

Midmar Newsletter

Published by Midmar Hall Committee
Winter Edition
Issue 24 - December 2016

**WANT BETTER MIDMAR
BROADBAND?**



COMPLETE THE SURVEY!

Dear fellow residents,

Some years ago I made a journey to Aberdeen on Christmas Eve. It was a dismal day and to cheer myself up I turned on the radio. Interspersed between a sequence of carols, a number of personalities recounted a Christmas they would never forget. Most spoke of childhood and a few of a Christmas spent away from home. One story, however, has remained firmly etched on my memory.

I can't remember who the individual was but he told of how he had been invited to be guest of honour at the Nativity Play which was being presented at his former primary school. Prior to the performance he was taken to a local hotel for afternoon tea by the headmaster. When they had finished, the two made their way along the road to the school. The distance was short and it was a pleasant evening, so they decided to walk.

As they approached the school a group of youngsters, dressed in flowing white robes and dressing gowns, emerged from the darkness. The headmaster stopped them in their tracks, asked them where they were going and pointed out that the school was in the opposite direction. At this one of the youngsters shouted out, 'the nativity's been cancelled. The Virgin Mary has nits'

Over the years I have heard a number of adults say words to the effect that they wished, for just one year, that Christmas might be cancelled. I can sympathise with those sentiments. Christmas - and all that goes with it - can be exhausting. Decorating the house, buying gifts, writing cards, preparing the Christmas meal. The list is endless. However, when the great day comes most people would probably agree that their efforts were worth it. At least I hope they do!

As each Christmas approaches the hall has an important role to play in community life. Whether it be parties, the school concert or a Christmas movie for the youngsters. For a time the hall plays its part in the festivities. Long may it continue!

Communities need the opportunity to come together, particularly when there is something to celebrate. Whether or not you find yourself attending an event at the hall this Christmas, I send you all the best wishes of the season from the hall committee.

Alistair McRobb
Hall Chairman





Community Fibre Partnerships

Delivering fibre to the hardest
to reach communities

Better Midmar Broadband – now or probably never!

– now including 01330 833xxx and 830xxx numbers

There are two grants available for a **very short time** to improve rural broadband. I have pushed Midmar near the front of the queue for these, but I need every household or business who is interested to complete a short survey at the link in blue below. Why? If we get enough responses then BT Openreach will enter into a “Community Partnership” and offer a range of solutions to improve our Broadband access, mostly funded by the grants. There is no commitment until the solutions have been reviewed. Thank you to everyone who has already completed the survey, but I suspect there are many more interested people out there! All responses will be kept confidential.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SGYJY7T>

If we don't get enough responses then the project will fail. The good news is that over 75 people have already completed the survey (as of 16th November) and we are close to having enough to succeed. **The closing date is mid-December 2016** so there is little time left! Anyone with a 01330 833xxx or 830xxx number can complete the survey. *Previously I didn't realise that 830xxx numbers could be included but they can.* If anyone else with another number wants to complete the survey I will pass the results onto BT.

Why

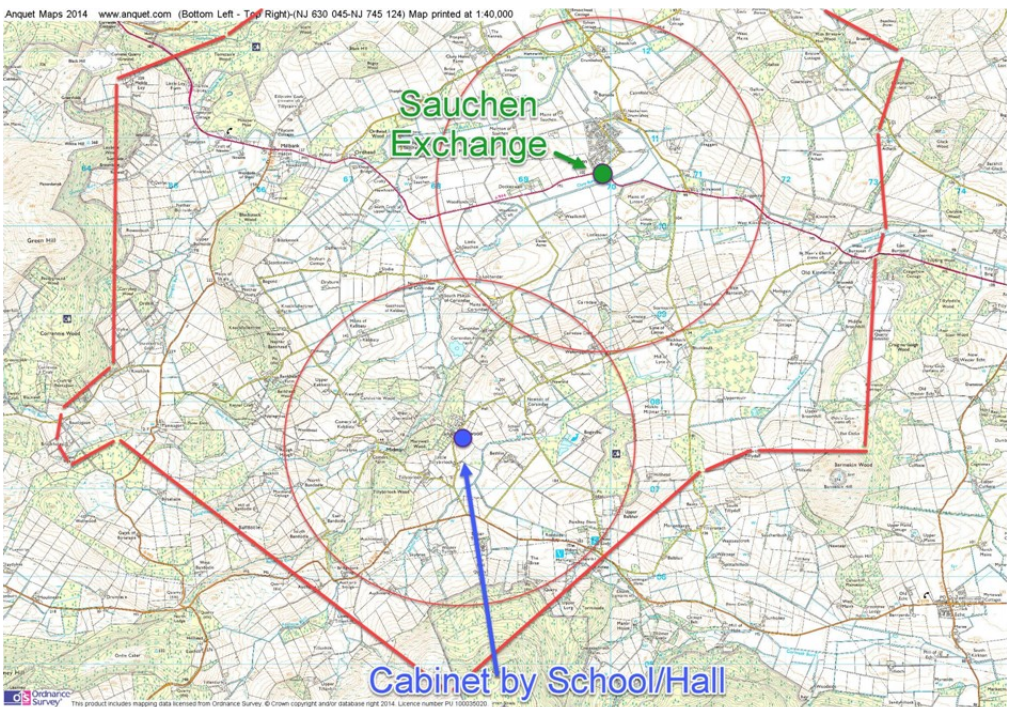
The Sauchen exchange which serves most of Midmar was upgraded to Fibre earlier this year but most Midmar residents are too far away or on unsuitable connections (Exchange only lines) to receive faster broadband.

