

# THE ABERLEMNO CHRONICLE 2000



Impressions of Aberlemno Parish at  
the start of the Third Millennium

## Introduction

At a public meeting in Aberlemno in 1998, several ideas were suggested for celebrating the millennium in the parish. Plans for an 'Aberlemno Domesday Book' and a Millennium Celebration at Meigund Castle were taken forward. Nine people met to develop the idea of producing a book which would describe the parish and its population in the year 2000. The word Domesday was abandoned at an early stage in favour of the 'Aberlemno Chronicle 2000'.

The Millennium Celebration was a great community event, and we hope that the Aberlemno Chronicle will provide a record of the community spirit and provide a lasting record of the year 2000.

The history of the parish is well documented. It was therefore decided to provide a statistical account, but a record of circumstances in the parish, which is a rapidly changing community.

In order to conduct a survey, the group met several times to draw up a questionnaire covering housing, people, employment, business, farming, education, social services, recreation and transport. A circular was sent to all householders, as recorded in the Register of Electors, requesting permission for visits and inclusion in the Chronicle. One or two did not wish to be involved. Some who were not on the Register, and others who had recently moved away, expressed an interest. Eventually 148 questionnaires were completed by thirteen visitors, who, on the whole, enjoyed the project apart from the trials of finding phone numbers, a suitable time to call, and the more 'remote' houses. They felt that they were welcomed.

In the statistical account of 1842, the people of Aberlemno are described as "peaceable, obliging and contented" and in the 1967 account as "cheerful, steady and hard workers, kindly and sympathetic in their disposition, ready and willing to help one another in their difficulties". These descriptions are still appropriate. "Commanding" householders living on the edges of this 14 square mile parish did not realise that they were part of Aberlemno. Other folk who have always lived in the parish had a fund of stories to tell about the people and the place.

Completed questionnaires were analysed and collated. The writers, who all live or work in the parish, have, in their own style used the statistics to create a picture of the parish in the year 2000.

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'PICTISH SYMBOL STONE ABERLEMNO'

by Colin Gibson.

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## Houses and People

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## Houses and People

The parish of Aberlemno is an area of dispersed rural settlement with no readily recognisable single central "village" in the conventional sense. The majority of housing is evenly distributed throughout the area as 'farm touns', groups of 3-6 cottages surrounding or adjacent to a substantial farm house. Occasionally individual houses occur between or adjacent to them. In a few places two or more such settlements are grouped together in a cluster, or have grown and merged to form a dispersed ribbon development. Unusually, because of their origins, these small clusters of population are often on side roads, with the main through routes devoid of housing for long stretches.

In the northern half of the parish the two parallel east-west ridges of Finavon/Angus Hill, and Pitscandly/Turin Hill<sup>1</sup> push fingers of largely uninhabited upland through the area, whilst to the south east the parish gives out onto the rising, thinly populated moorland of Montreathmont with its extensive forest plantations.

In the southern part of the area, two large houses at Turin and Balgavies have had some small impact in focusing slightly larger clusters of housing, whilst a small hamlet has grown around the watermill at Milldens on the southern tip of the parish.



*Balglassie farmed since 14th century*

The village (*sic*) of Aberlemno, as shown on maps and road signs, consists of four groups of buildings surrounding the ancient roadside standing stones. To the north east, the farm touns of Crosston and Flemington provide the larger cluster, whilst Kirkton with the kirk and manse forms a southern group. Immediately to the west of the stones lies a group of



more modern buildings including a mid C19th schoolhouse, a group of mid C20th council housing, and a village hall of similar age.

The village has in living memory boasted an inn, shop, smiddy, and petrol station, but currently has only a part-time Post Office, the nearest thing to a "shop" in the entire parish.

Housing in the parish ranges in age from the recently restored C16th Melgund Castle, through to the modern day, one farm having documentary records from the mid C14th. As might be expected, the more substantial buildings from earlier centuries have survived with some farmhouses bearing dates from the C16th onwards, whilst the meaner dwellings have either been swept away in periods of farm improvement, or remain only as foundations or fragments in newer replacements, or as conversions to industrial use. Similarly several current dwellings had other previous uses, and this trend continues with a few recent conversions.

There have been no specific events leading to sustained episodes of house building<sup>2</sup>, but periods of agricultural prosperity have led to corresponding periods of replacement and modernisation, with many examples from C17th onwards. Currently there are few new houses under construction in the area.

The latter part of the C20th has seen a substantial change in household tenure within the parish, with a large amount of former tied housing sold off, probably reflecting the continued reduction in direct agricultural employment, and a desire by farmers to capitalise on redundant assets. A survey of 135 households showed that at the millennium, 71% were owner occupiers. During the last 35 years, 13 tied houses have been sold off, with a further 4 being rented. During the same period 17 rented houses were sold. Currently 28 households rent privately, and only 4 are in tied cottages.

The population of Aberlemno reached its recorded height of 1,116 people in 1851, since then it has shown a steady fall to 313 at the last (1991) census. The fall in population has been unremitting<sup>3</sup>, decade by decade, with large declines between 1891 and 1911 as a result of agricultural recession and the final ending of the quarrying industry, and again from 1961 to 1991 due to farm mechanisation reducing the demand for labour.

The current estimate of the population (426) suggests that this trend has halted, and possibly been reversed. Most of this recent growth can



be attributed to people moving into the parish from surrounding towns, and further afield. Of 137 households surveyed, 100 have moved into the parish since 1940, with 28 arriving in the 1980's and 45 in the 1990's. This influx has been made possible by a number of factors including the availability of relatively cheap housing, advances in road transport, more flexible working practices, and latterly, perhaps the rise of electronic communications.

As a result only a tenth of the adult population were born or brought up in Aberlemno, with 32% originating elsewhere in Angus, 6% from Dundee, 32% elsewhere in Scotland, and 15% elsewhere in the U.K. (mainly England). Of these new families over a half had no previous connection with the parish. Despite this, when asked, 88% of families intended to stay in Aberlemno if possible, and only 3% definitely intend to move away at a later date.

Among the reasons given for moving to the area were, the availability of a house, for work, the availability of a farm, and good communications. The most frequently cited reason was to move into a "country" environment. This, from further questioning, equates with complex and often erroneous or idealised perceptions including; peace and quiet, quiet roads, pleasant landscapes, absence of dirt and pollution, and a slower, less stressful pace of life. Longer established residents gave similar reasons to explain why they enjoyed living in the area.

Of those 137 households questioned, around 5% have been in Aberlemno for over 100 years (some for over 200), and a further 23% have lived in or been connected with the area for over 50 years. Most of these families are farm owners.

Problems associated with living in the area included: lack of transport<sup>4</sup>, heavy and fast moving traffic, lack of public amenities, and cold and difficult winter conditions. Other than those already noted, the main benefit of living in the area was seen to be the friendliness of its people (24%). Sense of "community spirit" however, was mentioned by only 4% of respondents, with a few mentioning its absence as a negative factor. This may be an indication of the social dislocation caused by the population changes in the second half of the C20th.

As the rural working population has declined, it has been replaced by people with a predominantly urban background and focus. Currently less than a quarter of the adult population is directly employed in agriculturally related industries, and over a half of all households have no connection at all with farming. To a certain extent, this has led to



some polarisation of local society. One 'residual' agricultural population, continues to live and work much as previously, whilst surrounded and greatly outnumbered by a second 'urbanite' population pursuing a profoundly different lifestyle, and correspondingly having differing opinions and concerns about many aspects of the social and physical environment of the area.

Unsurprisingly the traditional social hierarchy has largely broken down. As long ago as the 1960's this trend was reported by Rev. A.C. Russell<sup>5</sup> who at the time attributed it to the rise in mobility of the population, to increased use of motor transport, and to the centralisation of education in towns.

Local social institutions have continued to suffer, with kirk attendance declining over the past 30 years, SWRI and Young Farmers struggling for members, scout & guide packs closed down, the curling club moved to Forfar, and the village hall fighting hard to overcome local apathy.

If the current revival in population levels continues, it is probable that some renewal of community activity will occur, though it is likely that the forms of activity could bear little relation to what has gone before. In the meantime, at least, the local school rolls should look healthier than in the past 40 years.

S.D

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> **Turin Hill.** During the C18th & C19th a large local population was employed in stone quarrying, chiefly on the Turin Hill ridges, however the settlement patterns associated with this have long since been obliterated with ruined quarry towns being either demolished and backfilled, or quarried and/or converted to form the steadings of farms which currently surround the hill.

<sup>2</sup> **Council Housing.** Two small groups of housing, six at Aberlemno, and a row of eight "prefabs" at Pitkenedy, were erected by Angus County Council after world war 2. Local authority house sales have led to a decline from this small base, with only eight council tenancies at 2000.

<sup>3</sup> The population actually rose by 37 during the period 1931 to 1951

<sup>4</sup> **Car Ownership.** The 1991 census identifies Aberlemno as having 7.6% of households with no car, and 47% with 2 or more, almost a complete reversal of the Scottish national figures (42% and 16% respectively). Whilst 13 of 42 Angus parishes had a lower figure for no car households, only 2 Lochlee and Carmyllie had higher 2 car figures.

<sup>5</sup> 3rd Statistical Account of Scotland: The County of Angus. 1977 pp410.



## The Environment and Conservation

### Trees

The environment in Aberlemno changes very little as the years go by. A visitor travelling through the Parish on the old Forfar-Brechin road would see only small changes in the overall picture. A few fields have been enlarged, some steadings have been rebuilt with large sheds, there is a new shelter belt at the roadside at Carsegowrie and to the south side of the road many trees are appearing round the old quarries at Carsegowrie Muir. These trees have mostly been planted by the tree group of the Dundee Naturalists Society. Others have grown through natural regeneration. There are also lines of trees providing much needed shelter.

