

CHURCH NEWS — MAY 2021

THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A Member of the Anglican Communion

ELIE:

ST. MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS

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SUNDAY WORSHIP

ST MICHAEL'S - 9.45AM.

ST JOHN'S - 11.30AM

For details of live streaming please contact St. John's Secretary

SEC EUCHARIST is available each Sunday at 11am
www.scotland.anglican.org/broadcast-sunday-worship

What's in a name?

Although things might change suddenly, it's sadly probable that once again we won't be able to have a joint service (in the flesh, at least) in May for a Patronal Sunday – this time for St John's. We'll do it separately though, with joy, as part of our continuing support for one another.

It's always intriguing to wonder if the founders of a church congregation wrestled and debated for months (or years) about which holy saint to name their church after. What would the criteria have been? Should it be a major or minor apostle – and would that choice reflect a degree of aspiration or humility? Should it be a local saint, to demonstrate a commitment to being embedded in the culture and community around? Might it be a woman? Was the choice so hard to make that they ended up with 'All Saints' or 'Holy Trinity'? Or was the choice simply limited to names that hadn't already been snapped up by the other churches in the vicinity or diocese?

Anyone starting an organisation or a business – I've done both – is encouraged to think very carefully about how it is named, and what impact the name will have on the wider issue of how it is perceived. It used to be smart to begin the name of your business with 'A', so as to come first in the phone book. These days it's widely recognised that the name will be an important part of the 'branding' – the crucial matter of identifying the target audience or market, which will inform the various ways in which the project is presented to the world. In an age of increasing information overload, it's all the more vital that any enterprise, old or new, can communicate itself quickly and accurately. Smartphones in hand, many (or most) people expect to be able to find the service they want immediately, and in a way that will instantly communicate what's on offer.

It's interesting to think of church names in this light. How many people these days, encountering our churches from the outside, will glean anything from the name? I was recently warmly welcomed to a service at Coastline Community Church – the most recently established church congregation in our area. No doubt there was careful thought about how to name and brand the new church. I imagine there was heartfelt debate about whether to drop the use of the word 'Baptist' – the denomination to which the church belongs. The chosen name is, I think, perfectly succinct – snappily and mellifluously communicating all that matters in the space of three words.

I read once that St John was somewhat infamous at the end of his life for his radically simplified preaching. He would walk around constantly exhorting people to love. At one point, he couldn't walk, so people would carry him to have him preach at Mass. Still, it was the same thing over and over: "Little children, love one another." When asked about his somewhat annoying insistence on this, he replied "Because it is the Lord's commandment and if it alone is kept, it is sufficient."

I didn't mention all of the hours I have spent wrestling with what descriptive *strapline* should accompany the name of a new enterprise – as in, "Coca Cola – It's the real thing". In the case of St John's, perhaps *Love one another*, wouldn't be a bad option. I'd buy that....

Grace and peace to you

Steve

Easter at St John's and St Michael's



Outside St John's during Holy Week, passers by were reminded of the Crucifixion and three-day tomb, constructed by Jane and Graham Forbes and photographed by Jane (the Crown of Thorns cross is now inside the church).

Easter Dawn

by Anglican priest and poet Malcolm Guite¹

He blesses every love which weeps and grieves
And now he blesses hers who stood and wept
And would not be consoled, or leave her love's
Last touching place, but watched as low light crept
Up from the east. A sound behind her stirs
A scatter of bright birdsong through the air.
She turns, but cannot focus through her tears,
Or recognise the Gardener standing there.
She hardly hears his gentle question 'Why,
Why are you weeping?', or sees the play of light
That brightens as she chokes out her reply
'They took my love away, my day is night'
And then she hears her name, she hears Love say
The Word that turns her night, and ours, to Day.

¹Taken from *Sounding the Seasons: poetry for the Christian Year*, Canterbury Press, 2012



Colourful flower arrangements enhanced Easter Sunday worship at both our churches, the work of several hands, again photographed by Jane.