Funding – 2 grants are available:

- 1) A match funded grant of up to £20,000 is available if a school is in the area to be improved. Midmar School is included in the proposed area.
- 2) £350 per phone line if your broadband speed is less than 2Mb/s and you haven't already used the grant.

What

Various solutions are possible and all will be considered, including boosting cellular connections, but the most likely scenario is probably to install another “cabinet” near Midmar School or Hall. This will enable anyone within a +/- 2km radius to receive faster broadband. The further away you are the slower the speed will be, but if within 2km you should get at least 20Mb/s, 10 times faster or more than most of us have in Midmar. See below for a likely speed/distance graph. The map below shows one of the possibilities, with the green dot showing the exchange location and the blue dot the possible cabinet location by the School/Hall. The circles represent the approximate areas that could be improved – the exact area could be bigger or smaller depending on cable routing.



Once completed BT Openreach will be responsible for any maintenance. Once installed you are free to use any Internet provider e.g. Sky, Virgin etc. not just BT.

How much will it cost?

The “School grant” of up to £20k is dependent of the community raising an equal amount (match funding). The good news is that according to the results pledged so far, we are on track to be able to receive the full amount **if more people answer the survey**. The £350 grant per line for <2Mb/s does not require any contribution from the owner and qualifies towards the amount we need to raise which helps. How much will installing a cabinet and rerouting the cables cost? That is the point of running the survey to find out, but probably around £20-40,000 depending on the complexity of the project. Why so expensive? – this is an investment for the future and should last for many decades.

When

If successful, the project must be delivered in 2017 (probably mid/late 2017) to qualify for the grants.

Why doesn't the Government fund this?

Various commitments have been made to cover various percentages of the UK population by certain dates but Digital Scotland inform me that Midmar is in the final 5% and we are unlikely to have our access improved in the next 5-10 years if we don't act now. It all comes down to money!

You may have heard that our MP Stuart Robertson and a BT rep attended a meeting in the Hall on 10th November along with about 50 residents when we discussed Broadband coverage including this scheme.

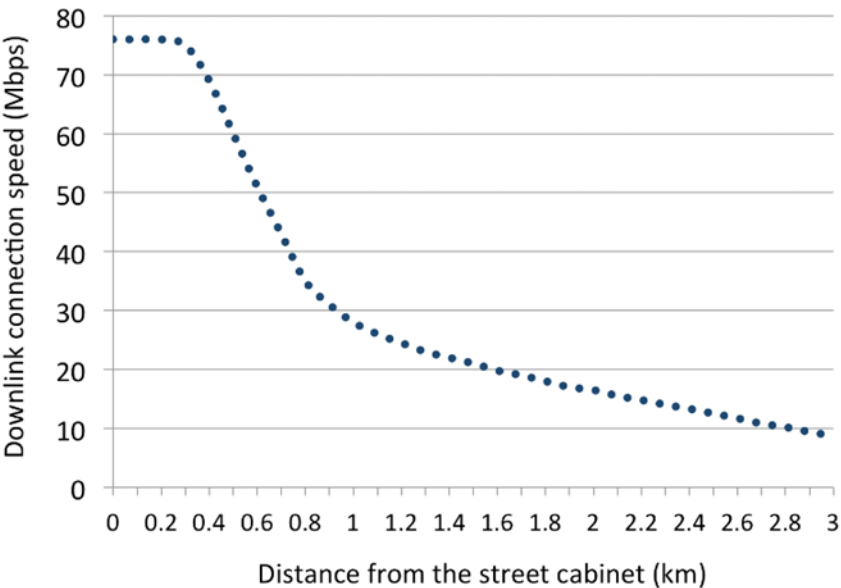
If you are interested but cannot afford to contribute financially then that's OK, please complete the survey, but bear in mind that the more people contribute the more likely we are to succeed. If you are in the Millbank area then it would appear that an additional cabinet could serve your area. Feel free to complete the survey and we can review with the Engineers.

What about Satellite & Cellular options? Everything and anything is included in the review, but it appears that the best solution at present is probably another fibre fed cabinet. There is also the possibility of a cellular provider such as Vodafone etc installing a "Femtocell" near the Hall if we have a good fibre connection which would provide 3G or 4G mobile service to the Midmar area.