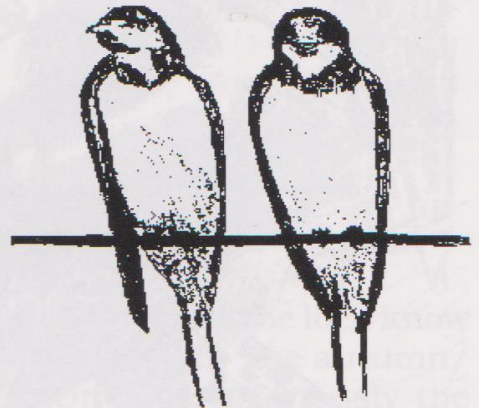
Stopping at the lay-by on the Angus Hill and looking down to the South Esk the view is one of the best in Angus. A small wooded area at Craigesk is beginning to show itself down beside the river.

There are many mature trees with rotting limbs in the parish, and every storm takes its toll. However, nine farmers have shown in the survey that they have planted trees within the last few years.

Montreathmont Forest is the only commercial woodland in the area. In the 1980's quality timber for electricity supply poles was being extracted at the rate of 1,500 annually. Many of these poles were for export, with longer poles going to Saudi Arabia, (presumably because they needed to be sunk deeper into the desert sands).

Seventy percent of the forest has now been clear felled, a quarter of this area has been replanted with Sitka Spruce and Pine trees. All the work in the forest is now carried out by contractors and no local labour is employed.

The landowner at Milldens has been planting a 'Millennium Tree' for each of his grandchildren, a Millennium Wood has been planted at Balgavies Toll, and another mixed wood of poplars and native species has been planted at Craigesk on the northern edge of the parish.





## Wildlife

The changes in the environment tend to be seen more in the numbers of wild animals, birds and fish. The river South Esk forms the northern boundary of the Parish for four miles from Woodrae to Blaikiemill. The number of salmon and sea trout caught has been declining although this appears to have stabilised over the last decade. Eels also appear to have declined in number.

Otters are more common in the river and in November one was killed on the road only 100 yards from Aberlemno village. Wild Mink are also seen beside the river and are probably the cause of a large drop in the number of Voles, Water Hens and Mallard Ducks. Freshwater mussels which used to be common are now an endangered species.



*Greater Spotted Woodpecker*

The purity of the river's water is indicated by the presence of dippers, and this is encouraging. I have lived near the South Esk for fifty years and five years ago I got my first sighting of a Kingfisher. There were occasional sightings for the next three years and then in 1999 two pairs nested at Balglassie and Balgarrock. In the year 2000 there were no sightings. Other birds commonly seen on or near the river are Cormorants, Mergansers and Goosanders.

The Buzzard, formerly comparatively rare in lowland Angus, is now to be seen over the whole county and Aberlemno is no exception. There appear to be more Rooks in the area with a very large number roosting in the wood to the north of North Mains of Turin. Seagulls and oystercatchers are also very much in evidence, especially when slurry is being applied to the land.

People who feed birds in the winter report a decline in the number of small birds, although many report that the Greater Spotted Woodpecker is a frequent visitor to the garden peanut feeders. Other farm birds in decline are Lapwings, Oyster Catchers, Partridge, Song Thrushes, Swallows and House Martins.



## **Balgavies Loch**

Around 5000 geese (mainly Grey Lag with some Pink-footed) have roosted on Balgavies Loch for upwards of 20 years, arriving in the autumn and leaving in the spring. The autumn of 1999 was the first time when this pattern changed and no geese have roosted on the loch since then. The numbers recorded at Montrose Basin have risen so that it appears that the "Balgavies" geese are roosting at Montrose



Basin. The Scottish Wildlife management committee for the loch know of no reason why the geese have changed their habit. The autumn/winter of 2000 appears similar to 1999. (One year previously the geese had moved temporarily to Rescobie Loch, but probably because of the shooting at Rescobie, had returned to Balgavies Loch).

## **Mammals**

It has been noticed over the last ten years that the brown hare is only seen infrequently and never in the numbers "playing" in the fields which gave rise to the expression "Mad as a March Hare".

In some localities in the Parish it is reported that rabbits seem to have dropped in number very considerably. This may be due to a disease where the rabbits die in their burrows (unlike myxomatosis where the sick animals are seen). In other areas they are as numerous as ever.

Roe deer are becoming more numerous and are seen in all areas of the Parish.

***These notes on trees and wildlife are written from a local knowledge and after discussion with people in the Parish. They were not taken from any survey and should not be treated as scientific facts.*** H. J.



## **Farming in Aberlemno**

The survey of farming shows 26 farms. Five of these are under 30 acres, of which one is a specialist pig farm and the other four are worked by semi-retired farmers. These four may be described as hobby farms, but one owner when asked to describe his farm said "a liability?".

There are two farms of 30 - 100 acres, 15 farms 100 - 500 acres and four farms over 500 acres. The average acreage of these 21 farms is 318 acres.

In the survey, acres have been used rather than hectares, which are now the official units of land measurement. It appears that most farmers are happier using acres, but perhaps this is wishful thinking on the part of the elderly writer!

Farms in Aberlemno tend to remain in the ownership of one family for long periods. Two farms have been owned by the same families for over 100 years and another four for over 50 years. Only one farm in the area is tenanted.

Most farms are described as mixed arable and livestock, although on two or three of these livestock provides a very small part of farm income. There is no dairy farm in the Parish.

### **Crops**

Crops commonly grown are winter and spring barley, wheat, oats, oil seed rape, potatoes, turnips, and grass. Less common are peas, beans, linseed, carrots and turnips for shopping. No soft fruit is grown as a commercial crop.

### **Livestock**

#### *Sheep*

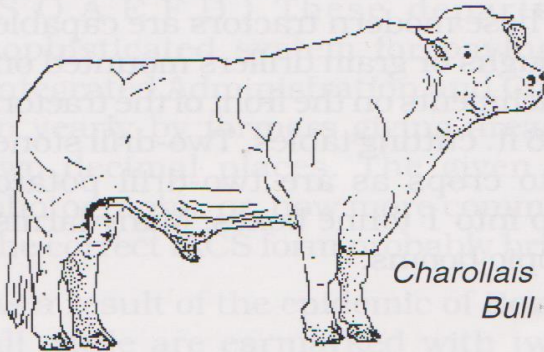
Six farms with breeding flocks of sheep are producing lambs for the fat market, many others buy store sheep and finish them over the winter. Ewes are mostly half bred or Suffolk crosses, bred with Suffolk or Texel rams.

One flock of Pedigree Texels produces rams and breeding females. It is noteworthy that the year 2000 is the first since 1896, that this farm is not producing pure bred Border Leicester rams. As a mark of progress, semen from the Texel flock is now sold on the Internet.



## *Cattle*

Six farms have breeding herds of commercial cattle. There is a strong influence of the continental breeds in these herds and the bulls used are normally Charollais, Simmental or Limousin. Aberdeen Angus are,



*Charollais  
Bull*

however, making a comeback and there is now one small herd of pedigree Aberdeen Angus in the parish. Some of the commercial herds keep the bull calves indoors and fatten them on rations with a high content of home grown cereals.

Most farms that do not have a breeding herd buy store cattle to graze outdoors in the summer and finish indoors. One farm specialises in buying heifers and finishing them, off the grass, or indoors.

## *Pigs*

There is one specialist pig farm with 50 Large White pedigree breeding sows. The offspring are mainly sold for breeding purposes and have been exported in the past all over the world. However the high value of the pound sterling is making the export trade very difficult and the present low price for bacon and pork pigs is not helping the trade of breeding stock in Great Britain. There is only one other farm in the parish with a herd of breeding pigs, the progeny are sold for bacon or pork.

Some farms now let their cattle courts for fattening pigs. In the present climate of low pig prices this may not continue.



*Large White*

## *Hens*

One farm keeps hens for egg production on a commercial scale.

## *Horses*

One farm specialises in breeding thoroughbreds with two brood mares. Other horses are shown and one trained for National Hunt Racing.

## **Machinery**

Most farmers own the tractors and machinery necessary to work their farms. There is, however, a growing trend to contract in larger



specialised machines. All swathers for oil seed rape come in this category. Combine harvesters, potato harvesters and silage machinery are often hired from contractors. There is now a machinery ring which organises farmers into using spare machinery and labour on each others farms. Tractors are now almost invariably four wheel drive, many over 120 hp. and having electronic controls. These modern tractors are capable of pulling 4 or 5 furrow reversible ploughs or grain drillers mounted on one pass cultivators with fertiliser attachments on the front of the tractor. Combine harvesters have large 14/16 ft. cutting tables. Two-drill stone separators are universal for potato crops as are two-drill potato harvesters normally loading the crop into 1 tonne boxes. Many farms have specialised loaders with telescopic booms.

### **Farmers and Farm Labour**

The survey showed that only two farmers did not list farming as their sole occupation, one employed in engineering and the other property management. Twenty farms employ no full-time labour other than members of the family. Six farms employ 15 tractor men, seven of whom are employed on a farm which also has a contracting and potato growing business, and do not live in Aberlemno. Of the remaining 8 men, 5 live in tied houses on Aberlemno farms and three live in Brechin, Menmuir and Kirriemuir. Family members employed include 8 sons full-time, one son part-time, one father(!) and six wives working full or part time.

