

Midmar Newsletter

Published by
Midmar Hall Committee
Summer Edition
Issue 18 - June 2015

Dear fellow residents,

As I write this there are two days to go. In a little over 48 hours voting will begin for the General Election. From this perspective there is a clear sense of anticipation. Among the questions that flit through our minds are some of the following. Will the polls prove accurate? Will the voters confound the politicians? Is it a foregone conclusion or will the final result prove to be a big surprise? Time will tell. When you read this the game will be over. Anticipation will have given way to reality.

Whatever our political allegiances we have to accept that elections provide the opportunity for the people to give their opinion. Every election gives a snapshot of a moment in time.

Some years ago the hall committee conducted a survey and consequently a series of changes were made to the activities and events on offer at the hall. The opinions expressed by residents gave us a picture of what many wanted to see happen at the hall. Consequently new initiatives were implemented including the Community Cafe, the Midmar Sheet Movies and our regular visits from Scottish Opera. These have proved to be extremely popular and well supported.

Over the next few weeks we will follow this up with a second survey. Hopefully this will be an opportunity not only to seek your opinion on what we might improve but also help us embark on a project to improve facilities within the hall. What you think really does matter.

Feedback sometimes comes unexpectedly and from unlikely quarters. Some time ago we received an email from a gentleman who attended a concert given by the Alexander Brothers. I thought I would share some of his comments with you:

'I saw them at Midmar in 2010 while visiting friends in Aberdeenshire. Had never heard of them but was truly an astonishing and enjoyable evening. Truly glad I had the opportunity to hear them and speak with them personally. I still have the flyer from Midmar....which I had signed by them that evening. I also appreciate the warmth and kindness the people of Midmar showed me as well. One of the ladies taking the money for the show allowed me to have the flyer and suggested I have it signed by them. I still have it displayed in my office'. The email was sent by John Copper of Pittsburgh, USA.


Please take a little time to get back to us, so that we may have a picture not so much of where we are but where you would like us to be.

Alistair McRobb, Hall Chairman

Band & BBQ

Live music with

HEARTLAND



Sat 13th June

7:30pm 'til late

Midmar Hall

**Ticket includes delicious BBQ
Licensed Bar (over 18s only)**

**Tickets £17 (in advance only from 2nd April) from:
01330 833722 or 07986455767**

www.facebook.com/theheartlandband

Cover Photograph Winner

Congratulations to Rob Ferguson for his great photograph looking north east over Millbank and Ordhead from the top of Green Hill

Where Have All Our Paths Gone - Part 2

Since the article in the last newsletter there has been a lot of discussion about what the Midmar community could do to re-instate paths in the Midmar area. An exciting new development at Bogindhu woodland is that the Fountains Forestry (the Management Company) has given tacit agreement for local residents to create a new woodland path. Also the Community Council is currently considering an application for funding support to Aberdeenshire Council to cover any practical costs that might arise to improve access throughout the area.

Comers Bridge is probably top of the list for many people, and we have been told that this is recognised as a priority by the Community Council and that they are chasing this up as an urgent matter. Since the last conversation with councillors, one of the walking boards has broken and many others are showing signs of serious rot, so urgent repairs are needed. Aberdeenshire Council has identified the path from Glenwood Cottages to Comers as the only “core path” in Midmar. We are hoping that this status will help make sure the necessary funds are made available.

We have also been in touch with Aberdeenshire Council regarding the blockage caused by rubble dumped in the middle of the historic right of way from **Midmar Kirk to Balblair**. The rubble was dumped last year (picture) and appears to have been added to recently. We are awaiting feedback from Aberdeenshire Council about how to deal with this problem.

At **Tillybirloch** we have discussed with landowners and users about improving access along the traditional route to the woods.

Finally, it is some time since the padlocked gate at **Mains of Shiels**, on the route up from Nether Shiels, was first referred to the council. The good news is that it has been left unlocked for the last few months. We hope it will remain unlocked because it is quite a heave for bicycle users taking the shorter and safer route to Millbank, quite aside from being an obstacle to everyone else using the route.