If you can't complete the survey online, need help or have questions please ring me and leave a message. Gareth Brown, Woodhead. Midmar AB51 7QB Phone: 01330 833417. I have no connection with BT or any telecoms company but volunteered to Digital Scotland about 2 years ago to champion better broadband provision in the Midmar area as I was frustrated with the slow rate of progress. I will email updates on progress to everyone that has completed the survey. Finally please spread the word to anyone who might have missed this. Thanks!

- Links
- BT Community Fibre Partnerships <http://www.communityfibre.bt.com/>
 - Digital Scotland <https://www.scotlandsuperfast.com/>
 - How to find out what speed broadband I have: <http://speedtest.btwholesale.com/>

Any questions or need help?
Graph showing likely broadband speed versus distance from exchange or cabinet.



Midmar School News

Garden Produce

Our garden produced bumper crops of fruit this year. We made blackcurrant juice and jelly, apple crumbles with the produce. For the first time ever we harvested blue berries and 2 pears from our pear tree. Everyone enjoyed tasting the juice and jelly. Primary 1 – 3 made bread to eat alongside the jelly.

Rotary Shoebox Appeal

28 filled shoeboxes were presented to Alford Rotary Club. These boxes will be sent to Romania to be donated to adults and children there.

Ongoing play park improvements

Over the summer the football pitch grass has been repaired and the pitch airrated. A new play tower has been ordered and will be installed shortly.



Macmillan Coffee Morning

Pupil Council organised a Macmillan Coffee morning on Friday 30 September in the school. There were various activities, including a Bake Off, which was a decorated cup cake. The winners of the Bake Off were: P1-P3: Danny Morrison, P4-P5: Max Stead, P6-P7: Kailey Maxwell, Adult: Sharon Maxwell. A total of £256.34 was raised.



Beetle Drive

Over 50 adults and children attended our Beetle Drive on Friday 30 September. The prize winners were as follows: 1st place – (130 points) - Jessica Liddiard, 2nd place – (112) points – Karagh Crossland, 3rd place (109 points) – Millie McClelland-Brooks. Winners of the decorated beetle were Jessica Liddiard, Finlay Sewell and Campbell Sewell. For the grown-ups Lana Maxwell and Richard Brooks came joint first with 117 points.

Community Walk

We enjoyed a lovely walk to Mrs Morriss' house on Wednesday 3rd October. Mrs Morriss treated us delicious cake and we all enjoyed playing in the garden.




Forthcoming Events:

Friday 25 November 2016 – Family Ceilidh, Midmar Hall, 7.00 9.00pm

Monday 12 December 2016 – School Concert, Midmar Hall, 6.30pm

Burns Supper 2017

Midmar Hall



Three course dinner provided
toast drink included
BYOB

Fantastic local entertainment

£18 per person

Contact Amanda on 07980 736 499 for details

Saturday 21st January
Doors Open 7pm

Midmar Under 5's



Midmar Under 5's held a coffee morning and play on 18 November. The toddlers and playgroup has not been so well attended in recent months as there appear to be fewer pre-school children in the community. The new Committee has therefore been looking at ways to re-energise the group. The 'Rising Fives' at the school will continue to take place next year for children who will go into Primary 1 after summer 2017.

The intention is for the toddlers and playgroup to now be encompassed by one 'Under 5's' session. However, the new Committee is keen to get as much feedback as possible from parents on what they would like to see the group be, do and also when is the best time for the group to meet, although for the time being the intention is for the group to be once a month on a Friday morning. Previous questionnaires have not gained as much feedback as desired so it is hoped that we can talk to parents about what would suit them best at the November and December sessions.

There will be a Christmas party for the group which will be held on Friday 9 December 10am until 12pm in Midmar Hall. From bumps to five year olds, all are very welcome. The usual fun activities and games will take place, along with crafts and snacks. There will be a visit from Santa along with Christmas fun!

If you would like to get in touch please contact Lesley Tierney on 07739 350129 or lesleyaitken@hotmail.co.uk

Lesley, Pammy and Lynn look forward to meeting you and your little ones.



Under 5's Christmas party
9th December
10am til 12pm
Midmar Hall

From bumps to 5 year olds
All welcome
Visit from Santa!!





MIDMAR PLAYERS PRESENT A MURDER MYSTERY EVENT IN
AID OF HALL FUNDS ON THE EVENING OF
SATURDAY 25TH MARCH, 2017 (7 for 7.15pm start).

The setting is 1969. Plans are afoot to organise the first mega Scottish rock festival - Midmar has been chosen as the venue for the Midstock Festival! You will hear all about the festival arrangements on the 25th.

So dress up in your flares, tie-dye, dungarees & kaftans (or even hot pants!) and enjoy an evening of Peace, Love and a Couple of Murders.

Cost is £40 per head. The full 3-course meal is by Harry Fraser of Inverurie, who provided such a feast last time, and it's still BYO for your drinks.