### **Diversification**

This is the 'in' word for Ministers of Agriculture when advising farmers on how to supplement their income during this very depressing time for farming. Our survey has identified a small number of ways in which farms in Aberlemno are diversifying: B&B (advertises on the Internet); Potato growing; Catering (3); Holiday Cottages and Fishing; Riding; Sheep Clipping; Pheasant Rearing.

It appears that farmers' wives play some part in these subsidiary businesses which increase the family income. Wives also drive tractors and forklifts and help with stock rearing. Many wives also keep the farm books and records, usually with the help of a computer. Some continue with their own careers outwith farming.

### **Record Keeping**

Keeping accurate records is now an essential part of farm business



management. A considerable proportion of income from growing grain, oilseed rape and livestock production comes in the form of subsidies paid by the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department S.E.R.A.D (Since Devolution S.E.R.A.D has replaced the Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department (S.O.A.E.F.D.) These departments have brought in a very sophisticated system for paying subsidies on an acreage basis. Integrated Administration and Control System forms (IACS) are filled in yearly by farmers giving areas of crops in hectares accurate to two decimal places. The given areas may be checked by aerial photographs, or, now more commonly by satellite. On an arable farm the correct IACS form probably brings in one third of the farm income.

As a result of the epidemic of Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis (BSE) all cattle are earmarked with two tags soon after birth and every cattle beast has to be accounted for with the correct ear tags. No cattle over the age of 30 months can be slaughtered for human consumption. These cattle are incinerated and a fixed sum for the carcass according to weight is paid to the farmer. Every cattle beast leaving the farm (dead or alive) has to be accompanied by the relevant forms including correct eartag numbers. Farmers who buy in store cattle have to check that the ear tags of all cattle bought agree with the relevant papers. This extra work and expense can be the cause of considerable stress for farmers.

### **Set Aside**

The Set Aside Scheme started in the 1990s and continues today with little change. The scheme is intended to reduce over production of grain. Each year a percentage of grain growing acreage on each farm is 'Set Aside' so that no crop can be grown on that Set Aside acreage, and there are complex rules which are designed to allow the farmer to prevent perennial weeds from flourishing. Payment is made for this set-aside land, and is roughly equivalent to the return the farmer might have received from a crop on an equal acreage of feeding barley.

How will this account of farming seem to readers of this booklet in the future? It is the reality for the average farmer in Aberlemno. He is a man who works the farm with his family, using large expensive machinery, spending much of his time keeping accurate records so that he can receive the subsidies which may enable him to make ends meet. Has some of the joy gone out of farming? **H.J.**



## Work Patterns

### Businesses

Outwith agriculture, Aberlemno supports nine small businesses, mostly family owned and run. The majority have been in existence for less than twenty-five years. Two of the more established concerns are involved in building and construction while an agricultural contractor has operated in the area for over twenty-six years. The remaining six businesses are two publishers, a motor vehicle body repairer, a gas heating engineer, a landscape gardener/tree surgeon and a self caterer, all working from their own premises.

The self catering business has been in existence for only three years, whilst the oldest firm is one hundred and thirty years old, and in the fifth generation of family ownership.

Established in 1871 the joinery at Netherton of Melgund is still operational today in its original location, although the business has undergone many changes in those 130 years. Originally the property was rented from Melgund estate with the bulk of the work being done on that estate and on local farms.

A century ago, wheelwright skills were essential as the joiner worked hand in hand with the local blacksmith at the nearby Netherton Smiddy, between them making a cart for £20, with £10



*Netherton joinery works*



going to each tradesman. Over the years the joinery also provided an undertaking service for the community, but this ceased in 1960. In the early nineteen hundreds, Melgund estate sold off all its properties, including the premises at Netherton which was then bought by the Bruce family and the joinery continued to be operated by each generation' presently employing ten full-time staff in building construction work involving all trades, rather than purely joinery. Generally the work is carried out over a thirty mile wide radius .

All businesses in the area, whether large or small, enjoy working in the rural environment. The advantages of modern communications and technology simplify administration and enable everyone to compete in the wider business world. Continuity of work is made easier by being well known in the locality. The main disadvantages of working in the country would appear to be the cost of transportation of both material and labour, with the added difficulties of premises being inaccessible during spells of winter weather.

Most of the labour comes from Forfar or Brechin, with under twenty full-time employees required, although seasonal and temporary workers employed by the agricultural contractor and caterer would swell the total incoming workforce to around thirty.

It is interesting to note that of all the businessmen and women interviewed, most were optimistic about their future with none seeing any benefit in relocating elsewhere.

L. B.

## **Employment**

Although the parish of Aberlemno is mostly an agricultural area, only a small number of the working population remain actively involved in this type of work. Much of our traditional employment has declined markedly. Forestry for example, which during the 1960's employed over 40 men, is now carried out by contractors with no local labour used.

Similarly, increased agricultural mechanisation has greatly reduced the demand for farm workers, and most farm cottages now house urban workers or retired people.

Research shows residents' occupations to be very varied, with most commuting both to local and regional towns and cities, and to other rural areas..

The workforce of the parish numbers 150, including employers,



employed, and self-employed; working full and part-time. It is interesting to note the full list of the following occupations: Agricultural, Agricultural Contracting, Joinery, Mechanic, Retailing, Driving, Public & Social Services, Building/Construction, Clerical, Security, Manufacturing, Post Office, Gamekeeping, Transport, Education, Managerial, Communications, Local Government, Administration, Scientific, Banking, Computing, Property Management, Water Bailiff, Forestry, Food processing, Caretaking, Nursing/Medical, Plumbing, Engineering, Oil and Gas distribution, Publishing, Public Relations, Tourism/Catering, Horticulture, Cleaning, Vehicle Bodywork Repair, Public & Private Utilities.

Seventy four people are employed within the parish, the largest employers being :

- Agriculture (40),
  - Building/Construction & Joinery (12),
  - Education (7),
  - Domestic & Catering (5),
  - Bed & Breakfast/Tourism/Leisure(5),
  - Publishing/Communications (3),
  - Government Services (3),
  - Horticulture (2).
- There are 7 unemployed.

Those working locally, travel on foot, bicycle or by car. The majority, however, who work outwith the Parish, travel throughout the Angus area, and there are those whose daily work involves travelling to Edinburgh, Fife, parts of Perthshire and Aberdeen. One employed resident's workplace covers the whole of Scotland. By necessity, for all of these people the mode of transport used is that of the car or other motor vehicle.

As can be seen, residents of rural areas, such as Aberlemno, can no longer expect to find work locally. The constant changing of industry, commerce and other forms of employment in today's world, necessitates that those seeking work must be willing to be "*Mobile travellers*". It can equally be seen that working life in the Parish has changed almost beyond recognition from the days of yesteryear. The town and city have now become integral parts of daily life in our countryside .

**P.H.**



## Aberlemno Pageant

It had been decided in February 2000 to hold a special event for the local community to celebrate the Millennium year, and so the ideas of a Pageant/Tableaux depicting "Aberlemno Through The Ages" was born. Over the next six months this idea developed into an elaborate theatrical production to be held in conjunction with several community events in the grounds of Melgund Castle on Saturday 26th August 2000 at 4p.m.

Various sub committees were formed to organise and plan the forthcoming event.:

Pageant: Rev. B. Ramsay, Georgie Sampson, Lynda Bruce  
Sports : Bill Jackson;  
Barbecue: Lorraine Jackson;  
Ceilidh/Disco: George McDonald  
Bonfire: Sandy Spence;  
General Organisation: Harold Jackson

Much hard work was put in by all the above along with the members of their various teams. The chosen setting for the celebration, Melgund Castle grounds, was ideal, with the recently restored castle providing a magnificent historical backdrop for the afternoon's events. Special thanks must be given to Mr. & Mrs. Martyn Gregory who were kind enough to allow the local community to take over the grounds of their home not only on the day but for almost a week beforehand.

The format for the day with the Pageant providing the centre piece was now clear so work then began on the narrative which would be the backbone of the production. Two narrators were chosen. They were the Rev. James Mitchell (Rev. Brian Ramsay) who was minister of Aberlemno from 1794-1841 and whose father and grandfather had been previous ministers in the parish, and Mrs. Bruce the carpenter's wife from Netherton of Melgund (Lynda Bruce), whose family have lived and worked there for over one hundred years.

Each member of the pageant sub committee was then given a topic to research and write in order to relate the story of this parish through the depiction of times of particular historical interest.

Meanwhile, the problem of finding suitable staging for the event was solved by the provision of a 40 foot trailer, with curtained sides, which made an excellent stage. The stage management team now



had some idea of the scale of required backdrops and props and so they busied themselves creating scenery to provide colourful backgrounds for the production.

Volunteers were then gathered from all corners of the parish to enact the various roles in the pageant, with both Aberlemno and Pitkenedy primary school children being important contributors.

So over the summer months hectic preparations ensued. Narratives were written (and rewritten!), costumes and props were designed and made by families and friends although some costumes were hired, or borrowed from Forfar Dramatic Society. Rehearsals were attended, marquees erected and decorated, food ordered and prepared for the Barbecue, the bar was stocked, sports planned, a bonfire was built and tickets were sold and sold - over 500 in all, which far exceeded the organisers' expectations.

The week before the Millennium Day saw a heatwave hit Aberlemno, so no one worried about the weather for the big day, and all the final preparations at Melgund were made in blazing sunshine, with the team of helpers suffering from heat exhaustion!

The dress rehearsal on Thursday 24th August was rather disjointed, but constructive to all involved in the pageant, being the only time the whole production had been put together.

