

# Rotas

COFFEE leader Yvonne Burnett

February 03 Rob Clyde

## Readers

February 10 Mairianna Clyde

February 17 Helen Willoughby

February 24 Elizabeth Hogg

February 03 Anna Annen Pearson

## Flowers

February 10 Rose Kumbanga

February 17 Mairianna Clyde

February 24 Anna Annen Pearson

February 03 Anna Annen Pearson

## Door

February 10 Elizabeth MacGregor

February 17 Elizabeth MacGregor

February 24 Daphne Paton

February 03 David Donald

## Sound

February 10 Lesley Donald

February 17 Max Allan

February 25 David Donald

Cover: Bride of the Isles,  
Greg Tricker.

Editor:  
Mairianna Clyde  
[mbclyde1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mbclyde1@hotmail.co.uk)

Church office:  
15 Chamberlain Road  
Edinburgh  
EH10 4DH  
0131 447 3152  
[churchoffice.muc@gmail.com](mailto:churchoffice.muc@gmail.com)

Rev. Steven Manders:  
[stevenmmanders@gmail.com](mailto:stevenmmanders@gmail.com)  
0131 447 7943  
0780 847 6733

Copyright Licence 817955  
Scottish Charity No. 015552



# Candlemas

The beginning of February is Candlemas, believed to be when, forty days after Jesus' birth Mary presented Him to God at the Temple in Jerusalem and the elderly Simeon held Him in his arms and proclaimed that he would be a light for the Gentiles (Luke 2:32). From the fifth century Christians in Jerusalem began lighting candles in celebration of this event. Candlemas is therefore a celebration of light and new life in the Christian calendar. In parts of Europe particularly Ireland and Scotland it has become associated with the cult of St Brigid, the sixth century Abbess of Kildare.

The name Brigid means 'exalted' and was the name given to the celebrated Abbess of Kildare, the daughter of a minor Irish king and a slave who established a large religious foundation in Kildare before her death around 525. By 650 there was a widespread memory in Ireland of an Abbess named Brigid. A powerful personality, many are the stories that are told about her charisma such as her supernatural powers to heal lepers and her care for the poor.

According to one 'life' when Mael, the bishop of Ardagh was blessing her, he became so overwhelmed by the grace of God that he mistakenly read from the wrong text and accidentally consecrated her with episcopal orders so she can be said to be the first (and so far, only) female bishop in these British Isles!

Her cult quickly spread to Scotland carried by Celtic monks and many other parts of Europe such as Germany and Belgium. In Scotland her emblems were the dandelion and the lamb. A cloth, said to be her mantle, is in the cathedral of Bruges. There are many places in Scotland which bear witness to her following such as the many places called Kilbride, meaning a 'cille' or church or monk's habitation devoted to Bride. Bride still attracts a devotional following today that has inspired a modern religious artist named Greg Tricker who in turn was much admired by Sister Wendy, the celebrated art historian and presenter of popular 1990s BBC documentaries on the history of art such as *Sister Wendy's Odyssey*.



# February events

February 06 **Wednesday**. Prayers for the Parish 5 pm

February 07 **Thursday**. Coffee Morning 10.30 – 12.00 pm  
Small hall

February 13 **Wednesday**. Prayers for the Parish 5 pm

February 14 **Thursday**. Book Group 7 pm centre vestibule

February 18 **Monday**. Kirk Session 7.30 pm centre vestibule

February 20 **Wednesday**. Joint Bible Study with Morlich  
House 2-3.30 pm. Prayers for the Parish 5 pm

February 21 **Thursday**. Coffee Morning 10.30 – 12.00 pm  
small hall

February 27 **Wednesday**. Prayers for the Parish 5 pm

February 28 **Thursday**. Book Group 7 pm centre vestibule

## John Ruskin Exhibition

*Drawing 'true to nature' as prayer?*

John Ruskin *'The Power of Seeing'* bi-centenary exhibition 26<sup>th</sup> January – 22<sup>nd</sup> April, at Two Temple Place, London.