Tickets are available from Angela Wilson on ae.wilson@btinternet.com or
tel: 01330-833910

Book soon to avoid disappointment - it'll be groovy!

Past.....



Garioch Blend gave their annual concert to a packed house in October. A fine afternoon was had by all while raising much needed funds to keep the hall doors open.

The Race Night held in September was a great fund raiser for the school as well as being a great night out.

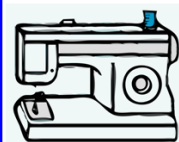


Midmar movies showed the funny & moving film 'Untouchable' to an appreciative audience while tucking into macaroons in keeping with the french film.

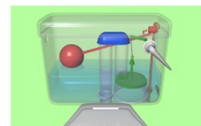
The hall AGM was held on 7 November. After many years as vice-chair Pamela Black decided it was time to take a back seat. Pamela has been a committed and tireless vice-chair and will be a hard act to follow, Nina Bidwell is going to give it a go. Pete Woodhead was welcomed as a new member of the committee.



Present....



On a Monday morning the upstairs room is a hive of activity with the new craft club in full swing. The Loo fund is slowly but surely filling the cistern, the total so far is almost £7000.



Future.....

The Christmas classic 'Home Alone' will be shown on Sunday December 4th.

Come and join the Boxing Day 'Wee Walk' starting and finishing at the hall with some mulled wine & mince pies to be served afterwards to raise funds towards the new loo campaign.



Watch this space - it is hoped that music lessons will soon be offered at the hall by tutors from 'The Rhythm Box', a music school based in Kemnay.

The carpet and vinyl in the main hall are to be replaced in January and after much consideration the carpet will not make a return. The areas that are currently carpeted will become vinyl which will be so much easier to keep clean.

Ideas for Bingo afternoons & quiz nights in the pipeline.





AOC Productions'

Dancing QUEEN

A concert of popular music
featuring songs from **Chess the Musical** and the hits of **ABBA**

9th Feb

Midmar Hall

Doors open 7pm

Tickets £10 & £8 concessions (includes refreshments)

Contact Barbara Harrison 01330 860421 / bhharr0166@aol.com

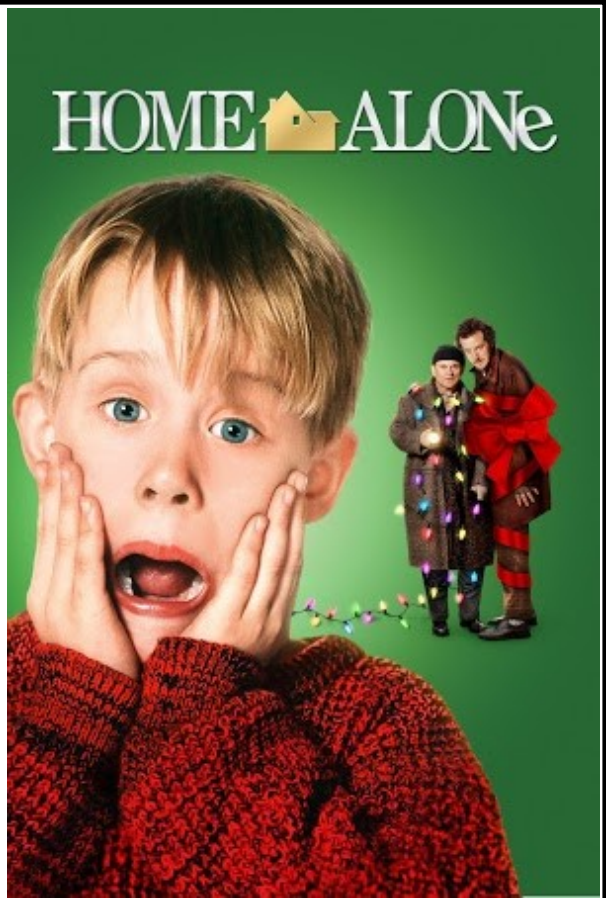
'Dancing Queen' is a rollercoaster of musical delights, taking inspiration from the story of "Chess the Musical" with music by Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson, formerly of ABBA.

'Dancing Queen' features songs by a diverse range of artists; from Green Day to Glee and Michael Jackson to Meatloaf; from old favourites to less well known treasures, the performance promises to have something for everyone.

Midmar Sheet
Movies are getting
ready for Christmas!

Come and join us to
watch
Home Alone
On Sunday 4
December
At 4pm
In the hall

Popcorn & ice lollies
will be provided
Donations will be
requested



Midmar Church Needs Your Help!

As with many Churches around the country, if not the world, numbers attending Midmar Church are dwindling.

You may have heard that we have had problems with our antiquated heating so we have taken a leap of faith and decided to upgrade the electricity supply and the heating. Now, we really need your help to keep things going!

Can you help?

Midmar Sheet Movies are pleased to offer a year of viewing pleasure.....

