message was for all of humanity.

### How Epiphany is Celebrated Around the World

Today, Epiphany traditions vary widely, but they are often centred around family, community, and festive foods. Here's how the day is honoured in different parts of the world.

#### In Spain and Latin America

For many in the Spanish-speaking world, Epiphany, or Día de los Reyes Magos, is the primary day for gift-giving. On the evening of January 5th, children leave out their

shoes, often filled with straw or grain for the Wise Men's camels, hoping to find them filled with presents the next morning. It's a magical day that extends the joy of the holiday season.

Large, colourful parades known as the Cabalgata de los Reyes Magos take over the streets of cities and towns, with the Three Kings riding on floats, tossing candy to crowds of excited children.

The French celebrate Epiphany with the Galette des Rois, or "King Cake." This delicious puff pastry, typically filled with a sweet almond cream called frangipane, also contains a hidden charm, or fève. The person who discovers the fève in their slice becomes the king or queen and wears a paper crown that comes with the cake. It's a fun tradition that brings families and friends together to share a treat.

Italian children look forward to a visit not from the Three Kings, but from La Befana, a kind, witch-like figure who flies on her broomstick on the eve of Epiphany. According to legend, the Magi invited her to join their journey, but she declined. Regretting her decision, she set out to find the baby Jesus herself, leaving gifts for all the good children she came across.

In countries like Russia, Greece, and Bulgaria, Epiphany is deeply tied to the baptism of Christ and the blessing of water. Priests lead ceremonies to bless rivers, lakes, and seas. A common tradition involves a priest throwing a wooden cross into the water, and brave men dive into the icy depths to retrieve it. The person who finds the cross is believed to receive good health and luck for the year. This event, often called the "Blessing of the Waters," is a powerful symbol of purification and renewal.

### Evolving Trends

Epiphany Eve, or January 5th, is often referred to as the Twelfth Night, as it marks the end of the twelve days of Christmas, which begin on Christmas Day. Shakespeare's famous play, Twelfth Night, is believed to have been written for a celebration held on this date.

In recent years, diaspora communities have brought their unique Epiphany traditions to new corners of the globe, sharing their cultural heritage through food, parades, and community events. Bakeries in cities from New York to Sydney now sell Roscón de Reyes and Galette des Rois, allowing people from all backgrounds to partake in the festivities.

Additionally, there's a growing appreciation for the cultural significance of the day beyond its religious meaning. It's seen as a time to celebrate family, generosity, and the rich tapestry of global traditions that mark the end of the festive season.

The most famous Epiphany food is the King Cake, which has many variations. In Spain and Latin America, it's the Roscón de Reyes. In France, it's the Galette des Rois. In New Orleans, the Mardi Gras King Cake season begins on Epiphany. Other foods include sweet breads, pastries, and festive family meals.

**Susan Smith** from her talk given for the Morning Worship service, 4th January 2026

## Great Houses and Gardens of North Yorkshire Sept.'25 Part 1

In mid September Sabrina and I took the train from Stonehaven to York. Being a Sunday and therefore engineering works to the railway system, the train had to go via Carlisle to get to Newcastle, which made the journey more interesting!



and comfortable bed!

We joined the other members of the tour at the Middlethorpe Hall Hotel, a Historic House Hotel just south of York, formerly a late 17th century private house, which had been taken over for the tour by Noble Caledonia, our tour operators. And what a comfortable hotel it is, with excellent food and a discerning cellar.



We started our tour next morning with a walk around the lovely 20 acre hotel gardens which included a walled garden and a lake. For the whole tour we were accompanied by Alan Mason, one of Europe's most experienced and best qualified garden designers.

We were then taken by coach to Harewood House, designed by John Carr and built in the 1760s by Edwin Lascelles and renowned for its magnificent Robert Adam interiors. It is also home to superb Thomas Chippendale furniture and a world class collection of paintings by, amongst others, Turner, Reynolds, Titian and El Greco. It has been home to the Lascelles family since it was built, reflecting the changing tastes and styles of the past 250 years. It is also home to the first contemporary art gallery to be opened in a country house.



