

# Stow & Fountainhall

community newsletter  
www.stow-borders.co.uk

issue  
**38**  
Winter  
2019-20



A huge thank you to everyone who turned up on 14 November to add their stitch to the Welcome Panel for the Great Tapestry of Scotland. A lovely mix of young and mature young! The entire Welcome Panel will be 2.5 metres x 1.5 metres; it has been cut up into five parts to make it easier to be worked on. There are five figures each representing part of the Borders heritage. The Fisher Lass is in Eyemouth, the Shepherd is in Smailholm, the Textile Worker is in Hawick, the Monk is in Kelso and in Stow we have the Reiver. Through the five sections the Borders river system flows across the characters. On this occasion we added stitches to the rivers and started on the hill sections.

We were visited by a puppy training to be a guide dog for the blind who is being socialised in a variety of settings, he was very well behaved but did not add a stitch! A lady from Selkirk came to add her stitch and one novice stitcher said 'This is easier than trying to mend a hole in my trouser pocket!'

The Reiver will visit the Galashiels Girl Guides and Boys Brigade in the New Year (he's already been to the Galashiels Scout group) to allow them to add their stitches.

Thanks to Gala Water History & Heritage Association for letting us share the Reading Room. The Great Tapestry of Scotland Gallery is due to open in Galashiels in Spring 2021.

### STITCHERS O' STOW



**Gala Water Singers**  
Community - Junior Choirs in Gala Water Valley




**Christmas Kaleidoscope**  
A colourful collection of Christmas Music & Cheer!

**Sunday 15 December 2019 @ 3pm**




**at Stow Church TD1 2QP**

Buffet included • EB • Children free  
Tickets: Stow Shop; choir members; on the door

SSE Foundation Scotland

**HOGMANAY PARTY**

Live Band from Tubby Horse Company  
Tuesday 31st December 2019  
8pm till late  
Adults £2 Kids Free  
Licensed Bar

Tickets available from Post Office or from Jenny 01578 760 297

**Kids Hub**  
Bring a bean bag  
Fountainhall Village Hall

Auld Lang Syne

Section of Dine will be available

4 no charity No. SC23124

**Stow Pump Track**

Community Consultation  
Stow Town Hall  
Friday 13th December  
2:15pm to 4pm  
7pm to 8pm  
Short presentation @ 2:30 and 7:15pm

Find out more!



Have your say!

Refreshments and cake available!

## STOW PUMP TRACK SURVEY



We recently conducted a survey to help us understand the level of support for a bike pump track in Stow. Thank you to everyone who responded. **We had 144 responses** (138 online and 6 paper). **66% of respondents were resident in the Parish of Stow and Fountainhall.**

### Benefit to community?

**85%** of respondents thought a pump track would benefit the community and a further **7%** thought it would maybe benefit the community.

### Use?

- **52%** of respondents said they would **use** a pump track in Stow and a further **17%** said they would maybe use a pump track; **82%** of respondents were aged 35 to 64 years.
- **81%** of respondents said that other members of their household/ family or visitors to the house would or maybe would use a pump track.
- The majority of these other potential users were **18 years or below**: **42%** were aged under 12 years with a further **20%** aged 12-18 years.

### Location?

- **29%** of respondents thought the pump track should be in the **centre** of the village, **17%** at the edge of the village. **53%** of respondents did not have an opinion about the area of location. **33** respondents added comments about location: the most frequently suggested locations were the park/ vicinity of the park (**9** respondents) and the area of the land between the Bowling Club and Mill Lade (**10** respondents).
- Important factors for location were **safe to access on foot/ bike** (**65%** of respondents), being **near to the park and existing village amenities** (**45%**) and **visual impact** (**20%** of respondents); **11%** didn't have an opinion. **10%** of respondents identified other factors that were important for location, the majority of which related to **car parking** close by or safe access from car parking.
- The majority of respondents would **travel** to the pump track by bike or foot (**54%**); **33%** said they would travel by car.