January 28	Confetti (cert 15)	British comedy with a matrimonial theme
February 25	Kingsman (cert 15)	British super secret spy action
March 18	Finding Dory (cert U)	A fishy family tale
April 29	La Famille Bélier (cert 12)	A warm, funny film about an unusual French family (subtitles)
May 27	A Good Year (cert 12)	A comedy starring Russell Crowe with wine, women but no songs!
June 24	Deadpool (cert 15)	The adventures of a marvel comic hero with a dark sense of humour
July	Summer children's films	A weekly holiday film club with dates, times and films to be arranged
August 26	The lady in the van (cert 12)	Maggie Smith plays the uninvited lodger parked on Alan Bennett's drive
September 29	Bridget Jones's baby (cert 15)	Comedy with the legendary spinster
October 28	The Big Short (cert 15)	An unexpectedly engaging film about the collapse of the sub prime market in America - no really it is!
December 3	Christmas family film	To be decided

We have aimed to offer a range of unusual, fun, dramatic & action packed films with something for everyone.

Please bring your own bottle and come and join us to enjoy midmar's own movie nights with cups, cakes & a chance to catch up.

Doors open at 7 pm. tea, coffee & nibbles provided. donations asked for.



You can find more information on our website at Midmarhall.com

Midmar events at a glance



4th December 4pm



Day	Activity	Venue
Monday	Stitch & Mix <i>New</i>	Midmar Hall (upstairs)
	Book Club (Last Monday of the month)	Various
Tuesday	After School Club	Midmar School
	Upholstery Classes	The Little Byre
	Bowling (October through to March)	Midmar Hall
Wednesday	After School Club	Midmar School
	SWRI (2nd Wednesday of the month)	Midmar Hall
	Whist (4th Wednesday of the month)	Millbank Bowling Club Hut
Thursday	Mobile Library (fortnightly)	Hall car park
	Rythmn Box Piano & Vocal lessons <i>New</i>	Midmar Hall
	Upholstery Classes	The Little Byre
	After School Club	Midmar School
Friday	Community Cafe (1st Friday of the month)	Midmar Hall
	Under 5's group (one Friday per month) <i>New</i>	Midmar Hall



**To Hire the hall or details on hall facilities, please contact
Mairi Black 01330833371 or go to Midmarhall.com**

Time	Further Information
12pm - 2pm	Frances Millward Frankie19701@live.co.uk
8pm -10pm	Alistair McRobb 833715
3.15pm - 6pm	MASC - 07856732341
7pm - 9pm	Kay Hourston 833515
7.15pm - 9.15pm	Alan Blackie 833482
3.15pm - 6pm	MASC - 07856732341
7.30pm -9.30pm	Judith Stokoe 833719
7.30pm -10pm	Isabel Birse 833209
9.45am - 10am	
TBC	info@therythmbox.co.uk
10.30am-12.30pm & 1pm - 3pm	Kay Hourston 833515
3.15pm - 6pm	MASC - 07856732341
10am - 12pm	
TBC	Lesley Tierney 07739 350129 or lesleyaitken@hotmail.co.uk



**Murder Mystery Night
25th March 7pm**



18th March 7pm



25th February 7pm

Burns Supper

**Midmar Hall
21st January
7pm**



28th Jan 7pm

9th Feb 7pm



A concert of popular music
featuring songs from **Chess the Musical** and the hits of **ABBA**

SWRI

Midmar S.W.I. Our winter season is now in full swing, we had two very successful evenings in September and October. The first was a display / demo of jewellery by Anne Marquiss. Anne's expertise was wonderful with a distinct Nordic flavour. The Midmar ladies were very impressed by the beauty and standard of Anne's work. October was a demo by Aileen West on how to



personalise old books into an individual gift by measuring and folding. A lot of hilarity ensued but there were some excellent results to take home and show Hubby. November 9th saw a flower arranging evening using a Christmas theme with Sara Findlay and Eilidh. Sara and Eilidh were so enthusiastic it would have been hard not to enjoy the demo and at the finish the items made were raffled much to everyone's delight. The meeting was opened up to other rurals with refreshments and a raffle.

Our December meeting takes the form of a Christmas meal at the Tee Room at Inchmarlo followed in January by a talk by Lesley Clark on Waterfield Llamas. February is the annual "Taste and Try" evening where members prepare and bring along a favourite recipe. All meetings are held in Midmar Hall commencing at 7.30pm and all are welcome.

For further details contact Michelle Paterson tel 01330 833490 or Judith Stokoe tel 01330 833719

Cluny, Midmar and Monymusk Community Council

Cluny, Midmar and Monymusk Community Council. The AGM for the Community Council was held on the 3rd of November 2016 at Midmar Village Hall. Various issues have been on the agenda over the year, notable items being Windfarms, The Blackhillock / Kintore proposed power line, the removal of some rarely used telephone boxes and the Save Bennachie campaign. The next meeting of the Community Council is on the 15th of December at Monymusk Village Hall commencing at 7-00pm when Mark Worsley and others will give a talk on the Save Bennachie Campaign. Anyone with local problems or queries is welcome to attend.