At **Bogindhu**, local residents are hoping to create a new path around the woodland using volunteers' labour over the summer, in a sociable and fun sort of way. The initial aim is to clear the southerly loop and crossing path from the road entrance to Hillhead. Dates proposed for working parties (for the Hall Garden, Bogindhu and others) are 14th & 21st June, 26th July, 16th August, 13th & 27th September. All help will be very welcome, if you can contribute please contact Rob Ferguson who is coordinating, 01330 830038.



Article by Rob Ferguson & Jackie Randell: if you have comments/feedback on the content, contact details are Tel 01330 830135 or eMail ianhumberstone@mac.com.

Midmar Under fives

WANTED

little terrors



for monstrous mayhem!

Midmar Under Fives offer a range of groups for all preschool children.

Rising 5s (for pre-school children that will go to Midmar Primary): Mondays 10am-12noon (Midmar School)

Playgroup (ages 2.5-5years): Tuesdays & Wednesdays 9.30-11.25am (Midmar Hall)

Toddlers (bump-2.5years): Tuesdays 9.30-11.25am (Midmar Hall)

We provide a snack for the children - usually toast and a piece of fruit accompanied by milk or water.

Contact: Laura : Laurawade78@yahoo.co.uk, Judith: 07843377768 or Judithdoherty@hotmail.com

or Hazel Haze567@hotmail.com, or find us on facebook.

Midmar Playgroup wants you!



To lead the monstrous mayhem!

Midmar Playgroup has an exciting vacancy for an enthusiastic and creative Playleader.

Midmar Playgroup is one of the oldest local independent playgroups, now running for 45 years. The group attracts children from Midmar and surrounding areas, including Sauchen and Echt. The playgroup runs for ages 2.5 - 5 years on Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9.30-11.25am at Midmar Hall.

The hours of the position are 8.45am-11.45 am Tuesdays and Wednesdays & offers a good rate of pay.

A successful candidate will have experience of working with children in a supervisory capacity and the ability to relate to children in a positive manner. Ideally you will have relevant qualification in Childcare such as SVQ level 3 in Early Years Childcare and Education or equivalent. It is desirable that you hold food hygiene and first aid certificates. You may be required to undertake further relevant training. This post is regulated work under the PVG Scheme. You would be required to join the PVG scheme.

Contact for further details and full job description: Laura Wade

(Chairperson) : Laurawade78@yahoo.co.uk ,

or Judith Doherty (Secretary) : 07843377768 or Judithdoherty@hotmail.com,

or Hazel Lorimer (Treasurer) Haze567@hotmail.com

Volunteers wanted

To help in the garden during June

We need to gear up to get Midmar Hall garden ready for its usual summer display of colour

The community is lucky to have been allocated bedding plants for 2015.

But they come at a cost. We have to be prepared to do all the work! So - many hands make light work. Or we'll stick in more shrubs and forget the bedding plants next year! Your suggestions are welcome. The main tasks will be:

- weeding the garden
- collecting the bedding plants from Kemnay - date to be confirmed but expected mid June
- planting up the bedding plants
- watering in the first few weeks, depending on the weather - a handy hose has been installed, just inside the gate.

The first work party will be weeding on 24th May. Anyone who can spare a few minutes to pull some weeds, please feel free at any time. Just chuck them round the back in the compost/garden rubbish heap.

Helpers could also be required 6th/7th June, 13th/14th June or 20th/21st. Can anyone help with a trailer?

Please contact Jackie with offers of help on 830 135

or ianhumberson@mac.com



MIDMAR HALL 100 CLUB MEMBERSHIP

On Saturday 16th May, we got together with the Sheet movies and enjoyed a BBQ followed by 'Sunshine on Leith'. This was very well attended and a great time was had by all – it didn't even rain!!

The winners of the annual draw were as follows:

First prize £100 – Laura Wade

Second prize £50 – Ann Smith

Third Prize £30 – Jo Trinder

Fourth Prize £20 – Sheila Macaulay

The Midmar Hall 100 Club raises funds to help maintain the Hall and now it's that time of the year again where you get the chance to be a 100 Club member. If you are unsure how the Club works and have never been a member before, then let me explain.

