



Drumoak & Durris NEWSLETTER

Issue 74 March 2013



Inside your March Newsletter.... Well, it's almost Spring at last after quite a wintry spell earlier this year and it's wonderful to have slightly longer days and see definite signs of life in the garden - still waiting for the warmer weather though. In the meantime, in this edition you can catch up on

- ◆ Community Council news and updates regarding proposed developments in the area.
- ◆ Read the second instalment of the story about German Spies during the Second World War in Port Gordon.
- ◆ More fascinating tales of Drumoak and Durris - as far back as Neolithic times.
- ◆ How does a SatNav actually work?
- ◆ And learn more about oystercatchers, jays, salmon, mink and what's happening at Drum Castle Estate over Easter time.
- ◆ plus what's happening with organisations and clubs in and around the Drumoak and Durris.

Question & Comments

If you have any comments about the newsletter or would like to contribute articles or images, please call Marion Nixon on 01330 811663 or email nixondenside@hotmail.com

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Your newsletter's future ...

Just over two years ago the Newsletter began accepting advertisements and it is an opportune time to thank all the local businesses who have supported this publication.

It is produced quarterly and distributed along with the Church Newsletter by a large group of volunteers from Drumoak-Durris Church to every household in the community. Newcomers to the area are quickly added to the distribution list so everyone receives a copy.

The Church has willingly funded and resourced the production of the newsletter since its inception as part of its outreach programme however with the steep rise in printing costs, the focus must now be on making it sustainable - the only option being to attract additional advertising.

In addition to larger businesses in the area, we are aware of smaller locally based individuals who offer services e.g. hair and beauty services, interior design consultants, taxi services, etc. We would therefore encourage everyone to consider promoting their services through the Newsletter and help to stimulate awareness of local expertise.

To this end, we are delighted to welcome a new member to the team who will manage the advertising element of the newsletter. Lesley Eaton was born and raised in Drumoak and is well known in the community. As well as running a business and being a full-time housewife and mum, Lesley's media experience will add real value to this aspect of the newsletter. Lesley will be approaching individuals, small and large businesses in the area to discuss the mutual benefits of advertising and to engage their community spirit. Lesley will be reviewing the current schedule of rates, which will be published in the June issue as well as considering special introductory offers.

Lesley will effectively double the production team and will be warmly welcomed by the Editor - and by everyone in the Drumoak and Durris community.

The Editor

Crathes Durris Drumoak Community Council

Chairman: Howard Scholey (Crathes)
Vice Chair: David Morrish (Crathes)
Press Liaison: Ann Ross (Crathes)
Treasurer/Minute Secretary: John Hopkins
Geoffrey Atkinson (Drumoak)
Molly Atkinson (Drumoak)
Trudy Harrison (Crathes)
Jenny Watson (Drumoak)

Key points from the CDDCC meeting held on 6th February -

New Community Councillors for Durris - CDDCC are urgently appealing for new Community Councillors to cover the Durris ward. If anyone is interested, please contact any of the above Councillors or come along to our next meeting. It involves representing and influencing matters in your local area and is not an onerous undertaking.

Speed limit at Kirkton of Durris - CDDCC are continuing to campaign for a reduction in the speed limit and have raised the matter with the local police.

The local police reported -

- housebreaking & vehicle theft at Tothill
- theft from a lock-up garage in Drumoak
- break-in at a house in Woodlands of Durris, in apparent conjunction with a male and female in their mid-20's, wearing hoodies & jeans, having been observed.
- The police appeal to the public to help prevent crime by locking doors and windows of houses and cars.
- Grampian Police are recruiting volunteers to serve as Special Constables.

Crathes Housing - A sub-committee of the CDDCC is continuing to meet and work actively on this matter. Stewart Milne Homes are working on producing 3D views of the proposed housing

Deeside Way – Concerns regarding the safety of users of the Deeside Way, on sections that involve pavement use at both Crathes and Drumoak have been expressed, regarding the proximity of traffic. Aberdeenshire Council officials are to be invited to a CDDCC meeting to discuss this.

CDDCC normally meets on the first Wednesday of the month at Crathes Hall at 7.30pm to which members of the public are welcomed. The next meeting will be the AGM being held in Drumoak Church Hall at 7.30pm on Wednesday 6th March.

Ann Ross, Press Liaison

email - cddcc@hotmail.co.uk
www.durris.net/html/cddcc.html

A Community Council is a concept unique to Scotland, set up under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. Community Councils:-

- co-ordinate and express local views to statutory bodies, particularly to [Aberdeenshire Council](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk)
- promote the well-being of community residents
- provide a means for people to voice opinions on any matter affecting their lives, welfare, environment and amenity
- co-operate with other Community Councils in pursuit of the above
- encourage and assist voluntary and other organisations within the Community area
- are voluntary bodies with statutory rights of consultation

Farming News

The horsemeat scandal has dominated the headlines throughout the past few weeks and looks set to continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The topic has been discussed and debated through many thousands of column inches in print and online, and in countless hours of airtime on television and radio.