Just outside the house, an Italianate Terrace, designed by Sir Charles Barry in the 1840s, stretches along the southern aspect of the house and provides stunning views over Yorkshire's most beautiful landscape and lake. The grounds and gardens are superb, having been crafted by Capability Brown. Harewood's Himalayan Garden is a redevelopment of the "Rock Garden" nurtured by Princess Mary and her



husband the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Harewood in the 1930s, and includes rare and exotic plants from the Himalayan region. We then returned to the hotel for a relaxing evening and delicious dinner.



Tuesday saw us taken by coach to Castle Howard, begun in 1699 and arguably the finest Baroque stately home in Britain, with a spectacular Great Hall under the painted and gilded dome 80 feet high.

It contains fabulous collections of paintings and classical sculpture, and is still owned and used by the Howard family. Its fame comes from being the location of "Brideshead" in the TV series and also the 2008 feature film.

The park is designed on a heroic scale covering 1,000 acres. The gardens, with their formal baroque layout between two lakes and famous Prince of Wales Fountain, also include such memorable sights as the Temple of Four

Winds, the Cascade and the Mausoleum.

The Walled Garden has collections of old and modern roses, and Ray Wood has a unique collection of rhododendrons, rare trees, magnolias and azaleas. You need to be fit to get round it all!



In the afternoon we were entertained by representatives of the London Festival Opera in the Long Gallery, with an excellent rendition of favourites old and new, and some less well known.

We then returned to the hotel for another relaxing evening and delicious dinner.

**Marcus Humphrey**  
**October 2025**

*(To be continued)*



## Readings for February and March 2026

1st February Epiphany 4	Micah 6: 1-8 Corinthians 1: 18-31 Matthew 5: 1-12	Ann Maggs	Carol Simmons
8th February Epiphany 5	Isaiah 58: 1-9a 1 Corinthians 2: 1-12 Matthew 5: 13-20	Sabine Muir	Carol Birss
15th February Epiphany 6	Deuteronomy 30:15-20 1 Corinthians 3: 1-9 Matthew 5: 21-37	Hilary Mutch	Christopher and Margaret Heald
22nd February Lent 1	Genesis 2: 15-17, 3: 1-7 Romans 5: 12-19 Matthew 4: 1-4	Sabrina Humphrey	Michael and Claire Bruce
1st March Lent 2	Genesis 12: 1-4a Romans 4: 1-5, 13-17 John 3: 1-17	Maggie Jaffray Ewen	The Rider Family
8th March Lent 3	Exodus 17: 1-7 Romans 5: 1-11 John 4:5-42	Stanley Ewen	Carol Simmons
15th March Lent 4	1 Samuel 16: 1-13 Ephesians 5: 8-14 John 9: 1-41	<b>Joint service</b> Hilary Mutch	<b>Joint service</b> Anne Harper
22nd March Lent 5	Ezekiel 37: 1-14 Romans 8: 6-11 John 11:1-45	Susan Smith	Meg White
29th March PALM SUNDAY	Isaiah 50:4-9a Philippians 2: 5-11 Matthew 26: 14-27	Marcus Humphrey	Janilyn Binns
5th April EASTER SUNDAY	Acts 10.34-43 Colossians 3:1-4 John 20: 1-18	Marcus Humphrey	The Aboyne family

### CHURCH SERVICES AT BALLATER AND ABOYNE

	<b><u>St. Kentigern's, 9.30am</u></b>	<b><u>St. Thomas's, 11.15am</u></b>
<b>1st Sunday</b>	<b>Morning Worship</b>	<b>Morning Worship</b>
<b>2nd Sunday</b>	<b>Holy Communion 1982</b>	<b>Holy Communion 1982</b>
<b>3rd Sunday</b>	<b>Holy Communion 1970</b>	<b>Holy Communion 1970</b>
<b>4th Sunday</b>	<b>Holy Communion 1982</b>	<b>Family Communion</b>
<b>5th Sunday</b>	<b>Morning Prayer</b>	<b>Morning Prayer</b>

## Sunday Club St. Kentigern's, Ballater

Children are welcome to attend any Sunday Service, and families are invited to use the materials in the Hall if so required.