For a small annual subscription, currently £12, you will be allocated a membership number which will be entered into a monthly draw. These draws will take place each month from June 2015 to April 2016. Numbers will be drawn during a Hall user group session. This could be playgroup, bowling, Community café etc. The winners will be announced on the Midmar Hall Facebook page and on notices in the Hall. Prizes each month will be £30, £20 and £10.

May 2016 is when we will have our annual draw where the prizes are £100, £50, £30 and £20. As you can see, by the prize awards it's well worth joining the 100 Club! See membership form attached and make sure you are 'in it to win it'!! You can also download forms from the website www.midmarhall.com

Remember, if you are not in it, you won't win it, so get in touch now for your chance to be a winner!!!





Midmar Hall '100 Club'

Prize Draw

Membership Form 2015 - 2016

Midmar Village Hall
'100 Club'
c/o Pamela Black
Conners Croft
Midmar
Aberdeenshire
AB31 7QB

For an annual subscription of £12 you will be entered in to the monthly draw from June to April

First Prize: £30 Second Prize: £20 Third Prize: £10

The annual '100 Club' event to be held in May 2016 will have prizes as follows:

First Prize: £100 Second Prize: £50 Third Prize: £30 Fourth Prize: £20

(This form allows up to 5 members of the same household to enter)

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

e-mail: _____

(your e-mail address will be used to advise you of the winners and to keep you in touch with '100 Club' and Hall events)

I enclose cash/cheque* for the annual membership of £12 per person (payable to Midmar Hall '100 Club').

*Bank transfer details: Sort Code: 82 61 00 Account No. 00396512 (Please use your name as a reference).

*indicate payment method

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please return completed forms to the above address by 30th May 2015

Tear off slip will be returned to you with your Membership Number.

✂.....

Member Name(s): _____ Member No(s): _____

Member Name(s): _____ Member No(s): _____

Member Name(s): _____ Member No(s): _____

Member Name(s): _____ Member No(s): _____

Member Name(s): _____ Member No(s): _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Treasurer)

The purpose of the '100 Club' is to raise funds for the upkeep of Midmar Village Hall

Contact Details: Tel: 01330 833682 or e-mail: info@midmarhall.com

Midmar School News

Fun Day 9th May 2015



Despite a wet start and heavy showers throughout the morning the netball and football tournaments went ahead as planned. Midmar won both the senior and junior netball. Tough won the junior football and Cluny won the senior football. All three football teams played very well, with Midmar Athletics coming runners up in the senior tournament.

Dunecht Dash



Ten pupils competed in the Dunecht Dash on Sunday 10th May. Millie McClelland Brooks came first in the 'Girls 10 and under' and Ben Morriss came first in the 'Boys 10 and Under'. Pictured with their medals are:
(back) Daniel Copp, Sam Morriss, Fionn Sewell, Matthew Copp,
(Front) Millie McClelland Brooks, Molly Morriss, Christopher Copp, Finlay Sewell, Ben Morriss .
(Not in picture) Campbell Sewell.

Archie in Africa Day – Friday 27 March 2015

£410 was raised during our Archie in Africa Day. Children dressed up, bought homebakes, completed sponsored tasks at home and took part in a drawing competition, which was judged by Vicky from Archie. The money raised went towards the building of the first children's operating theatre in Kampala, Uganda.

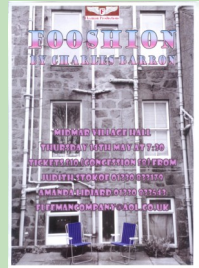


Forthcoming Visits

Primary 1-3 will visit Alford Transport Museum and Haughton Park and Primary 4-7 will visit the Wild Dolphin Centre at Spey Bay.

Fleeman

Fleeman productions returned to Midmar Hall on Thursday the 14th of May with their performance of FOOSHION. This was Charles Barron's favourite play and the cast of 5 were superb. An audience of over 70 thoroughly enjoyed the evening and we look forward to Fleemans' next venture.



Midmar S.W.R.I.