The full survey results will be available on the Facebook page 'Stow Pump Track'. Please share and follow the page for further updates.

We are holding a **community consultation event** to find out your views on a potential site(s) for the pump track on **Friday 13 December at Stow Town Hall** from 2.15pm to 4pm and 7pm to 8pm. There will be a short presentation at 2.30 pm and 7.15pm. Please come along to find out more and have your say. It is really important to get your feedback both to help decide on location and to support future funding applications. Refreshments and cake available! If you are unable to attend, relevant information will be available on the Facebook page and you can email feedback to [stowpumptrack@gmail.com](mailto:stowpumptrack@gmail.com).

## STOW COMMUNITY GARDEN

Much has been achieved in the last few months thanks to a small but brave gang of volunteers. Heroes of Stow! The garden is enjoyed by many but especially by children who love walking on its stepping stones and sleepers. The wildflower area is establishing itself with the help of Sandy Bruce who is attending to it with much care. The more pernicious weeds have been nearly completely eradicated. We are now taking a well deserved break until next Spring.



Many thanks to the Community Council who has awarded us another grant of £300 which will be spent mostly on bark to reduce weeding and more plants. Thank you to John from Millburn Garage for donating gravel, to Chrissie Wanner for the sleepers and Andrew McKenzie for topsoil.

For donations please contact Andrea at [andrea.carlino@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:andrea.carlino@yahoo.co.uk) or 01578730763. Keep warm and see you in the Spring.



## BEEING MORE BEE FRIENDLY . . .

By now, weather permitting, there should be 100 saplings of wild harvest trees and bushes planted at the quiting green alongside the burn to create a beautiful hedge. They have been provided by the Borders Beekeepers Association who were very pleased to be able to include Stow in its tree planting project to encourage pollinators. They were/ will be planted by Stow's volunteer band of gardeners and planters. Over 400 trees were provided in a nationwide scheme organised by the woodland trust and shared among beekeepers in the borders.

Bees are finding it increasingly difficult to survive in the wild, mainly due to the varroa mite which came to Scotland the 1990s. Bees are vital for pollination of crops and wild flowers along with other insects such as bumble bees, wasps and butterflies.

There are over 100 members of the BBA. The association runs regular courses including very popular taster days and also the longer beginners course, which starts in February 2020. Details of courses and more information about the BBA's activities can be found on the website at [www.bordersbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.bordersbeekeepers.org.uk).

Even if you do not want to become a beekeeper, you can help the bees and other pollinators by making sure you plant bee friendly plants in your garden, perhaps cut your grass a bit less often to let wild flowers flourish, you can also help to support bees in your area by buying local honey when it's available.

John Wilkinson, Chair Borders Beekeeping Association

## WIND FARM FUNDS

No awards have been made since the last newsletter. The final panel meeting of 2019 was due to meet on 3 December after the newsletter went to press.

Application dates for 2020 will be set soon and then will be available on the website: [www.foundationscotland.org.uk/programmes/edf-longpark/](http://www.foundationscotland.org.uk/programmes/edf-longpark/)

Notes  
on  
the  
Wind



The Stow Community Trust has had a very active few months, with a public meeting to give an update on the Station House project, and our 2019 Annual General Meeting.

To find out more about the work of the Community Trust please visit our website: [www.stowhub.co.uk](http://www.stowhub.co.uk)

### The Station House

The Station House project is an exciting and ambitious proposal to develop the existing station building into a bar/ bistro with cycle hub and community facilities. The project has been gathering momentum and is currently in the final stages before work can commence on-site.

Following a successful tendering process, the Board received a number of competitive bids for the construction work required to undertake the project. We are now working hard to close the funding gap that has arisen following this exercise. This involves working closely with our professional team and the preferred provider to identify savings, and with our funders to secure new monies. Further to this, The Accelerate Scheme which is run the by Scottish Community Alliance has allocated SCT the services of Pamela Redpath, a borders-based consultant to assist with financial planning.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Nigel Millar, who has very generously provided the use of his land for the additional parking provision required for the Station House. Planning permission has now been granted for the additional nine parking spaces which are above the station, west of the bridge, with the mature trees protected. We hope to be in a position to appoint a contractor for the construction work to begin early in the new year.