The **St Kentigern's Sunday Club** normally meets on the **third Sunday of every month at 9.30am** in the Church Hall. The children are brought back into Church to join their families during the Offertory Hymn.

**These Services will be advertised when they have been resumed.**

## Young Church at St. Thomas's

Children are welcome at all the services at St Thomas's.

The children's corner contains books, colouring materials and toys for small children, so do make use of them.

### **Morning Worship at St.Thomas's** *(on the first Sunday of the month)*

This is normally a non-Communion Service, not specifically for children, but they are of course especially welcome. During the Interregnum, they will be led by members of the congregations of St Kentigern's and St Thomas's alternately.

The next services are:

**1st February Candlemas with Christingle**  
*(led by St Thomas's)*

**1st March** What does it mean to be born again  
*(led by St Kentigern's)*

**5th April is Easter Sunday.** There will be a celebration of Holy Communion to mark this important date in the Church's calendar

### **Lent**

Lent is a tree without blossom, without leaf,  
barer than blackthorn it's winter sleep,  
all unadorned. Unlike Christmas which decrees  
the setting up, the dressing down of trees,  
Lent is a taking down, a stripping bare,  
A starkness after all has been withdrawn  
of surplus and superfluous,  
leaving no hiding place, only an emptiness  
between black branches, a most precious space  
before the leaf, before the time of flowers;  
Lest we should see only the leaf, the flower;  
Lest we should miss the stars.

*Jean M. Watt*

## From the Bible for the young and not so young



### Early years of Jesus

The Bible tells us a lot about the birth of Jesus, as celebrated at Christmas with stories of His birth, and carols. Then we move on to the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, and the start of His ministry. But what happened in His earlier years, as he was growing up?

There is not a lot written about this, but what there is, is worth looking at. We know that when the wise men came to worship Jesus as a baby, they spoke first to Herod the King, asking where they would find this new King. But this put Herod in a rage, he was afraid a new King Jesus would take over from him, and he ordered a terrible thing, that all the young males were to be killed. And Joseph and Mary had taken the baby Jesus to Egypt, to save him from the slaughter. They stayed there until Herod had died, but on returning to Israel, they heard that the new King was just as bad, so they went and settled in Galilee, which was thought to be safer.

So they made their home in the city of Nazareth, and Jesus was brought up there. We are told that he grew and became strong, 'filled with wisdom, and God's favour was with him.' It was assumed that Joseph was his father, in spite of his birth 'by the Holy Spirit'. Joseph was a carpenter, and though we are not told that Jesus was also a carpenter, he was known as the 'carpenter's son', and it is likely that he followed him in this too. He did not start his ministry until he was about 30 years old.

We are given of just one later story, which happened when Jesus was twelve years old. (*St Luke ch 2*) Mary and Joseph were devout Jews, and every year they went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Passover. This was an important time for the Jews, remembering the time when they were freed from slavery under the Egyptians, and with God's help, left Egypt and searched for the land that God had promised them.

So when Jesus was twelve, his parents took him with them for the first time. All seems to have gone well and after the feast, they set off with many relatives and friends, on the long journey home. His parents just assumed that Jesus was with some of their friends, but after travelling all day, they looked out for him and they couldn't find him! This thoroughly alarmed them and they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. They searched everywhere and saw no sign of him, getting more and more worried about where he could be. Without much hope of seeing him, they went to the temple - and there he was! He was sitting among the teachers there, listening and asking questions, and astonishing everyone there with his understanding of what was being taught, and his answers to the teachers.

But Mary went up to him, completely frustrated, and asked what he thought he was doing there, didn't he know that she and his father had been looking for him for the last two days? Jesus seems to have been surprised by this, saying they should have known that he would be there 'going about his father's business'. They had no idea what he was talking about, but took him away with them, and they all returned home. They went back to Nazareth, and we are told he was obedient to them. But Mary remembered, as she had the strange happenings at his birth.