Our March meeting was hosted by S.S.P.C.A. Drumoak in the person of John Carrol. John was delightfully couthy and give us a wonderful insight into his daily work. April should have been our annual business meeting but unfortunately, due to hospital operations, holidays and members other commitments, had to be cancelled. All the office bearers were happy to remain in place so there was no problem there. Finally, our last meeting for this session on May 13th was a visit from Bob Laing who gave a talk /



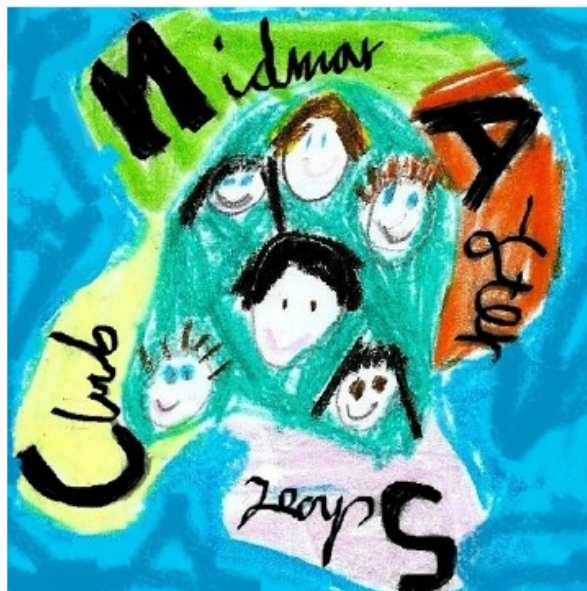
demo on that much maligned mammal the bat. We all learned some very enlighting facts that possibly changed our outlook about bats. There are no meetings over the summer months to enable everyone to "gather in their Harvest" and the next meeting is to be 9th of September 2015. Midmar S.W.R.I. are delighted to welcome new members or anyone coming for an evening that interests them.

Further information from Michelle Paterson tel 01330 833490 or Judith Stokoe tel 01330 833719.

Cluny, Midmar and Monymusk Community Council.

The last meeting of the Community Council was held in Monymusk Village Hall on the 19th of March and the next meeting is to be held at Cluny Church Hall on the 21st of May followed by the 25th of June at Monymusk Village Hall. All meetings commence at 7.00pm. The Community Council has been dealing with diverse items such as Wind Turbines, Planning Applications and the provision of paths at Bogindhu Woods. Anyone is welcome to attend meetings and can raise any queries or problems regarding local issues. The council have heard from Royal Mail that they are to install a Post box in Midmar although they are unable to supply timescale. A list of meeting dates is displayed on the Notice Board at Midmar Hall and also at Comers.

Midmar Community Councillors are : Richard Fyffe tel 01330 833295. Judith Stokoe tel 01330 833719 and Kay Hourston tel 01330 833515.



Midmar After School Club

After School Club Playworker

required for our rural, committee run after school club.

Hours: 3pm – 6.15pm, 3 sessions per week
(potential for more if the club expands).

Applicants should hold a suitable qualification at SVQ level 3 or equivalent, or be willing to work towards this. Must be registered with the SSSC or be prepared to do so.

This post is subject to successful PVG scheme registration and disclosure checks.

For all enquiries, please phone Eunice Wade after 6pm on 01330 833554.

Closing date for applications 18th June 2015.

Walk up an Appetite (15)

Hail, rain and chill winds today, regardless it is summer time, so this walk is higher and longer than usual to stay away from fields where crops are growing and young livestock are at pasture, it also takes in one of the best local views from the summit of Green Hill.