### 2019 Annual General Meeting

The SCT AGM took place in October and we were pleased to invite Jemma Reid (Project Manager, Midlothian and Borders Tourism Action Group) as our guest speaker. [And as many will remember, local resident Jemma was the volunteer organiser of a great party on the Quoting Green on 5 September 2015, to celebrate the opening of the Borders Railway. Good to have your skills available to us again Jemmal! Ed.]

Jemma provided an overview of what MBTAG have been doing and what they have planned over the next 12 months relating to tourism, opportunities and marketing. She also gave us an update on the new Scottish Borders Tourism Strategy and the work that is underway to develop the Scottish Borders as a place that people come to stay, rather than pass through on their way to other more favoured destinations in Scotland. Key to developing the Scottish Borders as a tourism destination is developing and marketing the full range of experiences for tourists in the Scottish Borders. We need to use available data to understand our potential visitors and their interests better as well as provide easily accessible information on the activities that are available in the area. Work has been done to gain insights into the people who are accessing information about the Scottish Borders online and what their interests are. By using this data we will be able to better provide a more comprehensive range of experiences that will meet the needs of tourists who are coming to the Borders.

MBTAG was set up by the Scottish Borders Tourism Partnership and Midlothian Tourism Forum on the back of the opening of the Borders Railway. During phase one the project focused on business-to-business support, encouraging collaboration to make local businesses more tourism ready across both regions-wide and not just down the railway corridor. This has included:

- developing a new tourism app 'Scotland Starts Here'
- providing online training for staff and managers
- providing training to support businesses to make their businesses more accessible to tourists online, as well as other routes to market including the travel trade.

Phase two of the project will focus on digital marketing, designing and building a new consumer facing campaign website that will inspire people to come to our destination. They are currently working on new campaigns, podcasts and ebooks that will also sit on the new website which will also be called 'Scotland Starts Here'

and is due to launch in the New Year. In addition to this MBTAG are also targeting the travel trade to ensure this destination is on their itineraries and brochures by doing more inbound FAM (familiarisation for industry professionals) trips and attending more trade shows than ever before.

**To get your tourism business listed on the 'Scotland Starts Here' APP and be on the MBTAG mailing list to be kept up to date with all that is going on in the area please email: [jemma@mbtag.uk](mailto:jemma@mbtag.uk) .**

Jemma concluded with her thoughts on the opportunities that the Station House Project provides to develop Stow as a destination for tourists. Key to this will be working together to develop a whole range of tourism experiences in and around Stow, as well as collaborating with other neighbouring areas, ensuring that we're well linked into the work that is ongoing across the Borders to develop tourism.



### SCT Public Meeting

At our public meeting in September we were joined by Lynne Marshall (Scottish Borders Council) who talked about the experience of setting up Just Cycle, a successful social enterprise in Tweedbank, which recycles bikes and promotes health and wellbeing through engagement in the project. We are now having further discussions with Just Cycle to explore what we can learn from their success and potential opportunities for collaboration going forward. Find out more: [www.justcycle.org.uk](http://www.justcycle.org.uk)

We were also pleased to report on the findings of the Station House community survey, designed to capture opinion on the project. We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who took part.

The full results can be found on our website: [www.stowhub.co.uk/community-survey-review/](http://www.stowhub.co.uk/community-survey-review/)



## STOW HEALTH CENTRE will be CLOSED on 25th & 26th December and 1st & 2nd January

### ~ Advice on Prescription Ordering ~

- You do not need to order double amounts of your medication; we will be closed for just two days of Christmas week and the same for New Year week.
- Ordering in plenty of time would be helpful as the run up to Christmas is very busy, this will allow the dispensary staff to prepare your medication. Orders are usually ready for collection 3 working days after placing the order.
- It would help us very much if patients could order all of your medication at the same time if you are on several medications as it makes it much easier for us to process the orders. Thank you.