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and this time we are told that he was in favour with God - and with man. It would seem he was well respected as he grew up.

## Snow on the Hills

Yesterday evening, in the lowering sun  
The snow on the hills  
Glowed  
A shade of pinky-orange  
Of sunsets and winter  
It was beautiful

Today the snow came down  
In swirls – a whirling dervish  
The traffic slows to a crawl  
The bird feeder is suddenly overcrowded  
As if in anticipation

And this evening  
There is silence  
Broken only occasionally  
By the intrepid traveller  
'Is your journey really necessary?'

Tomorrow we shall see  
More snow on the way  
Or so they tell us  
I wonder if the setting sun  
Reflected on the hill  
Will look quite as beautiful.

*Vittoria Hancock*

*St Kentigern's in the snow,  
January 2026 -  
also beautiful!*





## Stewardship – part 5

### A note about receiving financial gifts

Whether a contribution is given as a pledge or as another type of gift, confidentiality about who gives what is important. Withholding that information could be seen as being at odds with the development of an open, communicative approach to stewardship. However, most would agree that maintaining confidentiality is important both for the giver and the congregation.

The vestry should understand who has access to giving data but should not expect to know all. The rector may choose to have access to names and amounts, as levels of giving can say much about the health of the congregation and the attitudes of individual members (but this has never been requested during my time as treasurer).

As treasurer I have been able freely to share giving statistics with the vestry and the congregation while still maintaining confidentiality of individuals. Some may fear that the congregational leadership’s knowledge of pledge amounts will give undue influence to large donors. This fear is based on an assumption that these donors may have ulterior motives and are possibly trying to control the direction of the Church and prevent changes. In my experience as treasurer of St Thomas, this is definitely not the case. More often, large gifts enable our congregation to do things they could not otherwise do, and helped put the church on a course of renewal, growth, stability and change in keeping with its mission.

We are very fortunate that our regular and occasional congregation members are very generous with their gifts – large and small - not all of which are financial. More on other gifts next time.

**Sue Burgess**

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## News from Aboyne-Dinnet

### Community Life Group Events

Those of you who love Anne Harper's Doric will be able to hear her in performance at Bonty Court at 2pm in the Residents' Lounge of Bonty Court, **Wednesday 4th February**. We are welcome as visitors to Bonty Court, but please could anyone who is interested let us know beforehand. Because of security, we would have to know that you are coming to let you in. Email to [Christa Markham christa.markham@btinternet.com](mailto:Christa.Markham@btinternet.com) or Sarah Wright at [aboyne.wright@btinternet.co](mailto:aboyne.wright@btinternet.co)

Ann Raeburn, author of 'Lumphanan Paths and Ways', will be talking to the Guild about her discoveries on **Thursday 5th February**, Aboyne Dinnet Church Hall, 7pm start. All welcome.

Rev Sharmann Maromo will be talking about the Life and Culture of Zimbabwe to the Guild on Thursday 5th **March**, Aboyne Dinnet Hall at 7pm. All welcome.

**The Guild** will be holding its Daffodil Coffee Morning, 10am to 12 noon on **Saturday 21st March**. There will be the usual attractions, and daffodils picked in the garden of Rhu-na-Haven House by kind permission of Marcus and Sabrina Humphrey.

## Salvation for all or only for a few?

The book of Revelation, on which I have produced a series of videos, presents us with a paradox. On the one hand only those whose name is written in the Book of Life will be saved. On the other hand, the whole of creation is redeemed, and all nations are saved. But one thing is certain; our destiny and the destiny of the world hinges on our choices in the present.

It is helpful to turn to what Jesus says about our choices in Mark 8.31-38. “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.”

The life that we will lose is the small self, the ego self tied to our earthly existence. And the word Jesus used in his native Aramaic conveys the sense that to save is to impart life energy. When we try to save our small earth-bound self, what we are trying to do is to give it energy so that it can endure.