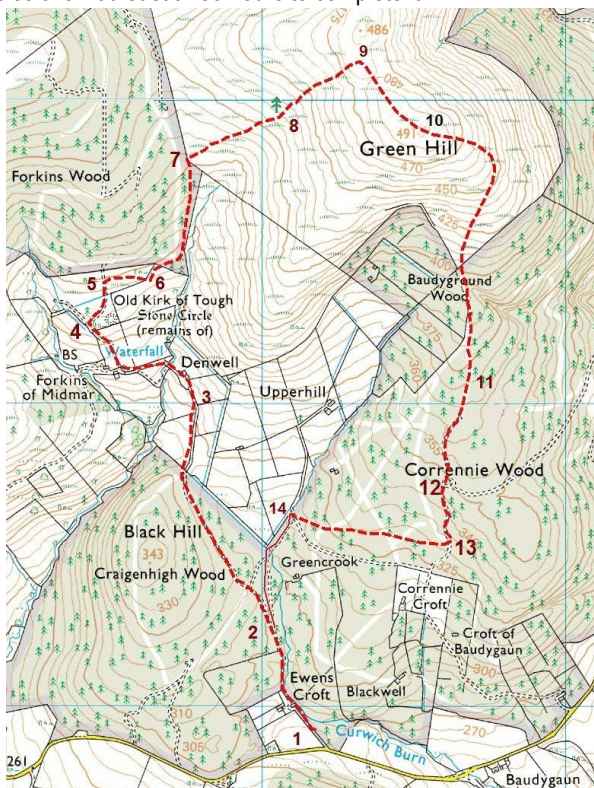
Guided Walk – Sunday 5th July, starting at 11:00.

We will start from the parking in the trees by Ewens Croft (third mile beyond Baudygaun) with the aim of having a snack on the way round at a convenient point and finish by mid-afternoon. Please let me know in advance if you are coming so we can run a proper head count and arrange sensible alternate parking if necessary.

Although most of the route is on well-made tracks there is a rough ascent to the top of Green Hill so everyone must have good mobility, preferably a walking stick for balance and robust footwear is essential.

The length of the walk is about 5 miles so allow at least three hours to complete it.

- 1) To reach the start of the walk, turn west off the B993 towards Baudygaun, Tolmauds and Ennets, passing the main forest road entrances for Correnie Forest to stop at the track marked Ewens Croft, Upperhill and Denwell.. There is ample parking off the road in the trees at the start of this well maintained track.
- 2) After about quarter of a mile you will come up to a fork, take the left hand route towards Denwell but allow some time to admire the magnificent cast iron letter box for Upperhill farm.
- 3) Pass through Denwell farmyard continuing uphill onto what is signed Bridgeview Road! This leads to more farm buildings and an uninhabited cottage at Forkins of Midmar. Again go through this farmyard continuing uphill.



- 4) 20 yards after passing through the metal gate, painted blue, turn immediate right (NE) on to a lesser vehicle track, this will lead you across the field where the remains of a stone circle are on your right. The depression of the circle is clearly visible in the ground and there are some minor stones on the south side. It is a magnificent spot to take an early break for those who have time. After this, head north into the adjacent field when you leave the stone circle. minor stones on the south side. It is a magnificent spot to take an early break for those who have time. After this, head north into the adjacent field when you leave the stone circle.

- 5) The obvious route across the rough meadow (N) and into the trees (shown on the OS map) is blocked by young plantation so I turned right (E) to walk parallel with the tree line field border.
- 6) Exit the field at the gate (SE corner) that will open but is difficult to close so it is probably best to hop over it at the hinge end. Then turn left (N) to walk up the field border, the farmer has left a sensible width without ankle twisting boulders strewn so it is easy walking. At the next field edge cross into the rougher ground, this traditional field fence has plain wire on the top strand so it can do its job without being a hazard to those stepping over it. After crossing the fence, first head East (right) and then North inside the fence line until you reach the wall that you will see in the distance. There are numerous animal tracks to use.
- 7) At the corner of the field wall look carefully to the NE, look for the single tree in the middle of the slope going up to the ridge of Green Hill, ignore the obvious ones that breach the skyline. Set off towards the single tree (approx. OS ref NJ 6311 0997) which can be reached walking primarily on tussocky grass and occasionally damp ground.
- 8) Between the tree and the top of the slope (Green Hill ridge) the ground is covered with heather, however it is even underfoot so not difficult walking, it is just a slog because it is uphill and there is no obvious path.
- 9) Pick up the summit track and turn right (SE) to walk towards what is the highest point of Green Hill.
- 10) Do not take the first turn (S) off the hill but proceed to pass the single (stunted) Christmas tree and head down the hill (E then S) on an obvious track.
- 11) Having entered the trees on both sides you reach a vehicle turning point with green container in the trees, carry on south leaving the container on your left.
- 12) When you come up to a track fork, with a quarry area on your left (E), take the right hand branch to carry straight on down slope (S) following the lesser track.
- 13) After about 300 paces start watching carefully for a turn off to the right (W), (if you reach more open ground you have gone too far). The inset picture shows what you are looking for. Once you have turned on to it, the path is obvious and well used but gradually narrows down to be single file walking
- 14) For those walking this route "in reverse" this narrow path starts just before the track to Upperhill farm crosses the burn. For those walking clockwise turn left (S) when you reach the Upperhill farm track and walk out (S) to re-join the route that leads back to the start.