On a visit to London recently I saw the Ruskin exhibition at Two Temple Place, which transformed my view of this 19<sup>th</sup> century figure. Ruskin is best known as an art critic. I'd always thought of him as a pompous, opinionated eccentric but learned that though undoubtedly opinionated, he was also regarded as the most brilliant art critic ever to write in the English language whose powers of vivid descriptive observation have never been surpassed. He was a polymath; an artist, geologist and natural scientist as well as art critic, teacher and lecturer and wrote copiously on many subjects both scientific and literary.

He was also incredibly generous and supported and encouraged many struggling artists at all levels of ability. What seemed to matter to him was less skill as sincerity. The son of

deeply Evangelical parents (his mother wanted him to be a clergyman) born in the Romantic era of Wordsworth and Turner, it is clear that Ruskin saw drawing from nature and the intense scrutiny of the natural world evident in his detailed drawings as a form of devotional and meditative prayer, a celebration of Creation that stemmed from his deep Christian faith. The object of drawing 'true to nature' in this intense way was not so much to produce a work of art as a spiritual exercise to open one's eyes to the sheer majesty and infinite intricacy of God's work and to witness it in some direct sense. No object was too tiny or too large to draw, too humble or too majestic, from the Mer de Glace to the most intricate mosses, lichens and ferns. He saw wonder everywhere in nature and wanted to awaken the

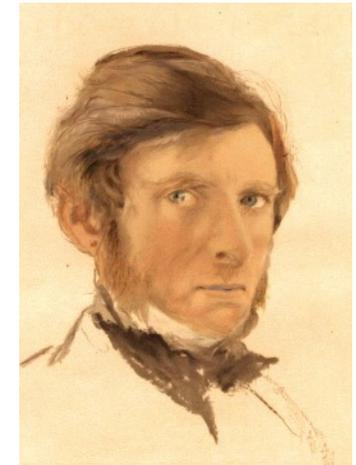
dulled senses of the poor working classes brutalised by 19<sup>th</sup> century industrialisation.

A prominent social critic, he railed against capitalism and was a notable philanthropist - giving away most of his £120,000 inheritance (equivalent to £6 million today). He was a key influence on Gandhi who claimed that reading his political tract *Unto this Last* changed the course of his life.

He once famously wrote, *'There is no wealth but life'*. His ecological awareness and concerns for the protection of nature are very contemporary, striking a note with the modern Eco-Christian theology movement of 'Creation Care'. Ruskin was particularly fascinated by clouds, and studied and drew them over his long life. He lived from 1819 to 1900, drawing and observing all the while. In the 1880s he published a paper which claimed that industrial pollution was causing climate change because he had noticed the climate becoming colder and the skies and clouds darker. Clouds were changing colour and shape. He was mocked at the time but subsequent studies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have revealed that he was right. His meticulous observations of cloud formations over a long life had recorded subtle changes occurring over decades which most people had simply not noticed.

It struck me that Ruskin was right to urge people to look more intensely at the natural world for how many of us are actually awake? What is life if not consciousness and what kind of life is it to be dulled in our most developed and precious sense – sight? The nexus between art and religion, between

seeing and witnessing God and trying to capture His essence directly from His creation in one's own hands, however little skill one has, has always been very close. When Picasso saw the cave paintings at Lascaux of lively animals leaping, intently, deftly and lovingly observed, he proclaimed, 'We have learned nothing'. Visiting the exhibition, the idea of drawing nature as a spiritual exercise and form of religious devotion struck me with some force. – Editor.



*Opposite page:* Fast sketch of withered oak leaves, 1879, John Ruskin.

*Above:* Self-portrait aged 42.

*Below:* Cave painting of a wild horse from the Lascaux caves, France, estimated to be 17,000 years old.