This is, undoubtedly, a very serious issue on many levels but for me personally it gives reason to pause, reflect on and celebrate local food production. Here in the North east of Scotland we benefit from an abundant larder which is brought to us thanks to the efforts of a large and diverse collection of businesses and people - not least our farmers.

The area is renowned for its top notch beef, lamb and pork and you don't have to look too far to see how that can be achieved. When you marry lush pasture, sparkling clean water and generations of expert animal husbandry it is a recipe for success.

Arable farmers too play an important role in producing some of the animal feed which further enhances meat production – not to mention malting barley which is turned into one of Scotland's most famous exports.

So go on - get out there and learn about your food. Whether it be chatting with a neighbour farmer about his day-to-day challenges in producing our food or a chat with the local butcher about what he's selling, learning about our food is a fascinating subject and one which we should embrace.



A Fairmer's Quine

Medical Notes

Changed days indeed! I would like to bring attention to our practice Zero Tolerance policy, displayed on posters around the Health Centre. This emphasises our firm stance against any kind of inappropriate behaviour towards our staff at any time and under any circumstances. It refers to abusive, aggressive, intimidating or rude behaviour and anything which causes distress of any kind to the members of our staff, who work very hard to help our patients get the best out of the medical service which we provide.

Sadly there have been recent incidents where such inappropriate behaviour did occur, highly distressing for those involved, and we need to make it clear that it will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Abusive incidents are also unpleasant for other individuals nearby to witness. Fortunately we have mechanisms in place for handling such matters.



We have been reviewing our increasing prescriptions workload and now advise that the usual minimum time for routine collection of any prescription will be 48 hours (2 working days) from the time of request, and this includes collection of the actual prescription script from the Health Centre. This is probably also in line with the majority of medical practices in the region. Of course in urgent cases we can respond rapidly where this is appropriate.

Best wishes
Dr D Harris, GP,
Peterculter Medical Practice

Durriss Primary School

Despite a couple of snow days we have done a lot so far this term. We held our annual Scots Verse competition with Mrs Isobel Bisset and Mrs Lesley Blackhall once again acting as our judges - the winners are:

Gregor Ferguson (P2) - Ghostie
Hannah Rose (P4) - Twa Leggit Mice
Corrie McKenzie (P6) - The Puddock
Lorne McNiven (P3) - Sair Finger
Innis Hay & Iona Adams (P5) - The Heron
Robbie Coutts and Samuel Diamond (P7) - Geordie Wabster

The Health Committee organised a Talent Show where we had singers, magicians, dancers and a drama performance. The overall winner was **Fenella Upton**, (P5), who played the theme song from Titanic which was very appropriate as her class have been working on a Titanic project. The money raised from the show is being sent to The Dorchas Trust – a trust which supports schools in Malawi. We have made contact with a teacher in a Malawian school and P6/7 are going to be setting up a link.

Giants in the Forest - Drum Castle Estate



If you go down to the woods today, you're sure of a big surprise ... 3 giant heads are lurking in the midst of Drum Castle Estate ready to be discovered! Drum Castle has been selected as one of ten sites from across the UK to host an interactive arts project as part of the Year of

Natural Scotland 2013. Giants in the Forest is all about exploring the outdoors and experiencing Scotland's amazing wilderness.

Throughout 2013, Drum Castle will be hosting outdoor art workshops throughout the season: on March 29th Drum Castle opens its doors and the three giant heads are unveiled – join in the with the celebrations on Drumhill Trail during the day with drop-in arts activities; an artist in residence will spend the last week of May leading workshops for schools and the public; and see the heads by moonlight at our Dark Wood event in the last weekend of September. So get outside, meet the giants and get involved!

Spring events at Drum Castle, Garden & Estate include -

March 29th 11am-4pm, Giant Heads Launch
Celebrate the launch of the Giant Heads with hands-on art activities on Drumhill Trail

March 30th - April 1st, 11am - 4pm, Cadbury Easter Egg Hunt. Hop around the gardens and follow the clues to win an Egg Head!



May 5th, 12noon-4pm, Flower Fest
Plant sales in the courtyard.

Keep up to date with all current events by visiting www.nts.org.uk.

Laura Paterson
Snr Assistant - Events, Functions & Learning

Thanks to the ongoing work of the Eco committee, we have been awarded our third 'Green Flag' after having an assessment on 6th February. The assessor spent the whole afternoon talking to the children, staff and some parents. The eco committee showed her around the school explaining all we do and this was enhanced by a power point presentation produced by some of the older children.



Our P6/7s have just played two netball matches against Banchory Primary coming out victorious in both, 58-38 and 42-10. We were delighted with their teamwork and accuracy in shooting.

We have begun learning the words for this year's school show which is 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat'. P4-7 will be performing this with P1-3 presenting 'Noah' at the Kirkton Hall on Wednesday 27th March at 7pm.