Bobby Dickson describes the occasion at St Michael's

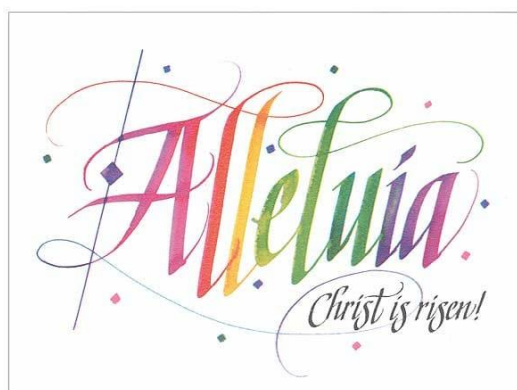
St Michael's opened its doors and welcomed with joy a congregation for Easter Sunday. All 20 spaces (the maximum possible under Covid restrictions), were used and a very joyful service followed. How far every member stuck strictly to the guideline of no singing behind the mask is something I am not prepared to comment on as I am not prepared to incriminate myself!! Anyway who can really resist at least humming "Thine be the Glory".

The Church was full of magnificent floral displays prepared by Anne assisted by members of the congregation. It was so wonderful to be back seeing friends even at a social distance and being able to share the Easter message in person. Without the continued work of Steve, supported by Anne over the period since we last met physically at Christmas, we would have been lost. The Zoom services kept our faith going and we are all too conscious of the amount of hard work which was needed to keep each Sunday and the Lenten Services as alive and fundamental as they were.

Now we are back and can look forward to the future while giving thanks for all that has held us together for the last few months. Hopefully we will be able to increase our numbers and we already have new faces in our seats.

The Sunday following Easter (Low Sunday) saw Steve and Anne taking a well-deserved break and the Service was taken by Graham Forbes. It coincided with the first opportunity which we had to remember with profound gratitude the life of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and to pray for Her Majesty and their family.

Also, we at St Michael's were delighted to welcome back David Stacey after a two year absence during which he underwent treatment for serious illness. David and Jan's arrival was greeted with warm applause, showing how delighted we all were to see him looking so much better. For my part I am delighted to relinquish the post of acting assistant Treasurer and pass the task back to proper hands!



Malcom Guite - POET'S CORNER

Janis Irvine shares with us this article from the Church Times, 16th April, 2021, in which Malcolm Guite recalls a moment of sharp-edged humour with Prince Philip.

I was very sorry to hear of the death of Prince Philip, not only because of the terrible loss that it represents for the Queen, and because of all the service he has done for the nation, both in supporting her and in his own right, but also because he was such a strong and likeable character, as I discovered for myself when, in his role as Chancellor of Cambridge University, he gave me one of the most memorable days of my life, and certainly a story to dine out on.

The whole adventure occurred when I was myself in role as consort, in my case consort to the Senior Proctor; for it happened that Maggie was Senior Proctor in 2009, the year Cambridge celebrated its 800th anniversary. So there were all kinds of ceremonial occasions to attend, and the chief of these was a special ceremony in the Senate House at which honorary degrees were given to the great and the good.

Prince Philip himself was to award the degrees and attend the small reception afterwards, at which also the University's "800th-birthday cake" was to be cut. Given that not only the Prince, but many others of the great and good were in attendance, security was high. We were all vetted and checked over in full airport style before we were admitted — though, as it turned out, I still ended up armed and dangerous.

The ceremony went splendidly. Maggie looked very well in her full proctorial fig and delivered her Latin, as always, with accuracy and aplomb. Then we all adjourned to a marquee for the birthday festivities. We were given champagne and canapés, and then, as if from nowhere, someone produced a magnificent cake, decorated with the university arms, and, as the King's choristers sang "Happy Birthday" an aide handed Prince Philip a ceremonial sword with which to cut the cake, which he did with his usual gusto, remarking that the age of the University entitled us all to feel comparatively young.