Please take OS Landranger Maps 37 with you for additional reference information. The total area is enclosed by Eastings NJ62 to NJ64 and Northings NJ08 to NJ11. Article by Rob Ferguson : if you have comments/feedback on the content or wish to join the guided walk on 5th July, my contact details are Tel 01330 830038 or eMail rob.ferguson@aiexps.co.uk.

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

Midmar events

Day	Activity	Venue	Time
Monday	Rising 5's (for our pre-school children)	Midmar School	10am -12pm
	Book Club (Last Monday of the month)	Various	8pm -10pm
Tuesday	Playgroup	Midmar Hall	9.30am -11.30am
	Toddlers	Midmar Hall	9.30am -11.30am
	After School Club	Midmar School	3.15pm - 6pm
	Upholstery Classes	The Little Byre	7pm - 9pm
	Bowling (October through to March)	Midmar Hall	7.15pm - 9.15pm
Wednesday	After School Club	Midmar School	3.15pm - 6pm
	Brownies	Midmar Hall	6pm -7.30pm
	SWRI (2nd Wednesday of the month)	Midmar Hall	7.30pm -9.30pm
	Whist (4th Wednesday of the month)	Millbank Bowling Club Hut	7.30pm -10pm
	Playgroup	Midmar Hall	9.30am -11.30am
Thursday	Mobile Library (fortnightly)	Hall car park	9.45am - 10am
	Fitness Class	Midmar Hall	9.30am - 10.30am
	Upholstery Classes	The Little Byre	10.30am-12.30pm - 3pm
	After School Club	Midmar School	3.15pm - 6pm
Friday	Community Cafe (1st Friday of the month)	Midmar Hall	10am - 12pm



s at a glance

ne	Further Information
	Barbara Harrison 860421
	Alistair McRobb 833715
lam	Pamela Black 833682
lam	Laura Wade 833810
	MASC - 07856732341
	Kay Hourston 833515
om	Alan Blackie 833482
	MASC - 07856732341
	Colleen Moir 833680
om	Judith Stokoe 833719
	Isabel Birse 833209
lam	Pamela Black 833682
n	
0am	Angie Barclay 07796076445
0pm &	Kay Hourston 833515
	MASC - 07856732341
	Next dates : 5th June, 3rd July & 7th August

Band & BBQ

Live music with
HEARTLAND

Sat 13th June
7:30pm 'til late Midmar Hall

Ticket includes delicious BBQ
Licensed Bar (over 18s only)

Tickets £17 (in advance only from 2nd April) from:
01330 833722 or 07986455767
www.facebook.com/theheartlandband

Guided Walk
Sunday 5th July
11am

Starting at Ewens
Croft

Contact Rob Ferguson

ring
015

Gardening at the hall
6th, 7th, 13th, 14th, 20th &
21st June



Your hall committee would like to hear from you!



Historically, our hall has been managed, maintained and improved by the community, and for some time now, it has become obvious that a review of the fabric of the building is now necessary. It seems prudent at this time too, to give thought to the use of the hall in the future and its' potential too.

Just look at what successive generations of Midmar residents have achieved! Since the hall opened in 1905, it has undergone numerous upgrades, until now, 110 years later, it is the hub of this thriving community where the next generation is learning about family life in a community minded society. Something that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives. Midmar Hall enjoys charity status and is a glowing example of what a community can achieve when it ensures that the money it raises is spent judiciously.