## We Remember

### Joyce Ross (1930-2018)



It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Joyce, a long-time member whose funeral was last month. Joyce Elder married Andrew Ross (1931-2008) in 1953, the Malawi missionary, church historian and Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh University, whom she met when they were both history students at Edinburgh. They would have 45 happy years and five children together living and working across several continents, firstly in the black neighbourhood of East Harlem then in Africa after Andrew was ordained to the ministry in 1958 serving the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa in Malawi (then Nyasaland). Both became active in the independence movement for democratic reform and social justice. There is a family story that during the struggles, visiting some African friends, a young couple who had been imprisoned with their baby, Joyce left her silver cross pram with them as they were in greater need of it for their baby because there was no cot for it in the prison. She,

Andrew and baby Jocelyn returned from the visit on foot. Though Andrew served as chairman of the Lands Tribunal in Nyasaland after independence, they became increasingly disturbed by the oppressive regime of Hastings Banda and were forced to flee in May 1965, tragically leaving behind the grave of Jocelyn who had been killed earlier in a road accident. Returning to Edinburgh they raised their four remaining children and Joyce became a much-loved special needs teacher at Gogarburn Hospital. The Ross family have had a long association with MUC and we are grateful for their faithful fellowship over many years. You are in our thoughts.

### Jenn Cowan (1931 - 2018)

Jenn's life was celebrated on 19<sup>th</sup> January at Mortonhall. Though housebound for some years in her lovely flat at Varrich House, Churchill, she managed a visit to MUC last Easter assisted by carers and was interested in all that was going on even though unable to attend often. She was from a colonial family, born and brought up in India, with a wonderful sense of humour and great capacity for friendship across generations. Jenn was blessed in her later years with visits from her two sons, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren from her first marriage to Sandy and from her step-children from her second marriage, to Brigadier Colin Cowan with whom she found great happiness after the great blow of losing Sandy. We shall miss her and our loving thoughts go out to all her extended family.

### Congregational meeting

The well-attended Congregational Meeting held in the centre vestibule on 20<sup>th</sup> January to discuss the new Model Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) constitution agreed by an overwhelming majority that we should propose some changes to par. 55 to 58 dealing with the dissolution of the charity so as to protect our local ownership. Our property and assets are legally ours, not the denominations' to which we are affiliated, which is an unusual situation. Whilst we hope we will never be in a situation of ever facing dissolution, it is important to protect ourselves from potential denominational decisions on this. The ACTS committee which drew up the Model LEP constitution probably never anticipated local ownership as a factor in drawing it up and assumed that churches would be denominationally owned. Par. 55 – 58 however gives the effective control to wind up and assume inheritance of the assets to the denominations whilst the local congregation will only be 'consulted'. A further concern is that the National Sponsoring Body for LEPs, ACTS, (which stands for Action for Churches Together in Scotland) is now dissolved though it is hoped another will soon replace it. The Constitutional committee now headed by David Donald has come up with some proposals. The revised document will now go to the denominations for consideration and if accepted will then go to OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator) for approval.

### Fairtrade Fortnight

25<sup>th</sup> February - 10<sup>th</sup> March



FAIRTRADE

### Bakers needed!

This year instead of the Fairtrade Breakfast Maggie and Elizabeth H propose Fairtrade coffee refreshments after service on 3<sup>rd</sup> March with cake made from Fairtrade ingredients with a focus on *chocolate!!* (60% of cocoa is produced in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire). There will also be a stall selling Fairtrade goods. If you would like to help with baking goodies please see Maggie or Elizabeth. All proceeds to Fairtrade.

### Kids' Holiday Club



Summer is not that far off... (hard to believe!) So time to start planning. Rev. Neil of Cornerstone hopes to hold a kid's holiday club for local kids at MUC from 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> August, if we can find the volunteers. Activities (games, crafts, stories) would take place outdoors in the garden and main hall. There might be a theme – pirates, jungles – but it would be linked somehow to bible stories. Anyone interested in helping to volunteer please see Steven or Rob.

**Congregational Lunch**  
Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March Manse 1pm  
ALL WELCOME