Carol Reilly, Head Teacher

"Winter makes way for Spring"

This time of the year is always a joy to me. The flowering snowdrops are providing an early source of nectar for insects, which allows them to take to the wing again on warmer days after the cold winter months. The buds on the birch trees are starting to get plump again, almost ready to burst into leaf, and catkins are appearing on alder and hazel trees. The song thrushes and robins have started singing, and the great spotted woodpeckers are drumming to make a claim on their territories. Meanwhile, ever-cautious red squirrels are busily burying peanuts, which they have adeptly removed from bird feeders, as insurance for any spells of bad weather still to come.



Since mid February, I've also been delighted to hear the oystercatchers making their return to Drum, after spending the winter at the coast. The boldly coloured black and white birds, with their distinctive long orange bills, invariably arrive during the night calling loudly with their characteristic piping. The ends of the bills of some oystercatchers are pointed while others are blunt. This is due to their individual feeding habits; much like people they have different culinary tastes. In the winter, some birds prefer shellfish like limpets and mussels and have to hammer them open, resulting in their beaks being blunted. While others feed mainly on lugworms, which are soft and easily hoovered up without wear or tear to their bills. Appetites aside, oystercatchers are renowned for nesting in situations where they can be vulnerable, and Drum Estate is no different. Here, they scrape out simple holes on busy lawns as well as on the ground in the walled garden, with apparently no concern for the dangers of doing so. Over/....



"Winter makes way for Spring" (contd)

And as the seasons change, it's well worth getting out and about for a walk through the woods before the leaves on the trees are fully out. The birds and other wildlife are much easier to see and by walking quietly through woodland you will be rewarded with sights of truly beautiful birds. The jay



is one of the most exotic looking woodland birds, with its pink back and chest, its glimmering blue wing feathers, and the unmistakable flash of white on its rump. This is about as far north as jays live in the UK as they

are mostly associated with oak woodlands, which are more commonly found in the south. The Old Wood of Drum is a great place to watch these intelligent birds go about their noisy business and their harsh, screeching call is unmistakable. Jays are an essential part of the ecosystem of an oak woodland, stashing acorns in the winter, in the same way that squirrels do. Not all of those acorns will be found again by the birds in the spring. The ones that are left in the

Contentment

*On the heart rug, deep and warm
Susanna lay;
She stretched
And dreamed of pools of sun,
Of catmint,
And intoxicating summer smells.
Outside the snow lay thick.
She sighed
And was content.*

*For winter too had recompense:
The fire warmed her
Someone fed her titbits
Of the choicest food,
And stroked her silken fur.
A soft voice told her of her
Regal past.
She purred with pride
And happiness.*

*Summer brought long nights
For hunting,
Tantalising birds and butterflies,
Great games of stalking
Through the unmown hay.
And yet with this all gone
Life still seemed good,
She closed her azure eyes
And slept.*

by Marigold Bowman



ground grow into the next generation of trees, so continuing the natural cycle of woodland. Other birds are now starting to migrate back to colder climes in Northern Europe. Bramblings, redpolls and flocks of starlings, fieldfares and redwings are on the move, so if there is another cold snap keep an eye out for them in your garden. They will appreciate a good meal!

Lastly, do keep feeding all of the birds, as they are still vulnerable to cold. Peanuts, high quality seed, and lard are all good dietary supplements right now. And more generally, it's sound advice to feed the birds all through the year. This allows the parents to concentrate on getting more natural food for the chicks while getting a quick meal for themselves at the bird table. This is also the time of the year to be giving bird boxes a good clean out. All you need to do is remove old nests and clean the boxes with very hot water. This will remove any parasites that may have overwintered in the box.



So wrap up warmly, get the wellies on, and enjoy the wonderful changes taking place as winter makes way for spring.

Fiona Milne, Snr Ranger
Drum Castle
Estate





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Miss Flora Donald

The German Spies at Port Gordon

In the December 2012 issue of the Drumoak and Durris Newsletter, the story was told of the German spies who were apprehended in 1940 as a result of the vigilance of John Donald, station master at Port Gordon. Mr Donald was the father of Flora Donald, a staunch member of the Drumoak congregation, who died in August of last year. The story continues. That article finished with the two male spies being tried and executed in August 1941 and with John Donald being awarded a British Empire Medal, but the third spy, a woman, was never put on trial and her fate has been the subject of much speculation.

This present brief account has been compiled using personal notes prepared by Flora herself, an article published by Robert Gordon University in October 2010 and Nigel West's book "MI5 British Security Service Operations 1909-1945", published by the Bodley Head in 1981.

The female spy, in her interrogation with Inspector Simpson at Port Gordon police station after her apprehension, claimed that she was 27 years old, that her name was "Vera de Cottani-Chalbur", that she was a widow born in Siberia and that a "Captain King" in the War Office in London could vouch for her.

"Captain King" turned out to be an officer in MI5, for whom Vera had acted as an informant, passing on gossip she had gleaned whilst working in a salon in London's Mayfair before World War II, in 1938. Now Vera revealed that she was in the pay of the German Security Service and had been planning to travel to London in the company of the male spies.