So the big day dawned - and the rain rained! But the show must go on!

By mid-afternoon the rain had cleared in time for the proceedings to begin. At 4p.m. The Rev. Colin Russell officially opened the celebrations and after a few minor teething problems with the sound system, the cast of "**Aberlemno Through The Ages**" swung into action.

In front of a large audience, the brief pictorial history of Aberlemno unfolded, beginning with the land formation in Prehistoric and Ice Ages, progressing to the Pictish era, with a graphic illustration by Pitkenedy school children of life here in those times, culminating in the Battle of Dunnichen in 685. From there we moved forward in time, to learn of a visit to the parish by Robert the Bruce, who was said to have stayed at Restenneth Priory during a hunting trip to Montreathmont Forests.

The narrative then went on to describe medieval life at Melgund Castle with its most famous resident Cardinal Beaton and family taking centre stage, giving a musical insight into the aristocratic life





Two views of modern farming; the latest potato planting machinery (above), and new buildings stand amongst acres of oil seed rape (below).







Morgan Milne (North Mains of Turin) with part of his Texel flock.

Existing steadings are being converted for modern machinery.







(above) 16th century Melgund Castle, home of Cardinal Beaton, restored in time to host the millennium festivities. (below) Milldens watermill is the focus for the southernmost cluster of houses in the parish.





## Aberlemno Millennium Pageant

(left) A Viking (Mike MacLeod of Hillbarns) that didn't perish at the battle of Aberlemno.

(below) Rev. James Mitchell (Brian Ramsay) Interviewing an Aberlemnite of the future (Archie Kelly from Pitkenney School)

(right) A Musical evening at Melgund with Cardinal Beaton and his family (Scott Waller, Heather Gourlay and her daughters Marjory and Phoebe)

(bottom right) The millennium service by the Kirkyard Pictish Cross

(over page) Lighting the millennium bonfire















The parish has two Primary Schools at Pitkenedy (above) and Aberlemno (below)





## **Education**

Nursery and pre-school aged children living in Aberlemno Parish attend playgroup or nursery classes in Letham, Lunanhead or Townhead Nursery in Brechin. Parents are responsible for transporting their children to these places as no school transport is supplied. Some travel further afield, depending on parents' work commitments, with one child attending, for example, Dundee University Nursery.

The parish is served by two primary schools, Aberlemno School and Pitkenney School. The majority of primary aged children attend these two schools although a significant minority choose to send their children to schools in Brechin, Dundee, Friockheim, Letham and Tannadice. However, this is to some extent balanced by requests from parents outwith the area who value the small school ethos and wish their children to attend Aberlemno and Pitkenney Schools. Pupils travel to school in a variety of ways; the school bus or taxi for children living more than two miles from the school, the remainder transported by parents. Very few children walk to school.

Pupils from Aberlemno and Pitkenney Schools usually go on to complete their secondary education at Brechin High School or Forfar Academy while some go to school in Montrose and Dundee. One child attends school in York. Pupils attending school in Brechin or Forfar are transported there by school bus.

Aberdeen is one of the more popular choices for Further Education, with local students attending the University, Northern College of Education or Agricultural College there. Several students travel to college in Arbroath or Dundee and one attends the Adult Training Centre in Forfar. Other university choices include St. Andrews, Napier University, Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities. Many households include one or more graduates.

### **Primary Education in Aberlemno Parish**

Aberlemno School began the Millennium with 25 pupils while there were 20 pupils at Pitkenney School. Changes during the year as new pupils were enrolled and others left for secondary meant that Pitkenney School finished the Millennium year with 22 pupils and Aberlemno School had 20 pupils on its roll. The pupils ranged in age from 4 years to 12 years. Each school had 2 classes, infant and upper.

The curriculum in both schools follows the National Guidelines set out for pupils aged 5-14. This means that all pupils study English



Language, Mathematics, Environmental Studies (history, geography, social subjects, science), Expressive Arts (art, music, drama, physical education), Religious and Moral Education (Christianity and other world religions), Health Education and Personal and Social Development. A modern language is studied in Primaries 6 and 7, French at Pitkenney and German at Aberlemno. Information and communication technology is a rapidly growing area and pupils have ready access to computers in the classroom. These are used for a range of activities such as word processing, data handling, graphics work and researching topics, in addition to playing games to reinforce knowledge. Pupils sit national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at key points in their school career. Teachers of physical education, art and music visit each school at regular intervals.

Links with the local community are strong. The school chaplain, Rev. Brian Ramsay visits each school weekly. Aldbar W.R.I. meets in Pitkenney School and the schools take part in a variety of local activities, the most notable of the Millennium year being the Aberlemno Pageant. Both schools have links with other schools in the area and have in the Millennium year joined with pupils from Forfar schools to take part in 'Yanomamo', an ecological musical, and with Inverarity and Tealing Schools when they were involved in an 'Artist in Residence' project and pupils had the opportunity to work with Rikki O'Neill, a professional illustrator. P6 and 7 pupils from both schools took part in a Safe Taysiders Day at the Royal Marine Base at Condor.

Both locally and nationally, the schools supported various charities such as the Blue Peter Appeal, Christian Aid and Barnardos (Pitkenney) and UNICEF, Shelter and the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (Aberlemno).

While each school followed a similar curriculum and range of activities, each also pursued individual interests.

In the millennium year Aberlemno School pupils took part in a wide range of pursuits. Among the notable successes, in a national writing competition nine pupils had their work selected for publication in a Tayside poetry anthology, on sale in bookshops throughout the area. Other pupils won various awards and prizes, including a competition to design a screensaver for Tesco, Burns Federation certificates for reciting Scottish poetry, prizes for designing a millennium logo for Brechin Horticultural Society and cycling proficiency tests. The pupils ended the year by entertaining parents and members of the local community with a seasonal musical entitled Jesus in the Manger.



During the year the pupils at Pitkenney enjoyed several trips and activities including two visits to the House of Dun. In the spring, the older pupils made a video of a typical school day after jointly writing a poem about the school and this is a memento they will have of the school in the Millennium year. Later in the year, members of the community had the opportunity to see this video and to listen to reminisces by some former pupils at an evening held in Aberlemno Hall and entitled "Pitkenney Primary, Past and Present". Our year ended with a Christmas Service in the school when the pupils performed a nativity play which they had already presented to the patients at Whitehills Hospital.

### Staff and Pupils 2000

#### Aberlemno School

Fiona Brownlee  
 Jill Morrison  
 Sheena Farquhar  
 Nanette Henderson  
 Louise Brown  
 Veronica Smith  
 Irene Reid/Alison Gale

**Headteacher**  
**Class teacher**  
**Support teacher**  
**Support for learning**  
**Clerkess**  
**Cleaner**  
**Dinner lady**

#### Pitkenney School

Susan Steel  
 Isobel Maitland  
 Sheena Farquhar  
 Maureen Mowbray  
 Jenny Dunlop  
 Irene Gray  
 Morag Ramsay

### Pupils in the year 2000

**Aberlemno:** Darren Alexander; Carly Duncan; Michael Cooper; Ross Duncan; Scott Duffy; Ross Duffy; Heather Stewart; Gary Simpson; Nyah Duffy; Cally Lamb; Kevin McDonagh; Fiona Stewart; Liam Cooper; Sam Shillitto; Sarah O'Connor; Lisa Duffy; Jennifer Alexander; Timothy Buchan; Andrew Smith; Emma Duffy; Aaron Murray; Ross Smith; Nicola Beattie; Trell Robertson; David Mason; Stewart Simpson; Michael Simpson; Connor Duffy; Kirsty Stewart.

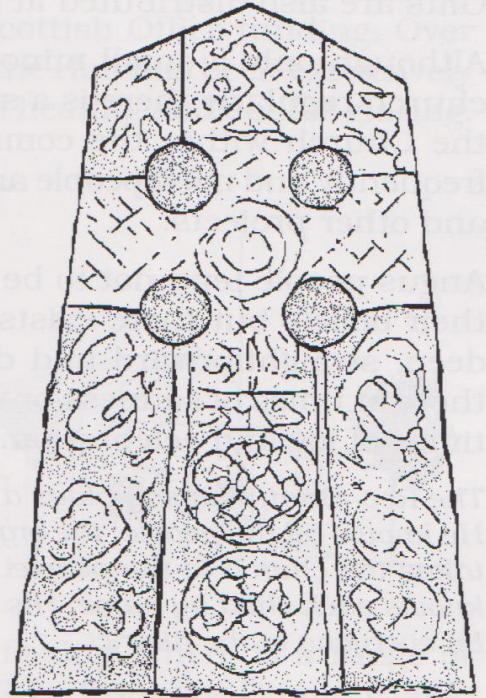
**Pitkenney:** Sean Mooney; Laura Jane Low; Jodie Rennie; Kelly-Leigh McGouldrick; Alistair Stewart; Thomas Turner; Kenneth Haley; Bobby Low; Ellen Henry; Davina Mooney; Gary Simpson; Alan Stewart; Archie Kelly; Lucy McGouldrick; Kelly Meiklejohn; Maud Sampson; Linzi Stewart; Michael Gillilan; Johanna Taylor; George Kelly; Christina Low; Shona McGouldrick; Joealan Brown; Jamie Kelly; John Sampson; Vikki Low; Stewart Simpson; Gemma Brown; Flora Henry; David Howe; Michael Simpson.



## Aberlemno Church

For many of us one of the highlights of our year 2000 celebrations was the open-air Church Service held at the Kirkyard Standing Stone on the morning of Sunday 27th August. We felt that the event was symbolic of the place that the Church still holds at the heart of our community for many of our people.

