

Moncur Memorial Church
Stronsay, Orkney
(0.5 FTE Reviewable Charge)
Parish Profile

26th August 2020

Dear Reader,

Our Parish Profile shown on the following pages was prepared before Lockdown on 23rd March due to COVID 19. All the Church activities and public events detailed below are on hold at the moment but we hope and pray that most of these will once again be part of our island life once we return to a 'new' normal and the new challenges that will await.

From the time we entered Lockdown until Scott Daily, our locum minister, returned home to America at the end of May, Scott held an online service for us every Sunday. Since then, and with grateful thanks to our Interim Moderator Julia Meason, Stronsay has joined in with Julia's charge of Kirkwall East linked with Shapinsay to share in an online service each week.

At the time of writing, although restrictions have eased, we had previously taken the difficult decision that the Church should remain closed for the time being. As restrictions continue to ease, we hope to review this decision in September and, I would hope, move a little nearer to being able to make use of the building again. We look forward in the not too distant future to join together in worshipping the Lord there once again, even if at a social distance!

Kind regards,

Elsie Dennison
Clerk to the Nominating Committee

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A Single Parish—A Unique Opportunity



It is a rare thing these days to find a parish situation that encourages and allows a minister to really concentrate on *ministry* (and not simply management). Stronsay offers the chance to live among, serve alongside, participate in and really get to know a single community, rather than having to divide up time, energy and attention among several districts. Moncur Memorial Church presents a unique opportunity for a minister both to slow things down and to get more fully stuck in—to be a minister in

fresh new ways. We are a congregation ready to welcome you—whether you're just starting out and need a chance to find your feet, or whether you've been serving for years and are ready for new challenges. As you'll read below, the community of Stronsay is a great place to call home—whether you're on your own or have a partner; whether you have school-age children or no children at all; whether you are younger or older or anywhere in between. Are you ready for something different? Something unique? Something you can't find just anywhere? Then we invite you to read on and discover more about our island parish.

Our Church –The People and Organisations

The Congregation

Almost every Sunday since the charge became vacant in 2011 a worship service has been held in the Church at 11.00 a.m., with an average attendance of around twenty-five. The only exceptions have been a few occasions when prevented by severe weather or power cuts. This demonstrates the importance we place on gathering together to be the Church. Communion services are customarily held about four times a year and there are occasional praise services using Sankey hymns, Mission Praise and choruses.

We are fortunate in having several members of the congregation who have faithfully taken services throughout the vacancy. Others, including children, are willing to read or lead prayers and we also have an accomplished and dedicated organist. Members of the Sunday Club also take an occasional part in weekly worship and hold their own church service once a year. We have also been blessed by having the services of Locum Ministers and other preachers on occasion.

The Kirk Session numbers six, with a congregational board of twelve. There are forty-seven communicant members, with a further ten adherents, who take an active part in our church. In addition to their normal visits, elders visit all households in the island, whether members or not, just before Christmas, bringing a Christmas Greetings message from the Church. About half the congregation are from outside Orkney and have come from a variety of church backgrounds. This diversity is reflected through acceptance and mutual respect in our worship and life as we all join in fellowship together. The church has its own website hosted by an innovative Orkney-wide community project at www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/STRONSAYKIRK/

The Sunday Club



There is a small Sunday Club which runs from March to June, and then August up to Christmas, with 6 to 8 children aged from three to thirteen coming along each Sunday. The children play an active role in the earlier part of the service in the church and then meet in the hall later. The programme currently in use is based on Scripture Union's SALT materials. When the Sunday Club is taking a break there is a creche available for the younger children.

Other activities

Annual activities include Christian Aid Sunday, Harvest Thanksgiving, Remembrance service at the War Memorial, a Carols by candlelight service and a Watchnight service. A handicraft group meet monthly in the Church Hall and a Community Library has recently been established, also in the Church Hall.



As another outreach event in 2018, members of the community helped the congregation to decorate the Church to help commemorate the centenary of Armistice Day. Biographies of the Stronsay men who had fallen in the Great War were on display, life size silhouettes of soldiers of the time were in place and wreaths and a wooden cross were made but by far the most inspiring display was the fall of poppies from the stained glass window of the Good Shepherd. There were about 2,300 hand-crafted poppies in this display, with poppies elsewhere in the Church taking the total to over 3,000!

Our Church - the buildings

The Moncur Memorial Church, which was funded by a bequest from Alexander Moncur in memory of a previous minister of the parish, was built in 1955, and is a large and beautiful building. There is a connected hall and a vestry, which are both used by the various church organisations. The buildings are all heated by an oil-fired central heating system installed as our Millennium project in 2000. The



seating in the church and the hall are all individual chairs, making these worship areas fully flexible. For example, our Maundy Thursday service seats everyone around a long table to remember the Last Supper, and our Watchnight service allows for a group of around twenty musicians to gather in the front of the sanctuary and for members of the community to occupy the rest of the building.