Vera Ericson

Vera, now known as "Vera Ericson", was taken to Holloway prison. No mention was made publicly of her involvement in the case during the trial of the two male spies. Her time in prison was not happy, apparently – she induced a miscarriage, with the putative father being one of the male spies. This may have been one reason for her not standing trial.

However, there is speculation that Vera passed on further helpful information to the British authorities, although what this might have been has never been disclosed, and this is probably the main reason why she never appeared in court. Vera is said to have spent time with an agent of MI5, Klop Ustinov (the father of the actor Peter Ustinov), who observed that she appeared to be very depressed but he found her "modest in her person".

After the end of World War II, it is thought that Vera was deported back to Germany, to then vanish in the chaos of that time. However, there is also a possibility that she was given a new identity and then spent the rest of her life in southern England. There is also a claim that she married again and continued to live quietly, eventually passing away in 1993. So, there is some uncertainty about its ending, but that is where we must leave this intriguing story.

William Bowman

References:

1. Personal notes prepared by Flora Donald
2. "The Village" Newsletter for Port Gordon, published by Robert Gordon University on 19 October 2010 rgu-sim.rgu.ac.uk/history/spies.html
3. MI5 British Security Service Operations 1909-1945 by Nigel West; published by the Bodley Head Ltd in 1981

"Where do you think we are?"



This used to be a familiar cry from ramblers, cyclists, walkers, yachtsmen and even from harassed partners in motor cars and the response depended on skills with maps, compasses, nautical charts, road atlases and possibly astro navigation – not to say a good, strong element of guesswork!

For the last few years, however, global satellite navigation systems (abbreviated to GNSS) have become a part of our everyday life, used in cars, commercial vehicles, taxis, aircraft and ships.

These systems not only tell us where we are but also how to reach where we want to go and can tell our friends and family where we actually are. For example, if a vehicle is involved in an accident, a message can be sent automatically to the emergency services; many digital cameras can record where an exposure has been taken as well as when; taxis can calculate fares (the author can remember seeing this for the first time whilst working in Dubai ten years ago); in the farming world, assessment of precise crop yields and subsequent targeted spreading of fertilisers has become possible.

There are other uses, though, which are not so well known – GNSS derived high precision timing controls telephone networks, banking transactions, the internet and the national electricity grid. All SatNavs have the same basic functions, though – receivers can determine location and height to within a few metres anywhere on the surface of the earth (on land, at sea and also in the air) using signals transmitted by satellites in orbit around the earth.



The term GPS is often freely used (a bit like Hoover is used for all vacuum cleaners), but strictly this is the name of the American system, maintained by the government of the United States; it started in 1972 (being known then as NavStar) but it became fully available in 1995. This system has 24 satellites in orbit and can give a location to within about 3 metres. Russia's GLONASS constellation has been available since 2011, with a similar accuracy, whilst the European Union's GALILEO constellation (with 30 satellites and an accuracy of 2 metres) should be in operation this year.

over/...

How does it work? Well, in essence, it is quite straightforward – your SatNav receiver, wherever it is installed or handheld, receives signals from the satellites in orbit. These signals are of a high frequency (in the microwave region) and low power (about 30 watts, half the strength of the now banned incandescent light bulbs) and travel in straight lines; they can pass through the atmosphere and weather systems, glass and plastic, but cannot pass through solid objects like buildings, mountains or water ... and indeed us! From these signals, your receiver can then calculate where you are from the known positions of the satellites. A good fix can be obtained from as few as four satellites, but most receivers will be using signals from eight or nine at a time. This fix can then be displayed as a latitude or longitude or as a mark on an electronic road map or chart. In practical use, the more open sky your receiver can see, the greater will be its acquisition of satellites and therefore the more accurate the calculated position will be.

Once your position has been determined, the SatNav can then give other information, such as speed, direction, trip distances, distance to your destination sunrise and sunset.

Some corrections to the signals are necessary, including atmospheric factors, small variations in satellite orbits caused by changes in the earth's gravity and even adjustment of time resulting from the speed at which the satellites are travelling, but these are not obvious to the user. To do this, a number of ground stations have been located at very accurately known locations and these take measurements of the satellites, check for errors and then transmit the corrected orbital information to geostationary satellites, which then in turn transmit this information to the individual SatNav receiver. So there is a lot going on in that small device sitting on the car dashboard!

What of the future for these devices? We have already talked of positions and route planning, but these applications can become more sophisticated still, taking account of changing traffic conditions, to develop routes which will, for example, give best fuel economy, will be the shortest or quickest or which might avoid tolls and motorways. I believe that road pricing is clearly possible and may not be too far away; if you wish to drive on the M1 at the busiest time of the day, you could be charged for doing so. The other side of this argument would see motoring taxes change – it could be done!