Aberlemno Church roll is fairly static at around 207, with many members living outwith the parish and yet choosing to keep their association with Aberlemno. Some live as far away as the USA but still take an active interest in Church and parish. In 1983 the congregation was linked to that of Guthrie and Rescobie and the Minister now lives in Guthrie.



The worshipping congregation is generally between twenty and twenty-five people, and there is a Sunday School of around eight children which meets once a month and is led by mothers of the children. Many more people come to services such as Easter, Harvest Thanksgiving, Remembrance and Communion. The best attended service in 2000 was the Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols when more than 170 people were in Church.

Worship is traditional and fairly simple in form but a modern translation of the Bible (Good News Bible) is used and modern hymns are attempted with enthusiasm. The Church services alternate between 10.00 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. on a four monthly rota with Guthrie and Rescobie Church.

There were 8 baptisms, 2 weddings and one funeral in the church during 2000.

The active congregation is a healthy mix of long established local families and "newcomers" to the parish with both groups involved in leadership. Although the congregation has a high age profile there are a few active younger members. The Kirk Session and Congregational Board both have a good gender and age mix.



As well as the gathering of funds for its own purposes the Congregation supports local, national and international charities. Gifts are also distributed at Harvest Thanksgiving and Christmas.

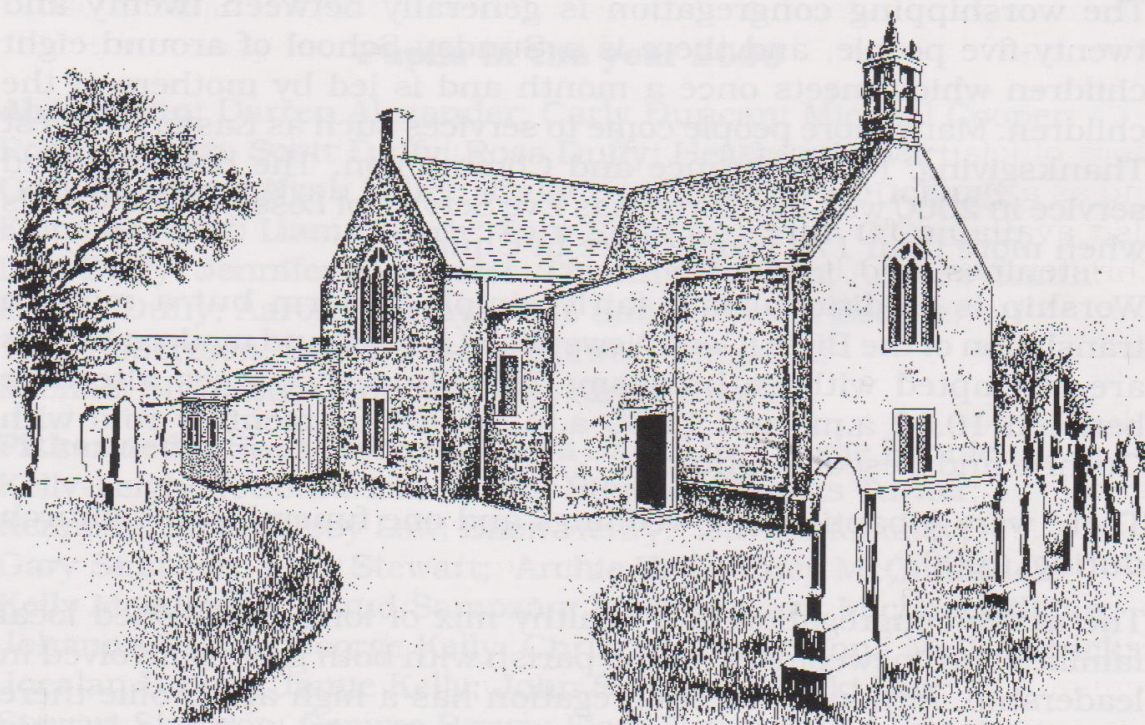
Although only a small minority of the people of Aberlemno attend church regularly there is a strong sense of goodwill and support for the Church within the community. Both schools use the Church frequently and most people are happy to help with fund raising events and other projects.

Angus people tend not to be overtly religious or quick to talk about their beliefs but there exists in many of the people of Aberlemno a deep, straightforward and down to earth faith which strengthens them in times of sadness or worry and adds to their thankfulness in times of joy and celebration.

**B.R.**

*The Rev. Brian Ramsay plays a key role in the welfare of Aberlemno Parish. He knows all the people, the organisations and the problems of the area - he takes the church to the people. He attends both schools in the parish and knows each child by name. His is a caring ministry and greatly appreciated by everyone in the district.*

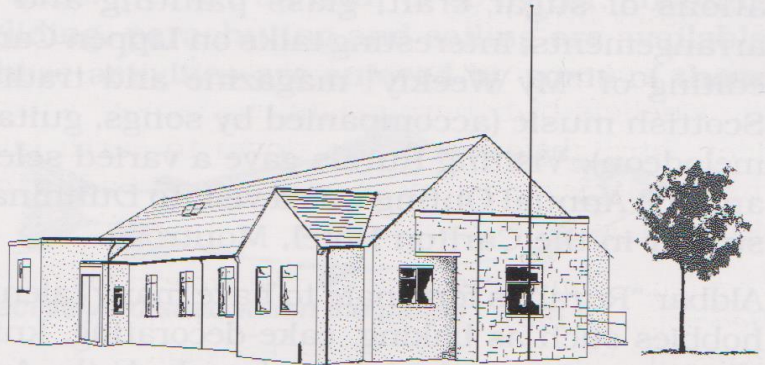
**R.J.**





## Village Hall

Aberlemno Village Hall is nearing its 40th birthday . It was built by community effort with the support of Scottish Office funding. Over the closing years of the last millennium the Hall has been extensively refurbished, including a new roof, central heating and double glazing. This was done with a variety of grants, help from a local charitable fund and a lot of hard work by local residents. The next scheme planned is to construct a car park.



The Hall sits next to Aberlemno Primary School and provides

the parish's only social/entertainment facility. There is a range of activities available including the S.W.R.I., Country Dance Class, Mothers & Toddlers, and Line Dance Class. The Hall Committee organises various events such as the Burns Supper, Spring Plant Sale, Bonfire Party, Dances, and activities such as Quiz and Race Nights.

More official uses include acting as a polling station for elections and as a gym for the school. At the other end of the scale the Hall is also available for hire for private functions, including parties, Christenings, and it was used during the Millennium for a Harvest Celebration.

How does it work? The Hall is built on land leased from a local landowner for a nominal sum and is run by a committee of local people, of which anyone can become a Committee member (you only need to ask!). Sadly the committee is dwindling and may soon reach the stage where it cannot function effectively. It currently costs over twelve hundred pounds a year to run the Hall and organising events to raise this amount, is becoming more difficult, although many people do turn out to help at specific functions. The social and community value of the Hall could be much greater - all it needs is the support of the local population to keep it going to meet the needs of future generations.

I. D.



## Women's Rural Institutes

### Aldbar

Aldbar S.W.R.I, founded in 1931, meets monthly in Pitkenney School. Twenty-two ladies, ranging in ages from teenagers to senior citizens, attend regularly.

During the year 2000 the ladies enjoyed demonstrations of sugar craft, glass painting and floral arrangements; interesting talks on Lippen Care, the editing of "My Weekly" magazine and traditional Scottish music (accompanied by songs, guitar and melodeon). Visiting Rurals gave a varied selection of entertainment and the Annual Outing was a visit to Dunninald gardens followed by supper in the Carlton Hotel, Montrose.

Aldbar "Rural" is fortunate to have many talented members who enjoy hobbies such as baking, cake-decorating, knitting, tatting, painting, crochet, cross-stitch and patchwork. At the Angus Federation Annual Show the ladies' talents were well rewarded when they won many prizes.



Although "Rural" membership is declining nationwide, Aldbar membership has remained similar for the past few years and the enthusiasm of the members ensures a successful future.

### Aberlemno WRI 1949-2000

Aberlemno is smaller but still very much a rural institute in this year of 2000. Craft and baking skills are still very popular but the different competitions on the sporting side at Federation and National level have come into being. Bowling, indoor and outdoor, curling and the Scottish Country Dancing Weekend are all of interest and participated in. The curling team won the low road trophy at Federation level.

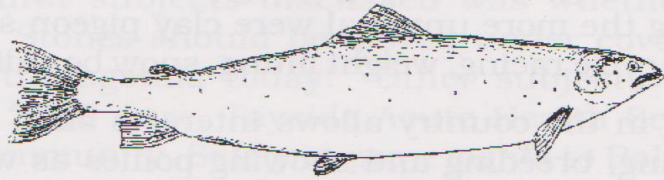
Other ladies attend the two-day schools when available, with classes on gold work, cold porcelain, art, needlework and cake icing. Members do well in these and find there is always something new to learn and pass on. We meet once a month in the Aberlemno Hall. Speakers and demonstrators vary over a wide area of interests. The monthly competitions are well supported in either baking, sweets, craft or photography. A very popular competition each month is the 'bloom', which is one stem from the garden. Being a small institute our meetings tend to be relaxed and informal, with a welcome cup of tea and a chat before closing at 9.30-10pm.

H.R.& C.A.



## Hobbies and Pastimes

The majority of the inhabitants of Aberlemno came to live or want to stay in the parish because they wished to live in the country. It is no surprise therefore that country pursuits are high on their list of interests. Aberlemno is well placed for almost any sport that can be considered: fishing rivers and lochs and even the North sea are within easy reach, the Angus glens provide opportunities for hill walking and rock climbing, the ski slopes are an hour or so by car, shooting can be arranged and gliding, parachuting and sailing are available quite near by. All of these activities are enjoyed by some of those interviewed.