*The Staff at Stow Health Centre wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.*

#### RECEPTION OPENING TIMES

	Morning	Afternoon	
Monday	08.00-13.00	14.00-18.00	During the lunch time hour break, the practice can still be contacted for urgent matters on the usual telephone number 01896 661440
Tuesday	08.00-13.00	14.00-18.00	
Wednesday	08.00-13.00	14.00-18.00	
Thursday	08.00-13.00	14.00-18.00	
Friday	08.00-13.00	14.00-18.00	
Weekend	closed	closed	Outside of these times and over the holidays please ring NHS 24 on 111

Please ring after 10.00am to re-order prescriptions.  
(There is an option to use the online service.  
Apply via the Practice website or ask at Reception).

#### WALKS AROUND STOW

We now have a grant from Borders Region Council to start to publish leaflets of walks around the Village. We have a professional mapper, who has now walked many of the walks and is going to begin plotting the routes.



Mary Craig, our village Archivist, has written some interesting facts to allow us to go ahead with the Heritage walk around Stow. Once we have the leaflets put together, we have a group of volunteers who are going to test the walks for us. If you would like to join them, please email [stuartjeffrey321@btinternet.com](mailto:stuartjeffrey321@btinternet.com)

Fountainhall SWI has had a good 2019 with interesting talks and demonstrations.



Members got to make soap, try zentangling and ribbon craft. We meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall and new members (£25 annual subscription) are always welcomed. You can also come along as a visitor (£4 on the night).

Next year's syllabus is in final stages of preparation, so still subject to minor changes:

- January - Talk on Housekeeping at Abbotsford
- February - Talk on Therapets
- March - Demonstration of mosaic work
- April - Upcycling talk and demonstration
- May - Demonstration by local glass designer
- June - Summer Outing
- September - Floral Art Workshop
- October - Christmas Craft Demonstration
- November - AGM and Taste & Try
- December - Party

#### STOW & DISTRICT O.A.P. SOCIETY

This summer the Pensioners' Club annual outing saw a coachload of members head for Dundee to visit its Victoria and Albert Museum followed by a High Tea on the way home.

The perennially enjoyable Christmas Dinner with entertainment will take place as usual in Stow Town Hall, this year on 7 December.

If you are 60 or over you can join for a £2 Annual Membership Fee which entitles you to go on the Annual Summer Trip with High Tea in June and enjoy the Christmas Dinner in December.

All new members welcome; please contact Jane Riddell on m: 07745 923470.

*Thanks to the Cloudhouse for*

## Stow Post Office and Village Shop Festive Season Hours

### CHRISTMAS

24<sup>th</sup> December – close at 12.30pm  
25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> December CLOSED

### NEW YEAR

31<sup>st</sup> December – close at 4pm  
1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> January CLOSED

### News from the Post Office Counter

As we approach our busiest time of year at the Post Office counter mail from Stow is posted all round the world in all shapes and sizes. Leaflets are available at the counter with latest recommended posting dates for overseas and inland, prohibited and restricted goods and prices and services available from Royal Mail and Parcelforce.

If you have any doubts about what you can post and how much it may cost pop in and ask us. This can save time at the point of posting. We do ask lots of questions at the point of posting - this is to enable us to help you get the most appropriate service and to prevent posting items which maybe shouldn't be in the postal system.

Don't forget about banking services at the Post Office. It is a handy place to withdraw cash, check your balance and also pay in cash and cheques.

Travel services include currency (Euros and US Dollars usually available on demand) travel money cards and travel insurance.

One 4 All Giftcards are available at the PO counter - handy gifts for all occasions.