But we need to know what you as users feel about what we can all do to ensure the hall continues to be the hub of this community. The hall is an invaluable asset where we can meet to celebrate, commiserate, and cement the community spirit we in Midmar so enjoy. Please do let us know your views by completing the feed back form in this newsletter, completing it online at our website, or by having a chat with anyone on the hall committee. If you'd like to remain anonymous that's fine but we really would like to engage with you to ensure the hall continues to provide what the community needs and wants.

Midmar Hall

An invitation to contribute to the future of the hall.

1 Hiring the Hall

The main hall and a small room upstairs are available to hire both during the day, in the evening and at weekends. Hire rates include use of the kitchen.

Would you know who to contact if you wanted to hire the hall?

2 What about the hall as a venue?

What would you like to see improved, added or upgraded, in and around the hall.

Is there anything you really dislike about the hall and have you any suggestions as to how we could make improvements?

What do you really like about the hall?

3 User Groups

If you are a member of a user group, is there any issue you'd like addressed?

Do you have a hobby or interest which you would like to get together with others to share and become a new user group?

Those already suggested include a local history group which could organise regular talks, and even setting up a men's shed!

4 Fund Raising.

In order to upgrade the hall, we will have to embark on a fund raising campaign, and because of our charitable status, there will be the opportunity to access funding. Can you help address any of the issues we will encounter, e.g. completing funding applications?

We would of course, have to raise a large portion of the money ourselves. Would you support events held to raise funds for specific projects?

Would you perhaps be happy to help organise such an event?

5. Fund raising events

These are some of the events which have been held at the hall in the past. Could you please tick those you are likely to attend in the future and add any others you would like to see the hall organise. Already suggested is a farmers market.

Band & BBQ

Family Quiz

100 Club

Scottish Opera

Midmar Sheet Movies

Silent Auction Fundraiser

Pub Night

Midmar Players annual production

Bingo

Fashion Show

Salsa Night

Burns Supper

Ceilidh

Fleeman Productions

Community Cafe

Hogmanay Party

Garioch Blend Concert

Classical Music Concert

Treasure Hunt

Antique Road Show

6 Communication

The hall has a website, a Facebook page and produces the community newsletter. We also use the more traditional means of communication by posting information on the noticeboard outside the hall as well as on the boards within.

Do you use any of these methods to find out about the activities at the hall or as a source for any other information you may require?

Which do you find most useful?

Perhaps you use some other means of finding out what's going on? We'd love to know what!

7. Thank you!

Your feedback is vital to help ensure the hall remains the hub of the community. Could you please return your completed form by posting it to, or popping it in the letter box at the hall.

Midmar Hall

Midmar

Inverurie

Aberdeenshire

AB51 7NE

We'd be pleased to know who you are but if you wish to remain anonymous, that's fine.

Please return by 29th June 2015

Nature in the Raw

'A garden is a lovesome thing- God wot'. Thomas Edward Brown 1830-1897

I have been fortunate to spend most of my adult life in an attractive rural part of Scotland, and to have had the opportunity to create a garden, over the last twenty years. This has not exactly been an endeavour which would emulate the skills of 'Capability Brown'; perhaps culpability would be a more apposite epithet. However, despite my best efforts, trees, perennials and shrubs, many of which are self-set, including the ubiquitous ash trees, have thrived-, and copses, shrubberies, lawns and borders planted long ago are now attaining maturity, and provide a habitat to sustain the livelihood of many birds and other indigenous creatures. As such, I have been in a position to gain some insights into their natural life cycles, at fairly close quarters. Occasionally I am privileged to have a vignette of their tenuous existence.

The arrival of Spring signals rejuvenation, plant growth, and considerable activity within the wild avian and animal populations. After the privations and sub-zero temperatures of the winter season, when most creatures are in semi hibernation or 'survival mode', many creatures, great and small, are invigorated by the burgeoning temperatures, and the renaissance of greenery, to start attracting their counterparts for mating and reproduction. Spring heralds new life.