*Fishing for Salmon is just one of the sports actively pursued within the parish*

Although these activities are all within relatively easy reach, transport is required and, because public transport is poor, that means having a car. Only two householders, both retired, do not have their own transport. One gives no hobbies or interests, the other cites stamp and coin collecting and gardening. Even households with no-one in work have a car, all with some interests including walking, swimming, gardening, football and golf.

About half of families visited had members belonging to clubs. These comprised a wide variety but could be divided into various categories:-

- a. Those for children such as boys' clubs, guides, brownies, air cadets and young peoples' club, all outwith Aberlemno.
- b. "Cultural" such as choral societies, brass band, pipe band, National Trust, Scottish Wildlife Trust, local history and the dramatic society, again all outwith Aberlemno
- c. Specific interest clubs such as the Scottish Womens' Rural Institute, Young Farmers, Senior Citizens, Mens' Social, Rotary, Inner Wheel and the 41 club, and, apart from the SWRI, all outwith Aberlemno.
- d. By far the biggest group were the sports clubs - badminton, bowling, cricket, curling, dancing, fishing, flying, football, gliding, golf, gymnasium, running, parachuting, squash and swimming. Of these, one dancing club is in the parish.



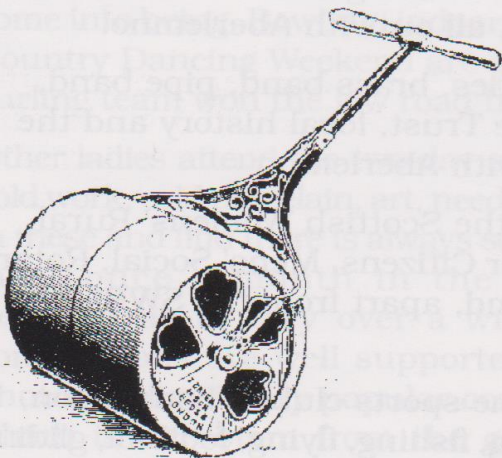
e. A few specialised - spinners, pigeon fanciers, Riding for the Disabled, Guide Dogs for the Blind and Arthritis Care.

Of those who did not belong to a club, twelve were retired and twenty-one had children, most of them very young.

Apart from the clubs, the hobbies and interests of the residents of Aberlemno are awe inspiring in their diversity. Gardening, knitting, sewing, walking, reading, T.V and other mundane activities are, of course, enjoyed as they are everywhere else. Sports of all descriptions are also popular, among the retired as well as the younger ones; golf, curling and dancing being particularly notable in this respect. Among the more unusual were clay pigeon shooting, trampolining, motor cycle racing, weight lifting, snow boarding and water aerobics.

Living in the country allows interests such as bee-keeping, sheep breeding, breeding and showing ponies as well as horse and pony riding to be indulged in. Others were interested in car restoration and renovation, steam engines, vintage tractors and classic lorries. Teddy bears, hat pins and ceramics are collected. Photography, drawing and water colouring are other leisure pursuits.

Voluntary work is a feature of the parish - special constables, Save the Children, stroke club, conservation, Access for the Disabled and voluntary work for older people. An important and valuable activity by one member of the parish, which was discontinued during this Millennium year, was Search and Rescue. After taking part in hundreds of rescues, his dog, the 3rd that he has had, became too old and had to retire and because of the length of time needed to train a dog for Search and Rescue, the member retired too.



The open countryside, relatively unpolluted by street lamps, also allows an interest in astronomy to be followed.

Of the households visited only six stated that they had no hobbies or interests at all, some with young children, one retired, one commuting to Aberdeen. As for the rest, their time is well taken up.

E.C.



## **Aberlemno Community Council**

The Aberlemno Community Council was set up in 1977 as a body which could facilitate the flow of information from Angus District Council to the people of Aberlemno and vice versa. It still carries out this function with Angus Council and in 2000 the boundary of the community council's activities was extended to include the areas of Nether Careston, Kintrockat, Kinnaird Park and Castle, and Farnell, although as yet we have no representative members from these areas.

In 1977 one of the first subjects discussed was whether the Aberlemno Standing Stones should be moved under cover and this item is still on the agenda today! Other subjects under consideration during 2000 were, Tayside Acute Health Services Review, Care in the Community, Safety improvements to Balgavies Toll cross roads, and the creation of Angus Community Learning Strategy.

The Community Council has sponsored both the Millennium Celebration, and this, the Aberlemno Chronicle, and has been responsible for obtaining the lottery funding for these events and productions.

Over the years the chairmen and members of the Community Council have changed, but two of our current office bearers were honoured by Angus Council for having held office for twenty years. Dr. Cyril Cohen and Mrs. Christine Allan have been Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer respectively for twenty-three years and deserve the thanks of the community in Aberlemno for this sterling service.

During these twenty three years Dr. Cohen has regularly written a report on the Community Council and its activities, which is published in the Aberlemno Parish Letter, and always finishes his report on a lighter note. I quote the last joke in the report for 2000, the year of the Sydney Olympics

“ Did you hear about the world's worst Athlete? He ran a bath and came in second!”

Fortunately, Cyril's (and his colleagues') work for the community has always been much better than his taste in jokes!

**H.J.**



## Shopping Habits

The day once was, when the inhabitant of Aberlemno could find his every requirement within the bounds of the parish. Tailors abounded, as did cobblers and many other trades.

In the more recent past, vans travelled the district selling almost every sort of necessity, including needles, if not anchors (commodities not much needed in Aberlemno). The Aberlemno parishioner of today, however, being more mobile, travels out of the area to make nearly all purchases.

Our survey indicated that three quarters of our population gravitates towards Forfar for groceries and general shopping, most of the rest going to Brechin. It might be expected that, with increased car ownership and the "pull" of cities and their chain stores, Dundee would be the natural centre for other kinds of shopping. This is indeed the case, but only just. In fact, for clothes and footwear, almost as many people stay in Forfar as go to Dundee. Others visit the nearby towns of Arbroath, Montrose and Brechin as well as going further afield to Aberdeen, Perth and even to Edinburgh and Glasgow.

For specialist shopping, it is clear that people in Aberlemno see Dundee as the place to go. More than half the respondents buy special items in Dundee, and yet it is also clear that a surprisingly large number feel no need to go beyond Forfar.

Mobile shops have almost vanished from the area, but there are still some (for example, *three* Arbroath fish vans) which are supported by many local residents. At the other extreme, we are now into the age of Internet shopping and a whole new range of possibilities has opened up to us. Aberlemno folk (a few) buy items through the Internet, while others favour the more traditional mail order catalogue.

The year 2000 sees many small towns struggling to preserve a range of facilities, shops and services in the face of heavy competition from the bigger towns and cities. None of our local towns has the range of shops that were present twenty-five years ago, and Internet business may well be, as some would suggest, the shopping of the future. Nevertheless, the people of Aberlemno exhibit considerable loyalty to their local towns. May they continue to do so.

H.G.



## Melgund Castle

It was more by chance than design that Melgund Castle was made partially habitable in the millennium year. If circumstances had been otherwise it might have been finished a few years earlier.

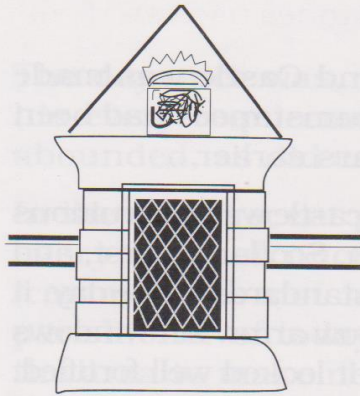
Purchased from the present Lord Minto in 1989, the castle was in a ruinous state. It was built in 1543 by a prince of the church, Scotland's first, and until recently, only cardinal, David Beaton. By the standards of the day, it was very luxurious. With the usual gun loops, narrow arrow slit windows on the ground level and the thick walls, externally it looked well fortified, but in reality it was only defensible against marauders, not armies. Inside it was another story, with wide stairs, well-proportioned rooms, and all the public chambers on the first floor level. It was a domestic residence, the private secular palace of one of the wealthiest and most influential men of his time. It seemed to my wife and myself that it would, if reinstated, make a good home in the late C20th.

Having purchased the building and some land from our farming neighbours, an Edinburgh-based architect was employed and negotiations started with Historic Scotland. Melgund was a Grade B listed building, and was subsequently upgraded to Grade A. It was decided to reinstate only the tower and part of the ground floor. Four phases were identified. The first, an archeological dig, the second, the consolidation of the fabric not to be reinstated, the third, repair to the tower, and the fourth, the reinstatement of the kitchen, cellars and lobby.

The archeological dig was undertaken during the summer months during the early 90's and revealed mostly foundations and demolished walls. The most interesting discoveries were the remains on the north side of an entrance porch, and a flagstoned forecourt surrounded by a carved drainage channel; and on the south side an earth-bonded circular tower, the original use of which remains unknown (an ice house has been suggested). The circular tower is being rebuilt (in dry stone) to hide an oil tank which has been placed inside. Also revealed was the foundation of a barmkin, or curtain wall, running southwards before turning west, which, hopefully, will be rebuilt to form two sides of a walled garden, but this is a task for the future.

To ensure that the ruinous elements of the building were left in a safe condition for the foreseeable future, the second phase, a programme of consolidation, took place. This consisted mostly of repointing walls in mortar. However, damp-proof membranes were installed on exposed wall heads including the roof of the round tower at the north east corner.