*Thank you to all our customers for support and custom throughout the year.  
Have a Merry Christmas and all the best for 2020.  
From all the team in the Shop and Post Office.*

An exhibition about  
The Stow Witches  
was on show in

Stow Town Hall on 8 and 9  
November. The Friday was our  
annual Friends Evening when we  
had the added bonus of a  
fascinating talk by our Archivist, Mary  
Craig, putting the witch hunts of the C17th  
in the context of the political and religious  
attitudes of the day. The exhibition continued  
on the Saturday and both occasions were well  
attended and appreciated by all.

Also in November GWHHA joined with Sound Out to  
help with their Fright Night, a much enjoyed  
Halloween evening of games and disco for children  
and adults. This showed how good it is for groups to  
work together, sharing tasks as well as the proceeds.



### Our Dark Past The Witches of Stow

*...six individuals were accused, tried, &  
rime of witchcraft. Three were ac-  
v afflicted the cattle. Three were  
ed 'a great drought'.  
's come about? The follow-  
walked all of Scotland  
's. Famine, pestilence  
'moners cut off!  
' Devil wa*

We are very fortunate to have our own  
archivist and a few volunteers who make the  
Archive such a valuable resource in the Gala  
Water, but we are also fortunate  
to have our Friends who, for an  
annual £5, support our work  
giving us the ability to stage both  
annual exhibitions and our splendid  
exhibition celebrating Stow as a Mill  
Village which is on permanent display  
in the Archive Room in the Town Hall.

If you are considering becoming a Friend  
or you have not yet had the chance to renew  
your subscription you can contact Jessica  
(01578 730305) or drop a note into 2 Mill  
Road, Stow. We also have a PayPal account  
for donations on our website:  
Stowparisharchive.org.uk

### GALA WATER OUTDOOR ACTIVITY CLUB

The aim of GWOAC is to promote outdoor  
activities. The club is open to everyone of all  
ages and all are welcome.

The club was first set up in Stow over thirty  
years ago and initially became a focus for  
canoeing in Stow and the Borders. It then went  
on to promote orienteering and now is mainly  
involved with hill walking and climbing.

There are five planned meets throughout  
Scotland for 2020:

17 -19	April	Dalwhinnie
22 -24	May	Achnasheen
12 -15	June	Altbea
21 -23	Aug	Dundonnell
25 -27	Sept	Crianlarich

as well as local walks.

For further information please contact:  
Gillian Donaldson: gilldon@tiscali.co.uk  
or Kenny Duncan: Kenny@LCTS.org.uk

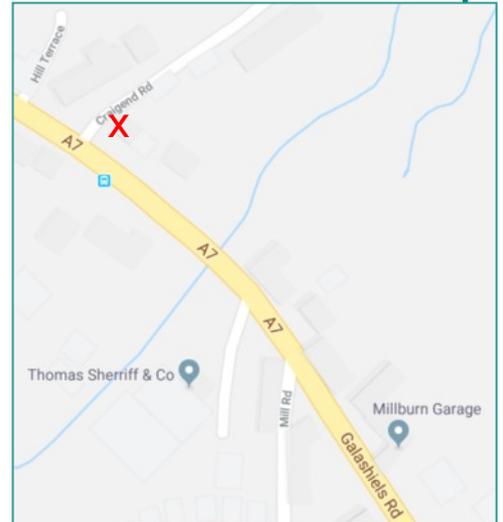
## SECOND AUTOMATIC DEFIBRILLATOR IN STOW WITH TRAINING INVITATION

Stow now has its second automatic defibrillator thanks to a Wind Farm Grant from EDF. This is positioned: on the side of a shed, at the side of the last house, on the south side and A7 end of Craighend road (see attached photos and map). The first defibrillator is still situated in the porch of the Town Hall.

The defibrillator is in the case which can be pulled open if required. The defibrillator does not require any training and gives full verbal instructions on how to use it when opened. Gillian Donaldson, the Lead Cardiac specialist Nurse at the Borders General Hospital, is offering to do some basic life support training, which is used in conjunction with the defibrillator training, early in 2020 in Stow and Fountainhall.