However, if we do, all that happens is that our small self, this earth bound life will decay, it will lose its purpose, which is what the root sounds of the word in the Aramaic language that Jesus spoke implies. It will then be absorbed back into the greater reality out of which it emerged.

Just as the body of any creature, once it has reached the end of its life, decays and decomposes back into the elements of the earth out of which it was formed, even so our spiritual body will decompose and be reabsorbed without form into the divine essence out of which it has been born. I think that this is one way to understand what is meant by the Lake of Fire in the book of Revelation.

If, on the other hand, we realise that that our ego self has grown to the fullest extent that is possible, and if we are willing to let it go in an act of self surrender, which is what taking up our cross and following Jesus involves, then the divine essence with which we are born, and which has been overwritten by the personality that we have acquired, will be energised and evolve into the True Self that we were originally created to become and whose true name is written in the Book of Life. Then our spiritual body, a body that survives death, according to St Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, can evolve and grow to clothe us.

Is it not possible, then, that there are those who, by following the way of the cross, will be saved, even though they are not baptised Christians?

This is just one of the thoughts I share in the video on Revelation 19 & 20. To view the full video and all the videos in the series, search for me @kenwebb on YouTube. I have also amended the introductory video.

**Ken Webb**

## On why rural church-goers like to freeze in church

The Rectory  
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Winter certainly exposes the difference between those of you who live in cities and us rural folk. While you bask in your centrally heated flat, and complain about the half an inch of slush outside, we country folk wear overcoats in our houses, open all doors and windows to let the heat in and battle through snow drifts, measured in feet, to get the morning paper.

Colonel Wainwright has acquired a new toy: a snow blower, of sufficient power that I believe it could clear the Antarctic. He kindly volunteered to clear the paths around the church. Working outwards from the church door, the path to the church soon became snow-free. Unfortunately, he only realised when his job was complete that the blown snow then formed a ten-foot drift under the lych gate.

Miss Margison, ever helpful in the worst sense of the word, decided to unfreeze the pipes in the church hall. A blow torch was not the ideal solution, although the resulting burst did make some rather attractive ice sculptures round the kitchen equipment. The village badminton team that uses the hall has now temporarily changed sport to ice hockey.

Inevitably, congregations have soared. There is nothing like adversity for making people want to prove they have the moral fibre to overcome it. Much satisfaction seems to be obtained on discovering who has not dared venture out, which is taken as judgement on their strength of character. The Prentices upstaged most people by arriving on a sleigh. Mr Prentice was warmly wrapped in a travelling rug, while his wife pulled it. As they both explained, they couldn't possibly let the pony work in such conditions.

What I momentarily thought was applause during my sermon was merely people keeping their hands warm and the hymns were drowned out by the stamping of feet. Our organist complained that the cold made his fingers so numb that he couldn't play properly – although I didn't notice that things were much different from normal.

No, my dear nephew, a few flakes of wet snow may close *your* car park for health and safety reasons, but we shall continue to triumph heroically over adversity. We return home after Matins, knowing we have proved our Christian commitment in being utterly uncomfortable.

Your loving uncle,  
Eustace

From the *Parish Pump*. Editor: The Rev Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace' ... If you would like a copy of our published booklet of Uncle Eustace's letters, please email us at: [enquiries@parishpump.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@parishpump.co.uk)

## Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at St Thomas's



This year's Nine lessons and Carols at St Thomas's Church was a treat for us all with carols, well known and new, interspersed with readings of the nativity story read by members of all the local churches and carols sung by the choir.

The Augmented choir, led by Lucy Bailey were in great voice and number bringing the joy of this season to us all.

Among the choir's programme were -

Angel Carol by John Rutter - Christmas services would be the poorer without a beautiful carol by Rutter . This year marks his 80th birthday but he still writes much music and is a judge on the BBC Young Chorister of the Year. His works are always set to wonderful melodies and although originally written as a completion piece for young Choristers in the 1980s, this carol is now among one of his most popular.