The turf and plants which originally covered these areas were carefully replaced to maintain the picturesque effect. The foundation stones supporting the south-east corner had long since fallen away down the den, leaving a precarious-looking overhang of the walls above, apparently supported only by the roots of a giant sycamore tree. This corner was carefully reinstated to our great relief. Two surviving barrel vaults beneath the eastern block were rendered over with cement to make them water tight, and to provide

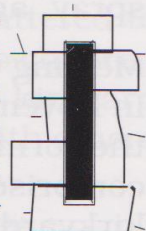
a floor for what was once a magnificent withdrawing room with unusually large, although originally heavily gridded, windows. Finally the great hall chimney stack had its moulded capping stones joined together with strong stainless steel rivets for safety reasons. Atop the chimney was found a lone baluster lying on its side, indicating that once the grand chimney stack was balustraded. Quite an embellishment for a building of this date.

This work completed, phase three was begun in 1998, involving the bulk of the work to make the building habitable, and concentrating on the tower block. It was decided to re-open the original quarries, two of which were within our boundaries and situated in the den. This would ensure a perfect match for the stone, which was a sandstone of a fine pinkish-purple hue and of a hard texture. Most of the rebuilding work used the newly quarried stone in this first year. The stone that was cut and dressed by the masons had an irritating habit of splitting when almost complete, slowing down some parts of the job significantly. A discovery was made that the northern boundary dyke was made up almost entirely of stones robbed from the castle, some of which were carved and moulded, and a complete baluster was found. Many of these lichened and weathered stones were rough cut on one side and were used by the masons for the outer surfaces of the rebuilt areas, such as the cap house and western gable, which were made to look as if they had been intact since the sixteenth century. The time came for the extraction from the quarry of massive stones from which could be cut the stair treads of the spiral stairs. Thirty eight were needed. They had to be cut and dressed, and were 6-7 feet long, 8 inches thick and roughly triangular in shape. Quarrymen were employed to go 40ft below ground. They successfully extracted the stone, only to find that within two weeks of being in the open air they delaminated, cracking mostly horizontally

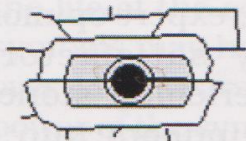


but also vertically, rendering all but one of the stones useless. From that time on, all the stone for dressed work was acquired from a quarry in Derbyshire. The stone was pinker in colour, softer to work and, more importantly, it was flawless. The entire crenellated parapet wall was built in the new stone and represents the single most costly part of the restoration programme. The difference in colour to the remaining stonework can readily be seen.

All the doors, floors, windows and shutters are of seasoned oak. The beams in the floors and roof are of green oak and were installed within three weeks of the trees being felled in private woodlands near Bicester in England. A lozenge-shaped, 5 inch deep oak moulding, based on a design in Holyrood Palace, was fixed to the oak planked ceiling in the tower hall, Cardinal Beaton's private chamber. This gave the room, when combined with the two massive window recesses with their stone seats and moulded stone decoration, a definite cohesion and will now fulfil the function of a drawing room. The great kitchen fireplace with its massive arch was reconstructed in September '98 and the collapsed flue above rebuilt.



Phase four involved the reconstruction of the kitchen barrel vault, and the two adjoining ones, now to be used as a dining room and an office; and the entrance lobby, the smallest barrel vault in the castle - one of nine. The work was successfully finished by mid-2000, but we were unable to move into Melgund until a few days before Christmas. It was initially very strange to sleep as residents in a building, recently ruinous and uninhabited for over two hundred and seventy years, but on Christmas Day 2000, with the surrounding land carpeted with snow, it seemed a most auspicious and seasonal beginning.



My wife and I are indebted to the men who have toiled on the restoration project from the beginning. The masons, joiners, electricians and plumbers, the builders, the architect and contractor, and, of course, Historic Scotland, who have grant-aided the project. However, equally important to us has been the friendliness and constant support of our farming neighbours without which the burden of such an undertaking might not have been bearable. We were delighted that Aberlemno village chose Melgund as the venue for the Millennium celebration. It was a memorable day.

**M. G.**

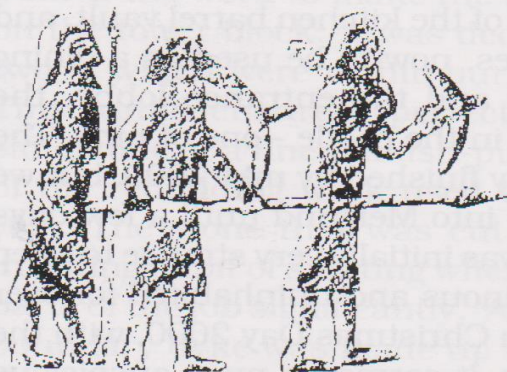


## The Aberlemno Stones

For decades the famed Pictish carved stones of Aberlemno have presented a problem for Historic Scotland (formerly the Ministry of Works) the agency responsible for their care and conservation. The present arrangement of boxing them in autumn and re exposing them in spring, introduced as a temporary measure many years ago, is unsatisfactory and an alternative permanent solution is necessary. For seven months each year, the exposed stones are vulnerable to the damaging effects of the weather and a cocktail of acid rain, salt spray, agrichemicals, birdlime etc.

Meeting with Aberlemno Community Councillors and other residents in November 1995, Historic Scotland unveiled their plans to convert the former byre of the manse to house the stones. The structure comprises part of the row of the outbuildings at the east of the kirkyard.

Following local criticism of these proposals a public meeting was held in March 1996 which was well-attended by a good cross-section of the community. Historic Scotland gave a presentation showing



types of damage to carved stones and the various measures employed in their preservation. While some stones could remain in situ, expert opinion was that the only satisfactory solution for the Aberlemno stones was to move them indoors into a controlled environment, and a model and plans of the byre conversion were shown.

Local opinion in the hall was divided if not confused, but the model clearly showed that the display would be cramped and that the roadside cross-slab was too tall for the building. There were also worries about presentation, interpretation, access and security.

Following the meeting, the Community Council formed a separate body to liaise with appropriate organisations to reach an acceptable solution. The Aberlemno Stones Committee met regularly to discuss the issue, and recommended opposition to the plans, proposing instead a purpose-built structure beside the Village Hall, allowing the stones to be displayed against landscape. Agreement was sought from the landowner, and funding explored.



This proposal was initially rejected by Historic Scotland, but it is now being reconsidered by them in consultation with SET and Angus Council.

If a new building was to be erected, it would be fitting for it to also house the other Aberlemno stones - the cross-slab from Woodrae and the symbol stone from Flemington, one now in Edinburgh the other in Dundee.

The community is now very respectful of their ancient monuments, but it was not always the case - in 1889 someone wrote that 'the glorious sculptured stones of Aberlemno are being fast battered to destruction by the stone throwing of schoolboys'. Aberlemno children are now much better informed and have an image of the kirkyard cross-slab printed on their uniforms. Some of them along with others from Pitkenney and Maison Dieu schools devised and produced the marvellous animated film *The Secret of the Stone* which was shown on television in 1997.

It is clear that the stones attract a steady stream of visitors to Aberlemno, and they still play an important role in the life of the community. The Pictish symbols may have gone out of fashion over 1100 years ago, but the enduring power of the symbol of the Cross is still of particular relevance to today's worshippers at Aberlemno kirk. As part of the Millennium Celebrations, an outdoor service was held around the kirkyard slab in August 2000; that stone was also the starting point of a memorable pilgrimage walk to Glamis on 8 June 1997, to mark the death of St. Columba.

Whatever an individual's response to the stones at Aberlemno, they do form an important focus for the community and it is understandable that any proposal to remove them threatens this age-old relationship. Local concern does not arise from rural conservatism or mere parochialism; the residents of Aberlemno are keenly aware of the national, indeed international, significance of their carved stones, and this almost proprietorial pride should find expression through the direct involvement of the community in deciding the future of these much-cherished monuments.



D.H.



## The People of Aberlemno

As part of the millennium survey, it was decided to compile a record of every person living in the parish in 2000AD. This proved to be slightly more difficult than anticipated. We apologise in advance for any omissions (and there are certain to be some), and we hope that we have respected the wishes of the few people who did not want to be included. The list below is in alphabetical order, which may have jumbled some members of two or more families with the same surnames.