I already have a list of people interested, but if you would like to be included, please email me: [stuartjeffrey321@btinternet.com](mailto:stuartjeffrey321@btinternet.com) or call on 01578 730336 and I will let you know when and where the training is taking place or email Gillian at [gilldon@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:gilldon@tiscali.co.uk).

Stuart Jeffrey



## GRAVEYARD GETTING BACK IN SHAPE

Work on Stow old graveyard is nearing completion with over 25 stones having been repaired and restored. The work has made a real difference to the appearance of the graveyard and has complemented the restoration work previously undertaken on the Auld Kirk. There is still a great deal of work remaining to be done in the graveyard and the challenge is to find some new funding. The hunt is on!

Stow is fortunate in that it has such a strong built heritage in the centre of the village stretching back to the medieval period. The fact that we care for that heritage is something of which we can all be proud.

A big thank you to all who have donated time, money and enthusiasm to getting this work started.

## TWINNING BETWEEN STOW-GALAWATER-HERIOT PARISH AND LUWATALA PARISH MALAWI

Long term links have been established between parishes here in the Scottish Borders and in Malawi - growing a sense of sharing and support between communities. Since 2009 Stow, Galawater and Heriot have been twinned with Luwatala which is a rural group of villages lying between mountain peaks south of Zomba. The community is isolated by difficult dirt tracks and lacks electricity or plumbing.

Three of us from Stow and Heriot Church went out to visit in October and the welcome and hospitality we received was awesome. We would like to share ideas and resources with Luwatala to help face some of the challenges in our communities. These challenges include an urgent lack of maize for the school-children and building a sustainable irrigation dam for future crops. Here we would love to learn more from the enthusiasm and faith of the people in Luwatala.

We would like to share some of these experiences with the rest of the parish. If you are interested to hear more and perhaps arrange a talk or discussion for a group please make contact with Eve ([ehartwood@gmail.com](mailto:ehartwood@gmail.com)) or 0796 352 0690.

[www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/LoveLuwatala](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/LoveLuwatala)



Where does the time go? As always, it's been a very busy few months at Stow Primary School. Here are some of the things the School has been up to.



During the summer the new fitness trail was marked out in the playground. This makes an alternative to the Daily Mile and is well used by the pupils at playtime and out of hours as well. Each class has had Zumba sessions during lunch and now a well-supported football club is running twice weekly. Wednesday mornings start early for some who take part in the Box circuit session. Thanks to Miss Matthewson, Live Borders and Active Schools, for offering and enabling all these activities.

The House Captains have settled well into their roles of responsibility and leadership. Following the Harvest assembly they delivered the collected donations to the food bank in Galashiels. Thanks to all of you who came to the assembly and gave so generously. The House Captains took part in the Remembrance service at the war memorial, laying the school wreath; they attended the service at Galashiels Academy and then led the Remembrance assembly at Stow school.

The pupils have been busy out and about spreading their learning and new skills to the wider community. They attended *Bang Goes the Borders* to show how technology can be used to make sustainable choices by showcasing the Giki App. Having become one of the Zero Waste School Champions, an SBC/ Radio Borders video was made to promote the council's recycling policy. During Zero Waste Scotland Recycling week the School was featured on ITV's *Representing the Borders* where they explained their understanding of Climate Change. There was great delight when a letter arrived for one pupil from the Queen; he had written to her inviting her to come to Stow Primary and see the work the school does around sustainability! The School took part in the *Great Borders River Clean*. This was one of Scotland's biggest ever river cleans and 48kg of waste was collected

and weighed in Stow in just over an hour. It was great to see so many children, parents, staff and community members coming together to make the Gala Water a cleaner and safer river. Children continue to pass on information, tips and advice about the work they are doing by making videos. If you haven't already, have a look at the Stow Primary School Facebook page for ideas to alternatives for clingfilm, unwanted Halloween costumes and a greener Christmas among many others. Please bring any unwanted costumes or Christmas jumpers into school where they will be swapped and reused.