Midmar Community Councillors are Richard Fyffe tel 01330-833295 and Judith Stokoe tel 01330 833719



The Rhythm Box

6 High Street, Kemnay
33E Bridge Street, Banchory

find us on:

facebook

twitter

instagram

snapchat

Piano and Vocal Lessons coming to Midmar Hall

The Rhythm Box is now offering lessons from Midmar Hall.
Lessons will be charged at the same rate as lessons in the studio (£17)

To register your interest contact:

info@therhythmbox.co.uk

01467 642026

www.therhythmbox.co.uk

IF SOMEONE TELLS YOU THAT
YOU HAVE ENOUGH FABRIC
STOP TALKING TO THEM.

YOU DON'T NEED THAT KIND
OF NEGATIVITY IN YOUR LIFE!

Stitch & Mix
Mondays
12pm-2pm
Midmar Hall

Come and join our small but perfectly formed, group of ladies who share their individual craft and expertise to give the rest of us novices the chance to learn a new skill.

Cushions, blinds, sign writing, wreath making are just a few of the skills brought to the table so far.

We've only been up and running for a few weeks and would love to welcome more people along. (A £2 donation goes towards hall costs)

Come along or for more details contact Frances Millward, email:

Frankie19701@live.co.uk

Boxing Day Walk – Christmas 2016

It has been a busy year for me, and you too I hear you say! I missed putting a walk article into the summer edition because I was “awa” and I have to admit this article describes a repeat of the route, we took for the Boxing Day walk three years ago because I am still “awa awa”. As a reminder here is a picture, lots of blue sky!!



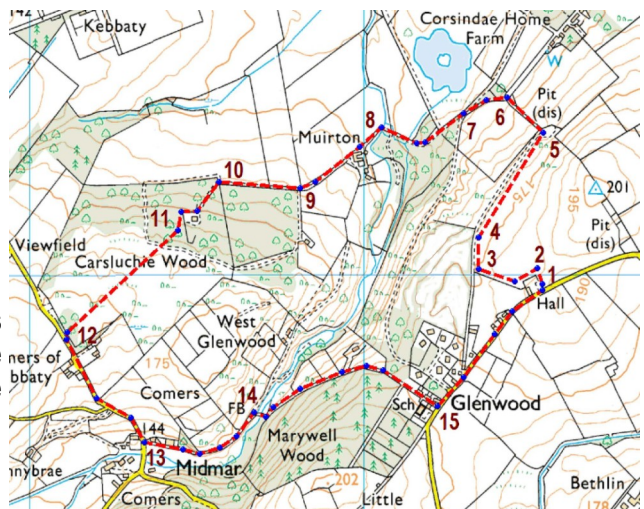
Anyone who would like to do this walk on Boxing Day, starting at about 10:00 am please let either Angela Wilson or Amanda Liddiard know. The plan again is to set off from the hall and maybe pick up people along the route! Contributions for mince pies, mulled wine to be consumed at the end of the walk would be welcome.

In the first part of the walk there will almost certainly be sheep in the field and game birds in the woods so dogs should be kept strictly under control. Half way round, in the rough grazing field before Comers, there may be cattle and if they have calves, can be dangerous, for those who are not aware, the safest thing to do in this case is not to have dogs on a lead, your dog can easily evade an angry cow by itself and you should avoid attracting their attention!

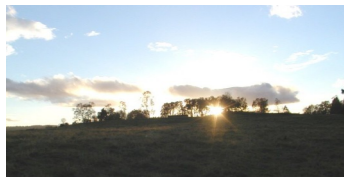
This route is easy to do in about 1.5 hours, it is less than 3 miles over easy ground, metaled road and paths so given the season, just dress for the conditions on the day.

- 1) To start, head left (NE) out of Midmar Hall car park and then turn immediately through the metal gate to enter the grazing field by the car park.
- 2) In the field, keep the hall car park and fence on your left to pick up the rough track that first heads NW along the boundary of open ground, this is soon to be new houses.
- 3) Follow the fence line to turn right (NNE).

You will have lovely views over the valley towards the Grampian Hills and Bennachie in the distance.