|                    |                     |                       |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Alexander Allison  | Bowman Pamela       | Cooper Norman G.      |
| Alexander Darren   | Bradford Julia      | Crumley Andrew        |
| Alexander Jennifer | Bradford Wayne      | Davidson Frances      |
| Alexander Lyall    | Brinke Hilde        | Davies Isabelle       |
| Alexander Pamela   | Brown Alan          | Davies Jim            |
| Alexander Steven   | Brown Catherine     | Davies Steve          |
| Allan Christine    | Brown Donald        | Derrick Carol R.      |
| Allan Georgina     | Brown Gemma         | Diplexcito Morrice S. |
| Allan Ian          | Brown Joealan       | Donachie William H.   |
| Allan James        | Brown Lee           | Duff Irene            |
| Allan John         | Brown Miriam        | Duff John             |
| Anson Liam         | Brown Morna         | Duff John Jnr.        |
| Anson Nicholas     | Brown Rebecca       | Duff Margaret         |
| Apted Pamela       | Brown Robert        | Duff Stuart           |
| Avern Lyndsay      | Brown William       | Duffy Alison          |
| Avern Nigel        | Bruce Beatrice      | Duffy Claire          |
| Bagnall Andrew     | Bruce Craig         | Duffy Connor I.       |
| Bagnall Barry      | Bruce Keith         | Duffy Emma            |
| Bagnall Lesley     | Bruce Lyall         | Duffy Lisa            |
| Bagnall Pippa      | Bruce Lynda         | Duffy Mari            |
| Barclay Alex       | Bruce William       | Duffy Nyah Rosy       |
| Barclay Harry      | Buchan Catherine    | Duffy Ross            |
| Barclay Harry      | Buchan George       | Duffy Scott           |
| Barclay Lynn       | Buchan John         | Duffy Scott           |
| Barclay Megan      | Buchan June         | Duncan Blair          |
| Barclay Steven     | Buchan Katrina      | Duncan Carly          |
| Batchelor Jim      | Buchan Kenneth      | Duncan David          |
| Batchelor Rosemary | Buchan Timmy        | Duncan Kathleen       |
| Beats George       | Buswell Geoff       | Duncan Paul           |
| Beattie Alison     | Buswell Rita        | Duncan Ross           |
| Beattie Andrew     | Butter David        | Dunn Joan             |
| Beattie Gordon     | Butter Elaine       | Eastman Tina          |
| Beattie Nicola     | Butter Elizabeth J. | Forbes Kathleen       |
| Becke Rev. John    | Butter Nicoll       | Gandy Bruce           |
| Bennet Denise      | Butter Susanna      | Gandy Patricia        |
| Bennet Roger       | Calder Jeannie      | Gibson Elizabeth      |
| Bing Andrew        | Clark Andrew        | Gibson James          |
| Bing Johnny        | Clark Margaret      | Gibson June           |
| Bing Katie         | Cohen Betty         | Gibson Stewart        |
| Bing Zoe           | Cohen Cyril         | Gill James            |
| Bowman Neil        | Cooper Helen        | Gill Moira            |



|                      |                     |                         |
|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Gill Roy             | Jackson Anne        | MacLeod Ruiradh         |
| Gill Sylvia          | Jackson David       | Malcolm John Q.         |
| Gillilan Fiona       | Jackson David       | Manzie Jacquie          |
| Gillilan Kimberley   | Jackson Eileen      | McCall Elspeth B.       |
| Gillilan Leslie      | Jackson Glenn       | McClements Zoe          |
| Gillilan Michael     | Jackson Harold      | McDonagh Kevin          |
| Gillilan Pamela      | Jackson Jodie       | McDonald George         |
| Gourlay Alisdair     | Jackson John        | McDonald Marion         |
| Gourlay Heather      | Jackson John        | McDonald Scott          |
| Gourlay Marjorie     | Jackson Karen       | McGookin Gillian M.     |
| Gourlay Phoebe       | Jackson Lorraine    | McGouldrick Kelly-Leigh |
| Grant Anna D.        | Jackson Margaret I. | McGouldrick Lucy        |
| Grant Anna H.        | Jackson Marie-Anne  | McGouldrick Lynda       |
| Grant David          | Jackson Moira       | McGouldrick Shona       |
| Grant John           | Jackson Rose        | McGouldrick Steve       |
| Gray Andrew          | Jackson William     | McGregor Alexander      |
| Gray Andrew T.       | Jamieson Duncan     | McKay Lynn              |
| Gray Elaine          | Jamieson Linda      | McKell Ian              |
| Gray Irene           | Jessop Susan M.     | McKell Yvonne           |
| Gray Pauline         | Jolly Annie         | McLauchlan Grahame      |
| Green Alan           | Jolly Eric          | McLauchlan Rebecca      |
| Green Evelyn         | Kennedy Isobel      | McLauchlan Richard      |
| Greig John           | Kennedy John        | McLauchlan Rosaly       |
| Greig Rose           | King Alan           | McSheffrey David        |
| Gunn Christopher     | King Brian          | McSheffrey Marie-Claire |
| Henderson Isobel     | King Elma           | Meiklejohn Alexander    |
| Henderson Jacqueline | King Lesley         | Meiklejohn Catherine    |
| Henderson Nigel      | King Sarah          | Meiklejohn Christopher  |
| Henderson Norma      | Kirkton Clare       | Meiklejohn Joan         |
| Henderson Peter      | Kirkton Julia       | Meiklejohn Kelly        |
| Henderson Robert     | Kirkton Paul        | Meiklejohn William      |
| Henderson Sonia      | Kirton Christopher  | Middleton Archibald     |
| Hendry Alyn          | Lamb Cally I.       | Millar May              |
| Hendry James         | Lamb Colin          | Millar May              |
| Hendry Margaret      | Lamb Deborah        | Millar Peter            |
| Hendry Roy           | Lamb Emma M.        | Millar Rena             |
| Henry Alice          | Lamb Irene          | Milne Alan              |
| Henry David          | Lamb Isobel D.      | Milne Alison            |
| Henry Ellen          | Lamb Kevin W.A.     | Milne Alistair          |
| Henry Flora          | Lamb Margaret       | Milne Andrew            |
| Hicks Elizabeth      | Lamb William        | Milne Andrew            |
| Hicks Michael        | Lamb William Jr.    | Milne Angus             |
| Hicks Steven         | Lamb Stephen        | Milne Ben F.            |
| Horsburgh Aileen     | Lashly Elizabeth    | Milne Betty             |
| Horsburgh George     | Lashly Roger        | Milne Cameron           |
| Howe David           | Ledingham Lesley    | Milne Catrina           |
| Howe David           | Ledingham Norman    | Milne Catriona          |
| Howe Lynne           | Livingstone Douglas | Milne David             |
| Howe Murray          | Livingstone Zak     | Milne Lynsay            |
| Howe Phyllis         | MacLeod Lachlan     | Milne Marian            |
| Howe Robert          | MacLeod Mandy       | Milne Matthew           |
| Howe Sarah           | MacLeod Michael     | Milne Michael D.        |



|                     |                      |                   |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Milne Morgan        | Sampson Maud         | Thomson John      |
| Milne Robert        | Sampson Shirley      | Thomson Ronald    |
| Milne Ross          | Sampson Susanna      | Thomson Sheila    |
| Mitchell Elizabeth  | Sampson Thomas B.    | Tingle Margery    |
| Mitchell James      | Sampson Thomas S.    | Tingle Roger      |
| Mitchell James Jnr. | Shillitto Janet E.   | Tingle William J. |
| Morrison James      | Simmonds Raymond     | Torrie Isaac      |
| Morrison Mary       | Simpson George       | Torrie Lilian     |
| Mungall Muriel      | Simpson Marion       | Torrie Matthew    |
| Murray Andrew       | Smith Alexandra      | Torrie Richard    |
| Murray Charles      | Smith George         | Trainer Beth      |
| Murray David        | Smith George         | Trainer Lisa      |
| Murray David        | Smith John           | Trainer Neville   |
| Murray Dorothy      | Spence Alexander     | Trainer Sarah     |
| Murray Margaret     | Spence Anna          | Turner Alan       |
| Murray Robert       | Spence Anne          | Turner Evelyn     |
| Murray Sandy        | Spence Christine     | Turner Henry      |
| Newsam Kenny        | Spence Kaitlin       | Turner James      |
| Norsworthy Joanna   | Spence Marie E.      | Turner Thomas     |
| Norsworthy Robert   | Spence Sandy         | Walker Alexander  |
| O'Connor Daniel     | Stalker George P.S.  | Walker Janice     |
| O'Connor Darren     | Steel Anne           | Walker Mark       |
| O'Connor David      | Steel Christine      | Waller Alexander  |
| O'Connor Donna      | Steel Isobel         | Waller Christine  |
| O'Connor Sarah      | Steel James          | Waller Georgina   |
| Ogilvie Stewart     | Steel John           | Waller Jack       |
| Pope Carol          | Stewart Agnes        | Waller Scott      |
| Pope Peter          | Stewart Alan         | Watt James        |
| Ramsay Alan         | Stewart Alistair     | Webster Frances   |
| Ramsay Calum        | Stewart Allan        | Webster James     |
| Ramsay Elizabeth    | Stewart Brian        | Weir Catherine    |
| Ramsay Helen        | Stewart Elizabeth    | Weir Kate         |
| Ramsay Laura        | Stewart Fiona J.     | White Iona        |
| Ramsay Lyall        | Stewart Garry        | White John        |
| Ramsay Morag        | Stewart Gordon       | White Kevin W.    |
| Ramsay Neil         | Stewart Graham       | White Matilda     |
| Ramsay Sarah        | Stewart Heather A.   | White Patrick     |
| Richardson Keith    | Stewart James        | White Ruth        |
| Riley Barbara       | Stewart Janet        | Wilson Caroline   |
| Robb David Andrew   | Stewart Jeanette     | Wilson Colin L.   |
| Robb James          | Stewart John         | Wilson Emily      |
| Robb Mary           | Stewart John         | Wilson Hamish     |
| Robb William        | Stewart Kirsty J. E. | Wilson Ian        |
| Robertson Allan     | Stewart Linzi        | Wilson Kirsty L.  |
| Robertson Julie     | Stewart Michael      | Wilson Sally      |
| Robertson Malcolm   | Stewart Wayne        | Young Olive       |
| Rogers Marion       | Stewart Wendy        | Young Ronald      |
| Russell Rev. A.C.   | Stewart William      |                   |
| Ruxton Katherine    | Sturrock Kari        |                   |
| Sampson Eleanor     | Swan Margaret        |                   |
| Sampson Georgina    | Swan William         |                   |
| Sampson John        | Symns Joanne L.      |                   |



# ABERLEMNO

AT THE HEART OF ANGUS