It is fascinating to observe the mating rituals of the native wood pigeons in my garden- the nodding and touching of heads, the display of plumage, and the chase by the male seemed vaguely reminiscent of human sexual behaviours. Many birds in my immediate vicinity are embarked upon the process of nest building. Wagtails have taken up residence in the stone wall outside my study, the blackbirds in the heart of the juniper bush, well protected by the prickly branches. It is to be hoped that they will raise their offspring to maturity and avoid predators, or destruction of their environment during this brief time. I have, in the past, witnessed the despoliation of nests, broken eggs, and worse, but happily many fledglings survive.

Sadly, in recent times, oystercatchers are not much in evidence - apart from distant sightings. Traditionally they have nested in rough pasturage in an adjacent field, but they are conspicuous by their absence. Is this attributable, one wonders, to 'development' or 'improved agricultural practices' adding fertilizer and pesticides to the land? For many years their shrill dawn cry as they wheel around the house, has been a harbinger of spring.

They have raised their sole offspring in my 'backyard', and I have witnessed the anxious ministrations of doting parents as they watched over their vulnerable offspring, alternating custodial roles in their search for sustenance for the chick. One year, I witnessed their nest being attacked, successfully, by crows, who, mounting a tactical diversionary ploy, swooped down for the kill. Nature in the raw can be fairly brutal, and the chances of survival of many young creatures, appears to be slim- frogs being a case in point. One day, after heavy rain, there were large accumulations of frogspawn in a newly created puddle. The next day a dessicated patch of ground had taken its place- the nurturing environment for the new life destroyed by the forces of nature.



The observation of these forces of nature at work, over many seasons, creates within me the impression of the precariousness of existence for these creatures, particularly those without nurturing parents. Nevertheless, in so far as I am sentient of the reproductive patterns of many local creatures, I am inclined to be in awe of the processes unfolding each year in front of me. Scientific

explanations notwithstanding, I find it miraculous- a 'Mysterium tremendum et fascinans'- that that their reproductive processes allow creatures to produce offspring in their own likeness. Is this due to accident, as evolutionary theorists might suggest, or due to 'Intelligent Design?'

I am not alone in thinking along these lines. In the article, 'Evolutionary Theories in Gender and Sexual Reproduction' 2003, the authors (Harrub and Thompson) question evolutionary perspectives on the development and maintenance of sex. They postulate that sex (the reproductive process involving a male and female ,in case we have forgotten!)is neither a historical accident.....nor a product of organic evolution itself, but rather the product of an 'Intelligent Creator'.

Each individual may come to develop their own view on this ontological matter. While not appraised of the genetic complexities involved in the ongoing cycle of reproduction, my own nascent beliefs, based upon a lifetime of observation of the life cycles of creatures, human and otherwise. increasingly incline me to be persuaded by the 'Intelligent Design' theory. A fairly controversial subject perhaps, and one which is not easily verifiable. Are we all part of a 'Grand Plan'- and not just for our gardens, I wonder? Faith Mackenzie 2015

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Home-Start Garioch is part of a national network that offers friendly, informal support to families with young children.

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Home-Start depends on committed volunteers who give of their time, energy and experience as parents to support families who are going through difficult times in their lives. Volunteers visit families, who have at least one child under five, in their own homes, for two to three hours a week.

This offer of regular, flexible support can go a long way to helping families get back on their feet. Parents grow in confidence, strengthen bonds with their children, recharge their batteries and regain a sense of the value of themselves as parents.



Home-Start Garioch has been working in the Garioch area since 1995. Our volunteers are the backbone of the service we provide, and we would like to meet anyone who would be interested in finding out more about volunteering for Home-Start. We ask only that you have experience of being a parent and that you are able to commit 2-3 hours a week to support a family. All volunteers must attend a Preparation Course which takes eight to nine mornings spread over a couple of months.

Our next Preparation Course will begin in the Autumn of 2015. If you are interested in volunteering we would love to hear from you. Please contact us on the details below and we will provide you with more information.

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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 Autumn newsletter (which covers events September, October & November) is the 17th August.

Please email Amanda at midmar.newsletter@hotmail.co.uk .
Thank you, Amanda

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