Then he looked around, clearly hoping to hand the sword back to someone so as to have a free hand for another drink. No one stepped forward. Then his eye lit on me. I was wearing the scarlet and palatinate Durham doctoral gown, which, someone once remarked, made me look like a cross between a flamboyant pirate and a dodgy Renaissance cardinal. There was a glint in Prince Philip's eye, and he grinned broadly as he handed me the sword and said, "Why don't you take this: you certainly look as if you know what to do with it!" Then he turned back to his champagne and conversation, and I was left holding this magnificent weapon.

Nobody came to take it from me. So much for security! I had Bill Gates to the left of me and the Aga Khan to the right, and a few swift strokes might have made my moment in history. But I thought better of it. I noticed however, that the choirboys, who had retreated to a corner of the marquee with the remains of the cake, were looking with great interest at the sword. So I went over to show it to them, remembering how I loved playing with swords as a child. Indeed, the child in me was very much alive holding this one.

Naturally, the choristers wanted to hold it, and, naturally, I let them. It turned out that what they really wanted to do was scrape the lasts bits of jam and cake off the blade with their fingers. Then the speeches started, and, leaving the sword with the choirboys, I went to stand with the proctor, but was relieved, as I glanced back, to see that someone had at last relieved the choirboys of the sword.

NB (J.Irvine): "Maggie" is Malcolm Guite's wife.

'palatinate' refers to Malcolm's PhD from Durham University. The Bishop of Durham was formerly the Prince Bishop because he exercised the King's military as well as spiritual authority over the lands up to the border with Scotland. Newcastle Diocese has only been in existence since 1882, carved out of Durham Diocese, and therefore previously the Durham Diocese stretched as far as the border.

Baxter of Pluscarden Abbey

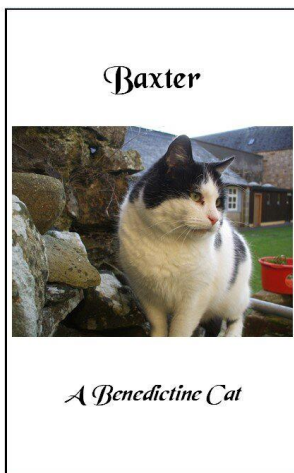
contributed by Max Taylor and taken from Pluscarden Benedictines No. 193

News and Notes for our Friends Lent 2021

Baxter arrived at Pluscarden in 2005, brought to us by the Cats Protection League. When he was first described over the telephone as having lost his tail and front teeth in an accident, a sympathetic welcome was guaranteed. But Baxter was no hapless victim of ill fortune: he was a strong-willed survivor and an opportunist of the first class. We learned later that the tail had in fact been lost in a desperate dash through a closing door, a door which Baxter perceived to be beckoning him into a land of plenty.

The name Baxter was given to him by one of the carers in the Cat Protection League, and arose from his having been taken in by them from the food processors of that name in Fochabers. He had allegedly been making a nuisance of himself there, loitering about the place and repeatedly trying to gain access to that hygienic fortress. We found out later that Baxter had been living comfortably with a family just a few hundred yards away from the factory; but his natural attraction for food and human company kept him permanently within the food processor's precincts.

These habits were firmly maintained when he came to stay with us at Pluscarden. Wherever there was a human gathering, Baxter would join the company; and if scraps of food were on offer, he would become the most attentive of companions. In his early days, he would roam freely among our neighbours; and from his portly appearance it was clear that some of them must have added to his daily portion. It is often debatable who actually owns a cat, with the relative contributions of food and shelter varying according to the cat's fancy. It is clear that, for a cat, the owner is simply the most favoured vassal.