- 4) Pass the stile on your left, continuing NNE.
- 5) After about quarter of a mile you will reach a wooden gate and a disused sand pit. Turn left (NW) through the wooden gate to walk down slope along a grassy avenue known as "Green Lane". The gate to enter "Green Lane" is easy to open but is not strong so please do not climb over it.
- 6) As the slope starts to level out pass through another wooden gate and turn left (SW) on to a well formed track, walking down slope.
- 7) You will reach an intersection, you should continue straight ahead to follow the main track, leaving the yellow grit bin on your right and continue walking down slope.
- 8) After crossing Comers Burn the track swings left (SW again), continue to follow the main track straight through the gate ahead of you where you will leave the house, outbuildings and yard of Monarch Developments at Muirton on your left.
- 9) Take the right fork leaving the main track to continue heading NW with trees on your left and the meadowland to the right.
- 10) Before the trees end turn left following the primary track up slope heading SW with trees on both sides of the route now.
- 11) Leave the hay store on your left side to approach a metal gate into the open ground behind it. This gate is held shut with wire but it is not difficult to open. Once you have entered the field walk up slope (SW) towards the trees at the highest point on the other side of the field.
- 12) As you reach the trees you will find a new gate but this is not mounted on hinges so I would advise that you climb over it as the wire that holds it is tight and will be difficult to re-instate if you undo it. Turn left (SSE) on to the metaled road walking first slightly down hill before the road drops down steeply into Comers village.
- 13) In Comers, at the corner with the Post Box in the end wall of the house to your right and just before the bridge over the burn, turn left to head first E and then the metaled road gradually curves to run NE.
- 14) As you pass along the metaled road, after about a quarter of a mile watch out for a simple seat and path on the right. Leave the road here on a path that leads to a wooden footbridge that re-crosses the Comers Burn. On the E side of the foot bridge the path rises steeply to join a metaled road and re-enter Midmar village. Go straight ahead to passing the school playing field on the right and village housing on the left.
- 15) At the 'T' junction, with water hydrant opposite, turn left (NE) to walk back up past Glenwood Park and return to the Village Hall car park.



Our route map is not scaled so take OS Landranger Map 38, with you for additional reference



I can't believe that it is nearly Christmas already, to me it certainly doesn't feel as if it is 11 months since we last celebrated Christ's birth.

Most of us will have heard the Christmas story over and over again and it may be all too familiar to us, perhaps just a little too familiar. But the story is actually one about humanity. A story that claims to connect with our very purpose and reason for being. How often do we think of God as an old man with a white beard sitting on a cloud, far, far away and out of

touch? But God is not lonely or distant. God is full of joy and love.

Whatever we receive this Christmas, we should remember that the present at that first Christmas was a little baby. Perhaps God's son wouldn't be at the top of our Christmas lists. But sometimes what we want isn't exactly what we need! The baby's arrival calls for us to give God another look this Christmas. God has come down to our world, with all of its muck and messiness, to make us his friends. And even when January comes upon us, however cold and miserable the weather might be, the gift that we have been given by God doesn't fade or fizzle out. It is a gift for you and is, one that will blow our horizons and lift our heads. A gift that is far too significant to let ourselves be put off by 'religion' or past experiences. A gift that is far too precious to let ourselves be distracted by the busyness and commercialisation of Christmas.

Christmas is as if God is saying that 'you are deeply loved, just as you are, loved and challenged to be the best that you ever can be. So I am speaking to you in the only way in which I can, from a stable, in a child born into poverty, a child who was born to show you the love of God'.

Our services in December are:

December 4th Christmas Tree Festival in Echt Church at 6.30pm

December 18th Pop up Nativity Service at Echt at 10.15am

December 22nd - Frozen Film Night at 7pm

December 24th Christingle Service with Jason the Donkey and friends at Midmar at 4pm

December 24th Watchnight Service doors open 10.45pm at Echt

December 25th Christmas Day Worship at Echt at 10.15am

The Community Nativity service on the 18th will be a 'diy' nativity involving the whole congregation with no rehearsals involved! You need not bring any costumes, but if you would like to bring Mary, Joseph, Angels or Wise Men costumes, you would be very welcome!

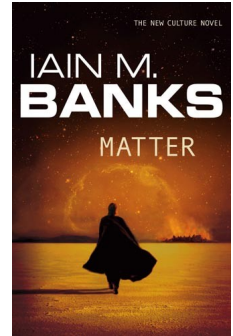
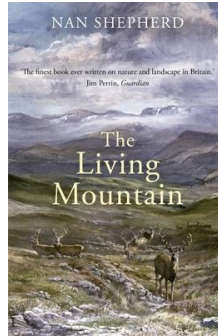
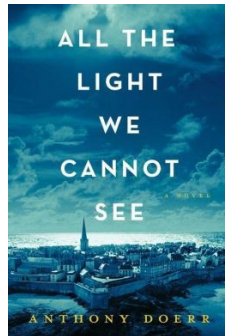
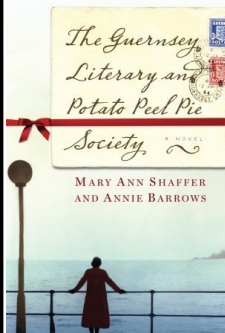
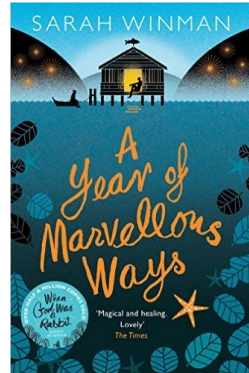
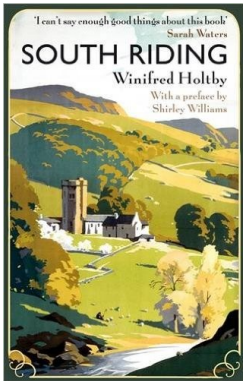
All very welcome at each and every service.