Vasco the Navigator

Royal Deeside Railway Update

Light Railway Order - the Railway was finally granted its Light Railway Order (LRO) by Holyrood on 28th December, 2012 which puts the Railway on a statutory footing, at long last. An LRO is an Order granted by Parliament under the Light Railways Act 1896, which allowed smaller railways to be built and operated without the need for their own individual Acts of Parliament - many British heritage railways have been authorised by an LRO. This will be the last LRO ever granted, as the Light Railways Act 1896 was repealed in its entirety by the Transport & Works Act 1992 (in England and Wales) and by the Transport & Works (Scotland) Act 2007 and it is only because we are a Scottish railway and submitted our application prior to 28 December 2007 that a Light Railway Order has been made.

Station Building Project

The Railway's biggest project so far has been the rescue of the listed wooden Victorian station building from Oldmeldrum Station (which closed to passengers in 1931) and its restoration on our platform at Milton of Crathes. As it happens, the building pre-dates the Light Railways Act 1896.



The station building project was initiated eight years ago, but did not

proceed, mostly as a result of other people's bureaucracy. The project was re-launched in 2011. In May 2011, our volunteers started carefully dismantling the building. Anticipating harsh weather, we decided to leave the central core of the building largely intact over-winter, with its slated roof still on. Ironically, of course, winter 2011/12 turned out much milder than the previous two years. This meant that we were able to re-mobilise to site in March and take the roof and walls down and transport everything to the Milton of Crathes by the beginning of June.

Last summer was spent stripping old paint, patching-in new wood to replace the extensive rot and re-priming the wall panels then in the autumn we started re-erecting. The photograph shows the state of the building as of this January. There is still quite a bit of work to be done before the project is complete. The two "lean-to" end wings have to be built from scratch and the inside has to be fitted out. Volunteers to help us with the work would be most welcome.

Operations

The Railway will be open to the public again from Easter onwards. Please see our website for further details www.deeside-railway.co.uk/RDR/Station.html

John Hopkins

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**Heather Dale
Garden Design**

Balbridie - a footprint of the past

It is said that understanding our past helps us prepare for and shape our future. In Durris there are markers which have been left by our ancestors, giving us tantalising hints of what our ancient past was like and how this local community developed.

Journeying west from the Slug Road along the South Deeside Road, there is a feeling that this part of the road is 'less well travelled', however almost 6,000 years ago in pre history times, the area could possibly have been a hive of industry. In a quiet pasture between the road and the river, just after the Tilquhillie sign beyond the yellow house, is buried treasure, holding signs of an ancient civilisation - Stone Age man and woman earlier than Stonehenge.

In 1976 the whole of the UK was in serious drought. Farmers and gardeners were despairing at the parched ground with many losing crops and whole gardens. Yet, for archaeologists, these are dream conditions for searching out 'cropmarks' which can be the only sign of archaeological features to be explored. Cropmarks can only be seen from the air and during 1976 an aerial survey by The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, a large rectangular shape became visible for the first time.

Although other sites have since been found, including one in the grounds of Crathes Castle, Balbridie was the first of its type to be found in the British Isles. It was a very exciting time and was deemed to be one of the most important finds of the 20th Century. The site was excavated between 1977 and 1981 by a team lead by Dr Ian Ralston from Aberdeen University. From the dig emerged signs of a massive Neolithic Wooden Hall measuring 78 feet long, 39 feet wide and 30 feet high. If you saw the film *Beowulf*, the huge chieftain's hall depicted there was possibly something like the Wooden Hall at Balbridie.

David Hogg has drawn an artist's impression of what the structure might have looked like, basing his imagined building on what was discovered during excavations.

What was found at Balbridie changed previously held views on how our Stone Age forebearers lived. Until Balbridie was uncovered, it was thought that the old civilisation lived mainly as 'hunters and gatherers' and that they only "fumbled around with the rudiments of agriculture." Balbridie turned that view on its head, forcing archaeologists to revise their understanding of Stone Age man.

There are signs of the Hall being divided into sections which included living quarters for 30-55 people as well as probably sections for the housing of cattle and sheep. In addition, thousands of burnt grains were found, namely barley and wheat and evidence points to domesticated wheat with the possible inclusion of a granary store.

Until Balbridie no other earlier or comparable building had been found. This leads to the conclusion that around 3500BCE, here in the North East, for its time this part of Scotland was likely to have been a settled farming community with a relatively advanced agricultural economy based on stockrearing and cereal cultivation. The building was destroyed a few hundred years later by fire, possibly as part of a ritualistic practise but analysis of the material found, stated the oak used to have been felled around 3500 - 3600 BCE. Taking into account the size of the building, considerable knowledge and skill must have been required to build it, albeit using primitive stone tools.



Right on our doorstep we have such an interesting footprint of history. Although there is nothing now to be seen overground, just knowing what lies beneath the surface had added a new dimension when travelling through this beautiful stretch of road.

I wonder where we will fit into the development of this community. I hope those yet unborn will be enjoying the produce of the land and not 'popping pills' for nutrition.

by Rev. Helen Hamilton

PS

Crop-marks: In dry weather the cereal crop grows taller and stays green over the topsoil of a ditch. The ditch shows up in aerial photographs as a green line against the ripe golden grain. In contrast, over walls the crop has less water, it falters and whitens.