Two more carols sung by the choir were by the younger composer Thomas Hewitt Jones (winner of BBC Young Composers' competition when in his teens) and by Andrew Carter (who arranged words from 8th century Bede to an arrangement of a French melody), both telling us in joyful words and music of the night of Christ's birth .

The choir ended with the wonderful combination of thoughtful and beautiful words of Vittoria set to music so fittingly by our organist Sheila.

After Revd. Ken Webb gave the blessing, the packed church were treated to mulled wine and a range of delicious treats.

Thank you to all who made this evening possible .

**Carol Birss**

## THE GREAT STORM OF 1942

I am sitting in my sun porch all cosy and warm in my centrally heated house, watching the snow falling and blocking up my drive. Having failed to find an old photo I'm sending you this 2026 one of my path out to the A97 when my kind neighbours dug me out.

And I am reading an email from Sheila asking if I have a story for the Tattler even about SNOW. That triggered my memory, so here we go.



When I was very young I used to get a bit worried about the weather for the first week of February in case we had a storm and I wouldn't get any Birthday cards from my aunts away down south.

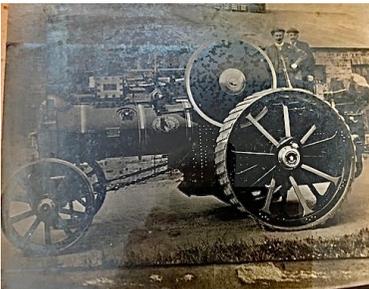
At this time we lived in Roughpark, Strathdon, a one sided village next to Thomas Shand, Grocer, Home Farm and Dairy all on our left, and on our right three more houses, then the Massie's Smiddy, Garage and two houses. The main road A944 ran past us all with fields opposite. Then there is the famous Seely Hillock just before you got to the village on a slope that always blocked with snow in the winter. Now in those days the only plough during the war was a steam plough and as it had a job keeping the bus route open, we were snowed in for a whole week in 1942.

The day it attempted to clear the Seely Hillock was so memorable, it chugged back and forth but with little luck in shifting all the drifts. Luckily a huge gang of people with their shovels hacked their way through the drifts, and the steam plough in the end got through. Behind it came the butcher's van, the baker's van the doctor, the post van, the local carrier, etc etc. Us children, and adults, gave a huge cheer as the Steam Engine ploughed its way through the village and on and upwards towards Corgarff. Unfortunately I could not find any photos of the event. Needless to say I did get my Birthday cards that year, even though they were late.

As children we had enjoyed a whole week off school, making snowmen and having snowball fights. Do any of you remember having putties tied round the top of your boots to save your feet getting wet? I know I did, but it made my legs ache!

**Eileen A. Davies**

And here is a picture of a **steam engine** of the time. Steam engines were the backbone of rail and often adapted for road use, making steam-powered snowploughs a common sight in severe winters.



In a wartime context - 1942 was deep in World War 2, and maintaining vital transport like the A944, a major route in Aberdeenshire, was crucial for the war effort. So the snow ploughs were important for keeping the roads open.

## Personnel Congratulations

Claire Bruce, who with Patron of St Thomas's Church Michael Bruce owns and manages Glen Tanar Estate, has been awarded an MBE for services to tourism in the New Year's Honours. Together they have transformed Glen Tanar into a thriving estate for tourism, eco-management of the land and much else. Claire recently stepped down from the board of VisitAberdeenshire, including seven years as chairwoman.

## New Member

We have a new and very regular member of our congregation at St Thomas's! Sue and Warren, thinking they perhaps didn't have enough to do already, decided they would take responsibility for a puppy, in its first year before going on to proper training as a Guide Dog for the Blind. This would not be any handicap to their other activities, as it would go everywhere with them, as part of the pre-training. And so Quincy arrived!

Things are not of course quite so simple in practice, but Quincy does indeed come to St Thomas's - and St Kentigern's on occasion - and has been very well received. He is a delightful, friendly pup, carefully trained, happy to say hallo to everyone including the children, who love him!

We do hear the occasional bark in the middle of our services, to remind us he is there, but never more than one at a time, he is quickly silenced. And he does add something lovely to the life of our church!