This term the children have been looking at food waste and the impact on the environment. The *Clean Plate Challenge* was launched and any waste food is weighed for each house. The children apply their numeracy, measurement and data handling skills then interpret the data to make decisions around their meal choices.

We now know the winners of the *Plastic Free Awards 2019*. The school was one of three shortlisted in their category of Schools Champion, the only Scottish entrant shortlisted and a great achievement in itself. Stow Primary was a runner-up in its category. David Attenborough was the overall winner!

Back in September, the sun shone; the community and visitors turned out to the family Duck Race organised by the Parent Council. A fantastic £1000 was raised for school funds which goes to help the school to buy much needed resources and fund trips. The MacMillan coffee morning was an amazing success raising an incredible £762.30 for this very worthy cause. Thank you to all who came and supported it.

**The School Christmas concert is on Tuesday 17 December where sustainable crafts will be on sale. All welcome.** Look out for the next Community Café, a great chance to meet up with pupils over a coffee.



After the Summer we had many warm and happy afternoons playing outdoors with plenty of baking but not many apple crumbles due to the poor crop!

A successful Halloween Party was enjoyed by all with our favourite activities like: Dress the mummy, apple dooking, pumpkin carving, corners, biscuit icing, jelly slurping and doughnut munching.

The children at the moment are enjoying dressing up, improvised gymnastics exercises, modelling clay, hama beads and daily staples like Lego, cars and trains.



Thank you to the generous parents who have donated some new resources and a big thank you to our volunteers Layla, Rowan, Iain and Louis for bringing more fun to the club.

We are looking forward to a busy and jolly lead up to Christmas.

Happy New Year and lots of cheers from Andrea and Janice.



# spotlight on

VICTORIA  
LINFORD

Staying 'just one step ahead of the *Inland Revenue*'; thinking '£90m was surely enough'; successfully using internet dating when it was in its infancy but 'uploading a photo' was a mystery... Often Ministers of the Kirk come to their calling at a mature place in life, with much that has gone before. In the case of the Minister of the Church of Scotland Parish of Stow St Mary of Wedale and Heriot Church, Reverend Victoria Linford, her tale weaves a story of modern commercial success alongside a deep-rooted, lifelong Christian faith and independence of thought leading to her arrival in Stow almost ten years ago as our Parish Minister.

So, what's behind those comments which carry a hint of a fugitive from justice? They relate to the earlier part of Victoria's working life when she was a corporate tax lawyer. How this Edinburgh born and bred lass became a lawyer was down to her very good Highers' results and being advised that she should therefore study medicine or law. As she had no vocation for medicine, law it was. What attracted her to corporate, rather than any other branch of law, is its complexity and international nature and on graduating Victoria worked in her speciality in a legal firm in Edinburgh. In time she became concerned about the ethics, despite the legality, of what she did in her working life, but some years and life events were to pass before reaching that point.

Only two weeks into the new job Victoria was invited to transfer to her firm's London branch - an offer she accepted with alacrity. A thoroughly enjoyable five years followed as a young woman about town, relishing the mix of interesting work and a social life thriving on London's theatres, clubs and general arts scene until her mother became seriously ill and she returned home to Edinburgh.

Living and working again as a lawyer in Edinburgh, Victoria connected with St Cuthbert's Church at the West End; close to her office it was easy to help out in her lunch break. Because of its central location, St Cuthbert's congregation was often transient, people just passing through or dropping in, and it was a regular spot for a Big Issue seller. The reality of the struggle for some to have basic needs for wellbeing met was easy to see in this city centre church. A growing disconnect between Victoria's 'suits and champagne' lifestyle and her church work came to a head when one of her legal clients gave explicit instructions to sell his company and find a way to do it so that he paid not one penny in tax. The company sold for £100m with an initial tax liability of £10m and Victoria successfully completed her instructions. This was an epiphany for Victoria - surely, she thought, '£90m was... enough for anyone!' - and she determined that she couldn't carry on applying her professional skills to exploiting legal tax reduction avenues for those who already had monetary riches, but an impoverished sense of social responsibility. She moved to work for a more socially orientated legal firm.