When I knocked a couple of doors (!) of those living along this stretch of the road, I was gratified by the warmth of the welcome and help given as I researched this article. Those who did not wish to be named - thank you.

For further reading -

- *The Making of Scotland (Farmers, Temples & Tombs)* - Gordon Barclay
- *Highways and Byways* - Archie Watt
- *Balbridie Excavations 1977-80* - Dr Ian Ralston

The Loch of Park

In the last *Newsletter* attention was drawn to the potentially disastrous effect that the proposed construction of a factory manufacturing cellulose would have had on the local environment in Drumoak had that plan proceeded. The damage would have been long-lasting as the manufacturing process involved the use of toxic materials. Toxic residues would have leached into the surrounding soil rendering the land useless for cultivation.



**Ordnance Survey: Aberdeenshire Sheet LXXXIV. S.E.
Second Edition 1901**

However there are more subtle and slower changes that have occurred in the parish which have had a profound effect on the local landscape. During the latter part of the 18thC, through the 19thC and into the 20thC, local landowners were introducing extensive drainage schemes. One spectacular consequence of the introduction of such schemes was the slow disappearance of one of the largest lochs in Aberdeenshire - the Loch of Park (sometimes known as the Loch of Drum). At one time the water surface of this Loch extended to 300 acres.

By the time the Reverend Adam Corbet, Minister of Drumoak, came to write the Statistical Account for the parish in 1845 the loch had contracted to 84 acres. Corbet noted that the average depth of water had been reduced by four feet as a result of Sir Robert Burnett having had four foot of water drawn off in order to dry a low tract of ground belonging to him. Corbet observed that this action was much to be regretted as the water in many parts had become so shallow that within a few summers it was likely to be covered in aquatic plants. He concluded that what once had been a beautiful loch would become 'an unsightly morass'.

At the time Corbet was writing the Loch was home to perch which had been introduced by the late proprietor a few years earlier. Pike were also abundant and attained a large size. Some of the fry of the pike which had escaped from the loch had inhabited the still pools of the river and had become superior in quality to those remaining in the loch. At the time Corbet was writing the Statistical Account, there was a great variety of water-fowl on the loch including moorhen, coot, little grebe, goldeneye, widgeon, mallard and heron. In the fenland copses surrounding the loch, woodcock, common snipe and jack snipe could be encountered.



**Pike Fishing: Loch of Park:
George Washington Wilson**

The two photographs are of interest. In the first photograph taken by George Washington Wilson, we have three men in a boat fishing for pike. The postcard below shows two women possibly having a picnic on the loch. Clearly the Loch of Park was seen as a recreational area. As the Ordnance Survey map for 1901 illustrates the Loch of Park was still in existence one hundred years ago, albeit considerably smaller. The eventual disappearance of the Loch has taken place in the lifetime of existing members of the Drumoak Parish. What perhaps is not generally known is that the Loch of Park is a Site of Special



Postcard: The Loch of Park: Drumoak

Scientific Interest. The area which now covers 116 acres is one of the best examples of reed beds and willow/alder woods in Scotland. The loch basin is also of local importance for breeding birds, particularly for wildfowl and waders but these are not natural features for which the site has been notified.

Unlike the situation with the cellulose factory where the damage would have been long-term, the drainage schemes introduced by the landowners can be reversed. In other words, it would be possible to re-configure the drainage channels in such a way that water could be led back into the Loch and through the creation of one or more sluices the level of the Loch could be raised and regulated. Clearly such a scheme would have to be agreed with Scottish Natural Heritage and local landowners. My argument here is the same as that of the Reverend Corbet's that something precious in Scotland's natural heritage had been lost through the acquisitiveness of a local landowner who paid scant regard to the natural heritage.

by Robin Jackson

Fishing & Mink News

The River Dee salmon fishing season commenced on 1st February with a ceremony attended by around 230 people at Potarch Bridge. The river was officially opened by Alastair Hume who was a founder member of Aberdeen & District Angling Association in 1946 - today it has over 1100 members. Alastair is also a Director of the River Dee Trust and Clerk to the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board.

The River Dee Board is celebrating its 150th birthday so it was fitting that Alastair had the honour of opening the river as he has fished the Dee for the last 70 years. The presentation of the *Park Trophy* for



the largest salmon caught in 2012 was to Malcolm Tocher who collected the trophy on behalf of Reid Hagelin and Dunecht Estates - Reid landed a 35lb salmon at Lower Crathes in October. An announcement was made that the *Callum Mackenzie Cup* would be presented annually to the best fish caught by a youngster under 16 years of age. Callum was formerly a Ghillie at Ballogie Estate and taught many youngsters to fish over the years.

Catches for the opening fortnight have been slow but hopefully they will increase soon, at least we should have good water levels when it warms up and allows snow melt and numbers of spring salmon entering the river system - we wait with anticipation. Thanks to Ken Reid for opening ceremony words and Jim Mann for continuing mink story.