Best wishes, Elspeth

Midmar Book Club

New members are always welcome. Take a look at what our next seven months have in store.

Please contact Sarah Kearns for further details – 01330 833638



Sponsor the newsletter

If you would like to sponsor the newsletter prices are:

£10 for a business card size

£30 for a half page (landscape)

£60 for a whole page in colour (portrait)

Please email Amanda

Midmar.newsletter@hotmail.co.uk

The newsletter is non-profit making and is distributed to 230 homes throughout Midmar as well as being published on the Midmar Hall website

Hail to the Holly tree

At this time of year, in late November, and December, when the last withered leaves scurry across the frost dusted ground, very little colour remains in our gardens-with a few exceptions. Evergreen shrubs and trees still retain their colour, and the golden needles of the European larch trees are illuminated in the soft winter light. Rose hips and other berries provide a splash of colour in an increasingly monochrome world, which is our environment during the winter season. The holly comes into its own, with its bright red berries and shiny dark green leaves.



From time immemorial, holly has been recognised as a special tree, and superstitions, traditions and rituals have been interwoven into history. The name itself derives, apparently from the old English, 'hole(g)n', and there are other linguistic derivatives, across Europe.



*The holly and the Ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly wears the crown'.*

Around Christmas time, holly and its counterpart ivy, have been used for making wreaths, and garlands, to decorate our festive portals, and for embellishing the traditional Christmas pudding. The berries have been traditionally associated as a symbolism of Jesus Christ, and the Ivy with the Virgin Mary. In times past it was seen to be the sign of eternal life, and superstitiously it was perceived as bad luck to chop down a holly tree. As the tree can live for 300 years, it may command some respect.

Within the local environment, and within our gardens, there are a number of holly trees. Most of these are the European Holly-'*Ilex aquifolium*'-and is a genus of 400 to 600 such plants. Of course there are variegated versions and cultivars of this tree, all of which add splashes of colour to our wintry walks. It is worth bearing in mind that the ancestors of this tree became established 82 million years ago, when the Earth mass broke away into Gondwana, and Laurasia. So they are at least survivors- as well as enhancing our environment! Fond though we may be of our holly trees, it is surprising to note that in at least one part of the world, the American west, it has spread widely, and come to be designated 'a class C invasive plant'. This I can understand when I see all the saplings starting to grow in my gravel! Maybe I should start a holly nursery!

Hollies are not just there for aesthetics, though. The berries form an important component of birds' diets in the winter months, when the frost has had time to soften the 'drupes', and deer have been known to nibble the new greenery at the ends of the branches. In summer bees take the nectar from the small white flowers. Certain insects feed upon the leaves of the holly tree- notably caterpillars of the holly blue butterfly, along with various moths.

For me, the holly is an attractive part of Nature's patchwork, or 'Grand Design', and the tree adds an element of beauty to our wintry landscape.

Aoife's year in Thailand with Project Trust

My name is Aoife Goodin. I am a seventeen-year-old sixth year student studying at Alford Academy and live in Midmar with my family.



In August 2017, I hope to volunteer in Thailand for twelve months with the Scottish charity, Project Trust. There I will be teaching English in a small rural primary school to young Thai pupils.

Project Trust is an educational charity, which specializes in overseas volunteering for school-leavers. Their aim is to provide volunteers with an educational experience through working and living with people in communities different from those they've grown up in.

The projects are carefully chosen by the charity to ensure that volunteers can put their skills to good use in the community they will be living in, without taking work away from the local people.

However, for this amazing opportunity to become a reality I must raise **£6,200**.

I will greatly appreciate any support that can be offered in helping me reach my target. To help raise these funds I am holding a stall at Torphins Christmas market which will be on the 3rd of December. I am also organising a ceilidh on a Saturday evening in March; please keep an eye out for more details.

I am also available for babysitting, gardening, cleaning, car washing and dog walking. From now up to Christmas there is an opportunity to win a luxury Christmas hamper. For the cost of **£1** you can buy a date on the calendar, the winning date will be chosen and the hamper delivered before Christmas.

If you would like more information, please contact me using either the email address or the telephone number below.

[All donations no matter how small will be greatly appreciated.](#)

To donate please visit:

www.justgiving.com/Aoife-Goodin

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For any comments and queries regarding articles within the newsletter, please contact the writer as the Hall Committee does not take responsibility for content and accuracy of articles.

Closing date for submissions to the Spring newsletter (which covers events March, April & May) is the 12th Feb 2017.
Please email Amanda at midmar.newsletter@hotmail.co.uk.
Thank you, Amanda

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You can also download extra copies of the newsletter.

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We look forward to hearing from you.



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