This chimed with changes in Victoria's church work and focus. She had become a church elder (part of the leadership of the Church of Scotland) led small, mid-week services within St Cuthbert's and later also worked in the evenings at a church in Gorgie in Edinburgh. For some time she had been having conversations with key people in her spiritual life about applying to be a Minister of the Church of Scotland as her calling became clearer. Alongside this she was introduced by two 'mischievous friends' to a new entity, which was itself very new, an internet dating site 'Christian Connection' set up by and for Christians. As Victoria's friends were settling down and creating families and the average age of the congregations around Victoria was over 50 making finding a Christian partner difficult, Victoria was willing to give 'Christian Connection' a go. There were only four men in Scotland registered on the site and immediately, Tim, now Victoria's husband, stood out.

Tim's profile photo showed him with his uncle and granddad and the line 'you can see what I'll become...'. Victoria was immediately taken with his honesty and humour and the couple got to know each other well by telephone before Tim even knew what Victoria looked like (those mystery 'uploads'). One unexpected area of compatibility was an interest in having a family by adoption. Within five years of meeting, Victoria and Tim married, Victoria was accepted to train for the Ministry and after the first year of her theology degree, two brothers who had not lived together until that point, Kieran aged four and Luke aged two, were placed with the couple and



the Linford family through adoption was born. Tim initially took adoption leave but never returned to work becoming full-time at home.

Qualified, and after a few months as a locum, the now Reverend Victoria sought a permanent charge (Parish). Our Parish had not been too long vacant and the information from the congregation of Stow of Wedale and Heriot Church sounded 'real, simple, colourful - and wanting a minister and a real person'. Victoria drove down from Edinburgh one day, walked around Heriot then Stow, then popped into the Cloughouse, prayed, and told Tim she wanted to apply. Having reassured Tim in response to his queries - do they have hospitals and broadband? (the family were regulars at the Sick Kids Hospital in Edinburgh) - Victoria was successful in the selection process of the Parish and congregation and the family moved to Stow in the autumn of 2010.

Not everyone will call something a godsend and mean it literally. That's what Victoria says moving to our parish has been for her and her family. The church congregation is compassionate and committed and the village communities are nurturing places to bring up children and develop relationships which withstand challenges. Victoria's legal skills are now at the service of the local Presbytery but most essentially, her Christian belief of service - of being there for people and giving to people - is willingly at the service of us all.

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2020 : No. 39

COPY DATE DELIVERED FROM  
17 Feb 20 7 Mar 20

to: Heather Johnston, Editor  
heather@southcottage.co.uk  
01578 730507

If you are a new business in Stow Parish CC area and would like a mention in the newsletter, please contact the editor  
for an email reminder of the copy date nearer the time email the editor and ask to be put on the list



heartfulness

2020

Heartfulness relaxation and meditation  
free weekly classes restart after  
Christmas and New Year

Stow  
Tuesday 7 January at 9.30 am  
Wednesday 8 January at 8.00 pm

&  
Galashiels  
Tuesday 7 January at 8.00 pm

All over 18 welcome  
Please ring Sarah 07784 740179 for details

## PRAYER AND CONTEMPLATION NOT JUST SUNDAYS...

Stow Church is  
open every  
Monday to Friday  
9.30 - 10.00 am  
for a short service  
and prayer

ST. MARY  
OF WEDALE  
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Throughout  
Advent  
Stow Church  
is also open  
daily from  
5.30 - 6.30 pm

A welcome is extended to anyone who would like  
to attend any of the weekday services or to simply  
take time in the church for contemplation and quiet.

stowandheriotchurch.org.uk