Robert Harper
Ghillie - River Dee

One bizarre incident occurred on the coast near Pennan where a volunteer found what remained of a dead mink namely the skeleton and part of its tale in one of his low tide creels. Apparently the hapless beast had gone into the creel at low tide to feast on the crabs within unfortunately for it the tide turned and it was unable to make good its escape. The crabs then had their revenge.

The dispersal season in Aberdeenshire proved to be an extremely busy and fruitful time for all the people involved in the Scottish Mink Initiative throughout the shire with as many as eight mink being captured in one day during August. The total mink caught last year was a staggering 144!

It really does not bear thinking about the havoc those voracious predators would have wrecked on all types of wildlife along and in our river systems. By removing those mink it is hoped that it will substantially curtail the ability to procreate time will tell. During the winter months the mink have been generally keeping their heads down, with the mating season rapidly approaching the males are now starting to actively seeking out the females.

As March and the new breeding season approaches I would ask all existing and potential new volunteers to the Scottish Mink Initiative to ensure that they have the necessary equipment ready for deployment. It is only by continued trapping and vigilance that we can possibly hope to get rid of this invasive species and give our natural wildlife a fighting chance. For more information on how to become a volunteer please look at our website. www.scottishmink.org.uk

Jim Mann
Rivers & Fisheries Trust

Mink

Young mink are born around May time and after suckling and weaning for approximately ten weeks or so they are ready to move on and carve out new territories for themselves. The females, also known as sows, become extremely territorial



whilst the males or boars adopt a more nomadic lifestyle and can travel many kilometres in a day. The mink use our coastline

and waterways as their motorways and highways. When reaching a new estuary they will systematically work their way up each watercourse in the never-ending hunt for food. Once that system is exhausted they move onto the next system and so on.

There are various opinions and theories relating to the co-existence between otter and mink with one school of thought believing that the otter will not tolerate mink in their area. My own observations however do not tally with this as on many occasions I have trapped mink where otter is present. The otter population throughout Aberdeenshire would appear to be thriving.

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Drumoak Durris Crathes Bowling Club



As we move from winter into spring our Indoor bowling season has progressed very well. Our Deeside Indoor League Teams have acquitted themselves admirably and a top six finish is nearly assured. We thank all players who competed in the league for their efforts.

Unfortunately, over the winter we have suffered a few instances of vandalism to the Green. This has made it necessary for us to 'beef up' our security fencing with the addition of barbed wire and our club security with the use of CCTV cameras. Grampian Police have also stepped up patrols in and around Drumoak village.

- Our Club AGM is on Thursday 14th March at 7.30pm where a large turnout would be appreciated.
- The Closing of the Indoor Season will take place with a fun bowling night and party on Friday 12th April. (BYOB)
- The Opening of the Outdoor Season will be at 2.00pm on Sunday 14th April.

We extend a very warm welcome to anyone who may wish to try bowling to come along on the day. Our membership could do with an influx of young boys and girls and bowlers of all ages.

Our Opening Day/Coffee Morning on Saturday 4th May from 10.00am till 12 noon also gives an opportunity for new bowlers to come along and try our sport. We will have a wee bit of fun 'target bowling' on the green on this day to gently ease anyone new to the sport into the art of the bowl. The usual stalls will also be available on this day.

Hall bookings have increased this year and anyone wishing to book the Pavilion for functions may contact Margaret Campbell, tel no: 01330 810199 for this purpose.

Dave Stuart
Match Secretary



Business Process Management (a Doric translation)

This handy chart may help some business people - especially those new to the North East!

General	
Process Flowcharts	The wye tae dee things
Departments	Bourachies o'Fowk
Roles (job titles)	Fit the folk are caa'd
Resources	Handy things tae hae handy
Value	Foo mony or foo muckle
Unit of measure	Foo mony or foo muckle fit
Concepts & Standards	
Quality	Fit wye a thingmie's fit for fit it's supposed tae fit
Competency	Fit ye're fit for
Documentation	Bumf
Document Register	Faur tae look for mair bumf
Retention Period	Haud on til't for
Processes	
Process Reference	Fit it's caa'd
Process Title	Fit it's tae dee wi'
Process Owner	Heid mannie
Approver	Fa says "aye
Draft	Nae quite feenish'd

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The City of Roses Chorus

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The City of Roses Chorus

Following our very successful recent workshop, where ladies were introduced to the art of Barbershop singing, the City of Roses Chorus continue to strengthen their presence in the

music scene on Deeside. With concerts arranged at various small venues around the area, participating in the Aberdeen and Shire music festival, performing at the Gathering in Drumoak and even singing in Prague later this year, it is turning into an interesting year for the chorus.



We are always happy to welcome ladies over the age of 16 yrs to our rehearsals on a Monday evening in Drumoak Church Hall, where we rehearse from 7.15 - 10pm. It doesn't matter if you can't read music because all we ask is that you enjoy having fun singing and meeting other friendly ladies.

Contact Valerie Madden 01330 824737 for more information about the chorus or for arranging to come along and visit us.