However, it was his character as a Benedictine Cat that won him world acclaim. The little book, "Baxter, a Benedictine Cat" has sold thousands of copies since it was first printed and sold in the Abbey shop. The simple format, with a photograph of Baxter demonstrating different chapters of Saint Benedict's Rule, is immediately engaging and widely popular. The Latin version of the book was sent to Pope Benedict and was gratefully received, prompting a gracious reply and an Apostolic Blessing. Although as a Benedictine his practice of the virtue of obedience was very much accommodated to his feline nature, Baxter's desire to conform to custom was remarkable: he was often to be seen taking his place as the monks processed into Vespers; and he would rise from his bed to line up with the brethren coming out of Mass. On the occasion of the funeral of one of the monks, he appeared out of nowhere to lead the coffin all the way into the church to its station in front of the altar.

In his twilight years, no longer able to jump up to the windowsill of his den by the front door, Baxter was finally admitted to the monastery cloister. His inability to turn his back on a quarrel with local feral cats got him into serious trouble; so it was for his own protection that he was sequestered in our enclosure. Failing strength together with deafness seemed to mellow his character somewhat, and he was a tranquil presence among us until the end. At the venerable age of 17 years, he finally succumbed to kidney failure, and has been laid to rest in a peaceful spot near the Visitor Centre. No doubt his many followers will journey there to pay their last respects.

DmdK

[Have fun chanting what follows to your favourite psalm tune - Ed.]

We sing of a cat and mice, / in tears we bewail our dirge, / having bitten the deadly cheese, / he will no longer walk the cloister.

Our Baxter has passed over, we announce his death; / he will no longer lick Flora/ nor the morsel falling from the table.

Always seeking the places under which the heating pipes run / and sleeping in the heat of the sun, / every day he sought / treats from the Cellarer.

The whole world over, everywhere, / printed images of him were distributed and sold, / he was famous.

Of nine long lives, / but sadly shortened tail / our white and black friend / lies now buried by a pious hand.

Some background on Pluscarden

Janet Bulloch, drawing heavily on her reference book² about Scottish places

Situated 6 miles southwest of Elgin, Pluscarden Abbey is the only medieval monastery in Scotland still occupied by monks. The community, which welcomes visitors, numbers about 30. On a day-trip to Pluscarden some years ago, when they were fund-raising for work on the abbey roof, I happily contributed by 'purchasing a slate', which was inscribed there and then with my name. Is it too romantic a notion that the plainsong of the daily office floats heavenwards through 'my' slate, taking a prayer for me with it?

The original Cistercian abbey was founded in the 13th century by King Alexander II, who also founded Elgin Cathedral. It suffered damage in a raid by the 'Wolf of Badenoch' and was later taken in hand by the Benedictine order. After the Reformation the buildings fell into ruin and passed through various hands before being restored by the Roman Catholic antiquarian John, 3rd Marquess of Bute – who, readers will recall, also funded repairs to St Andrews Cathedral - at the end of the 19th century. The restored buildings were returned by his son, Lord Colum Crichton-Stuart, to the Benedictine community of Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire [another great monastery visit; there they make and sell lovely glazed black pottery, I remember]. The 'new' monks took up residence at Pluscarden in 1948.

² *Information from Scotland; an encyclopedia of places and landscape compiled by David Munro and Bruce Gittings for the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, published by HarperCollins, 2006.*

May Time by Jane Forbes

May time
deal gently
with our bruising.
So long cocooned,
we slowly dare
to breathe.
Break free from
Covid dread
and deadnesses,
ready in hopefulness
to spread our
new formed wings.
We shed
our fractured selves,
rejoicing in
the blossoming
and healings
that each new
May time brings,
that make our spirits
soar
and our refreshed souls
sing.

A date for your diary!

The St John's Events group is organising a Quiz on Zoom on Wednesday May 12th at 4pm. Everyone is cordially invited to join in, with a master quizzer on hand to test your knowledge! Final details and a Zoom link will follow in due course - keep the date!

From the editor.

My thanks, as ever, to all our contributors, as I bow out of this particular role. We are delighted that Tony Lodge has kindly agreed to join Anne-Marie Smout and Janis Irvine on the editors rota. Janis will be editing the next issue. Contributions may be sent to her at davidirvine190@btinternet.com and are invited for 14 May. JB