Quincy with home-grown pumpkin!

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When snowbound, one looks for entertainment from out of the window - and there if you are lucky, are the birds! Here we have a hopeful robin perching on a fence at Dinnet.

And a total of nine pigeons at one point came to feast in my garden! Mostly there were only one or two, plus the odd blackbird or two. Then there was a host of chaffinches, and a few tits, doing the heavy work of pecking at the bird feeders, thus bringing down lots of spares for the hungry birds below! The pigeons tended to fight with one another, but were very calm with the little birds, it was lovely to see them together. The chaffinches were mostly peaceable but hard-working - except one aggressive one who was a disgrace to the flock. It was all very entertaining!



**Sheila**

## WEB-SITES

St Thomas's Web-site has been transferred and upgraded. The link is <http://www.stthomasaboyn.org>

If you want to get in touch, please email: [stthomasaboyn@gmail.com](mailto:stthomasaboyn@gmail.com) or phone Tel No 07352 750090

St Kentigern's Web-site is: [stkentigernsballater.aodiocese.org.uk](http://stkentigernsballater.aodiocese.org.uk)

The Deeside Tattler is posted on the St Thomas's web-site, along with some of the previous editions. It has been possible to return the photos to their original colours, making a huge difference in their quality.

Some services are recorded at St Thomas's, and posted on Youtube, usually a few hours after the event  
The Youtube Link is:  
<https://www.youtube.com/@st.thomaschurchaboyn>

“Devote yourselves to prayer,  
being watchful and thankful.”  
*Colossians Ch 4 v2*

Anyone who would like to be prayed for especially, or has a friend who would like this, please get in touch

by phone **07352 750090** or email [upperdeesidechurches@gmail.com](mailto:upperdeesidechurches@gmail.com)

## Pastoral Cards for the sick or bereaved

We have a small selection of very helpful pastoral cards, which are suitable to send from the Church to anyone who is sick, going into hospital, or bereaved. They include appropriate readings and prayers. Recipients have commented on the encouragement and comfort these cards have brought them.

If you would like a pastoral card sent to a friend from:

**St Thomas's, Aboyn**  
Please contact Meg White  
Tel 013398 80034

**St Kentigern's, Ballater**  
Please contact Sabrina Humphrey  
Tel 013398 85233

**Important**  
**The Tattler needs you!**  
Please send news, articles, stories, fillers, or anything else you can think of to enrich the Tattler. It can only be as good as you make it!

The next Edition is starting now.  
Please give or send all contributions to the Editor,  
or to Sabine Muir at Ballater,  
by March 16th

## CONTACTS :

Treasurer  
Secretary  
Lay Representative  
Vestry Members

Sacristan  
Organist  
Chalice Bearers

Secretary  
Treasurer  
Lay representative  
Vestry Members

Organist and Publicity  
Child Protection Officer  
Sacristans  
Chalice Bearers

Flowers  
People's Warden  
(Maintenance Officer)  
Patron

## ST. KENTIGERN'S

Marcus Humphrey  
Sabine Muir  
Hilary Mutch  
Sabrina Humphrey  
Margaret Jaffray Ewen  
Sabine Muir  
Susan Smith  
Stuart Wright  
Hilary Mutch  
Stanley Ewen  
Marcus Humphrey, Sabine Muir  
Douglas Mutch, Susan Smith,

## ST. THOMAS'S

Anne Harper  
Sue Burgess  
Anne Harper  
Warren Burgess  
Lara Elson  
Sheila Maxwell  
Katherine Rider  
Carol Simmons  
Lesley Thomas  
Sheila Maxwell  
Lesley Thomas  
Carol Simmons, Jo Elson, Lesley Thomas  
Warren Burgess, Peter Sowrey, Lara Elson  
Andrew Wilson, Sue Burgess

Jill Binns  
Warren Burgess  
Michael Bruce

## ST. NINIAN'S

For information, contact Diocesan Office tel **01224 662247**

**Lay Eucharistic Ministers:** Susan Smith, Sue Burgess