*"Don't walk behind me;
I may not lead.
Don't walk in front of me;
I may not follow.
Just walk beside me and
be my friend."
- Albert Camus*

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Thank you from the 'Hogmanay Lassies'



The Hogmanay Lassies - Karen, Lena, Rhona and Shelagh - would like to say a big thank you to all who supported so generously the Macmillan Cancer Support Ceilidh held in Drumoak Church Hall on Hogmanay - it was a great success and raised **£1520** for the charity.

The dancing, children's games, local talent spot and the lovely stovies made by Kenny and Jeannette Smith all made the evening a special family event and one we hope to repeat this year. So watch this space folks and book your tickets early as it was a total sell out.

Special thanks go to all local businesses and friends who gave so generously to the raffle. We really enjoyed chatting to the local business owners and feel strongly that we should support them and keep our local economy strong.

Shelagh Reid's last event for Macmillan will be a concert in the Music Hall, Aberdeen on Monday 4th November, 2013 entitled **"America meets Scotland"** It promises to be a night of wonderfully uplifting music and dance. Make a note of the date in your diary and help Shelagh support this wonderful charity.

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

Diary Dates			
Date	Event	Time	Location
6 March	CDDCC AGM	7.30	Drumoak Church Hall
14 March	Bowling Club AGM	7.30	Bowling Club
27 March	Production of Noah & Joseph by Durris School	7.00pm	Kirkton Hall
29 March	Giant Heads Launch		Drum Castle
30 March - 1 April	Easter Egg Hunt		Drum Castle
12 April	Fun Bowling Night		Bowling Club
14 April	Opening of Outdoor Season	2.00pm	Bowling Club
4 May	Open Day/Coffee Morning	1000 - 1200	Bowling Club

Easter Events for Children at Crathes Castle		
Ranger Guided Children's Walk : It's a Frog's Life	Ranger Guided Pre-School Children's Walk - Spring	Ranger Guided Children's Walk - Tracks & Signs
Tuesday 2 nd April 10.30am to 12.00pm	Wed 3 rd April 2.00 to 3.15pm	Tuesday 9 th April 10.30am to 12.00pm
Frog games and crafts and a glimpse of tadpoles if we are lucky!	Find out what our woodland creatures are up to at this time of year. This walk is aimed at 3-5 year olds.	Find out who or what is living in the forests at Crathes by following their tracks and signs. Search for footprints, fur and feathers.
Charges for all events are £1.00 for Adults and £3.00 for Children. Booking essential on 0844 493 2167. All our events begin and end in the property's car park where there is a car parking charge for non-members. Some of our trails are unsuitable for pushchairs. Please let us know if you have any special requirements. Children's walks aimed at 5-12 year olds		

To Mothers
How to preserve children

*Take two or more children of runabout age
If they are bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked youngsters,
so much the better.*

*Tuck them into bed early - and leave for twelve hours of quiet
restful sleep. Windows wide open*

*In the morning, dress them lightly and set at a table in the
brightest, cheeriest corner of the breakfast room.
To each child, add the following:-*

- *one small cup of orange juice*
- *one steaming dish of delicious nut-brown
wholewheat cereal,*
- *several slices of crisp wholewheat toast,*
- *one glass of milk.*

*Remove children to a grassy lot.
Add a kite, some toys and mix thoroughly.
Cover all over with a blue sky and leave in the sun until brown.*

Anon (from many many years ago!)

Drumoak & Durris NEWSLETTER

Editor: Marion Nixon

This newsletter is produced and delivered FREE by volunteers to all households in Drumoak and Durris to inform all of local issues and interest. You can support the newsletter through article contributions and advertising by contacting the Editor on -
tel: 01330 811663
mobile: 07778 813183
email: nixondenside@hotmail.com

Useful Information

Local Websites

Crathes: www.crathes.com

Durris: www.durris.net

Drumoak: www.drumoak.com

Drumoak-Durris Church

www.drumoak-durrischurch.org.uk

Aberdeenshire Planning www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Useful Telephone Numbers

Police Station* 0845 600 5700

Police (non-emergency) 0845 600 5700

Crime Stoppers 0800 555 111

*All Police Stations are accessed from the Grampian Police Call Centre.

email: servicecentre@grampian.pnn.police.uk

Aberdeenshire Council

Ward 18 Councillors

Wendy Agrew (Stonehaven) 01569 361364

Peter Bellamy (Stonehaven) 01569 767426

Graeme Clark (Stonehaven) 01330 823940

Mike Sullivan (Stonehaven) 01569 766922

Crathes Drumoak & Durris Community Council

Office Bearers

Howard Scholey (Chairman)

Ann Ross (Press Liaison)

Email: cddcc@hotmail.co.uk

website www.durris.net/html/cddcc.html

Hall Bookings

DRUMOAK CHURCH HALL

Mary Robertson 01330 811593

KIRKTON OF DURRIS HALL

Sheila Watt 01330 844613

BOWLING PAVILLION

Margaret Campbell 01330 810199

Local Numbers

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