The Manse, built in the church grounds in the 1880s, comprises on the ground floor: kitchen, laundry, storage space, toilet, dining/living room and study with small adjoining library. On the first floor: sitting room, 3 bedrooms and bathroom. The windows are double-glazed. In 2018, an extensive renovation of the building was carried out, with all walls being insulated to a high standard and additional insulation added to the roof space. A new eco-friendly oil-fired boiler was installed to provide central heating to all rooms and the whole building was redecorated. New carpets were fitted to all bedrooms, upper landings and stairs and laminate flooring laid in downstairs rooms and hallway. There is a car garage, a small outhouse, a large greenhouse and a fairly large mature garden bounded by a dry-stone wall.



Both the Church and the Manse have been well-maintained over the years, and a recent Presbytery property inspection found all the property to be in good repair. There is an on-going programme of regular maintenance and decoration.

The financial situation

We are in a sound financial state, and have always been well-able to meet our commitments. When fundraising drives have been held (e.g. for Manse improvements, for our Church central heating, and for our new Church organ), the congregation, and indeed the whole island community, have responded well. We have a significant level of endowment income and also general fund and fabric fund income generated by trust funds set up from bequests. We have a healthy fabric fund, and the property has always been well-kept and maintained. An annual “Bring and Buy” sale and social evening is held in the Community Centre in May and is well-supported by the wider community. A feature these last number of years has been a sale of bedding plants which has proved to be very popular.

The Island of Stronsay

Stronsay is situated in the northern half of the group of Orkney Islands.

This flat and fertile island measures about seven miles by five at its widest points and is distinguished by three large bays which give it its unique shape. There are also five small islands, or holms, included in the parish, one of which is inhabited for part of the year by the owner. Situated close to the harbour lies Papa Stronsay, another of these small islands, where a fairly recently constructed monastery is home to a small number of Roman Catholic monks – The Sons of the Most Holy Redeemer.



Although relatively small, Stronsay has many of the facilities you would expect to find in a small town. The population of the island is about 300, with more than half of this population coming from outside Orkney. The Stronsay community has a good mixture of ages ranging from couples with young families to elderly retired people. The main occupation is beef and sheep farming, and there is also a small but thriving lobster and crab fishing industry. The community in Stronsay are also

making good use of wind/renewable energy developments, and the community-led Stronsay Development Trust erected a community wind turbine in 2011 to help provide income for the voluntary sector on the island. This money is now being utilised to good effect. The Trust recently erected a number of small business/industrial units to give much-needed employment opportunities to budding entrepreneurs.



Education - Our School



The recently upgraded and extremely well-equipped junior high school caters for children from Nursery right through to Secondary Four. At present, there are five Nursery children, twenty-seven Primary children and twelve pupils in the Secondary department where a wide range of academic courses and some vocational courses are available.

Children from Nursery through to Secondary follow the “Curriculum for Excellence”, with senior pupils participating in the new national awards scheme. In addition to seven resident teachers, visiting specialist teachers of P.E., Music, Art, Social Subjects and French fly in each week. Over and above the standard subjects, there is currently in-school tuition for fiddle, harp, brass, piano and accordion. Pupils wishing to attend further education at school in Kirkwall are accommodated free of charge in Halls of Residence, returning home each weekend. For all the latest news about our school please see the [Stronsay School blog](#)



A varied selection of ‘After School Clubs’ take place depending on the season and pupil interest. Current clubs include STEM (science), films and football.

There is also an opportunity for local adults to further their education by means of afternoon or evening courses in some subjects, either by local tutors or by a video link with establishments and tutors further afield such as [Orkney](#)

[College](#) (part of the University of the Highlands and Islands) where courses up to degree and postgraduate degree level are available.

The Playgroup

Playgroup is held in the Community Centre on Friday afternoons during term time. This is organised by the parents themselves and is for children up to school age.

Transport



A roll-on / roll-off ferry makes a return journey from Stronsay via Eday to Kirkwall, Orkney's main business centre, six days a week throughout the year, this crossing taking about two hours. During the summer there are additional sailings, including Sunday trips to other islands.

In addition, Stronsay is connected by air

to Kirkwall by an eight-seater Islander aircraft making the eight minute journey twice daily six days a week. Both the inter-island ferries and plane are heavily discounted for island residents. There is also an excellent air service between Kirkwall and the main Scottish airports, also discounted for isles residents.



There are first-class ferry links between the Orkney mainland and the Scottish mainland, with roll on/roll off connections to Gills Bay and Scrabster in Caithness and a roll on/roll off link with Aberdeen, making it quite possible to leave Stronsay in the morning and to be in the Central Belt by mid-evening. There is also a short ferry crossing from Orkney to John o' Groats for foot passengers during the summer months, with an onward bus connection.

Facilities available

Shopping

There is a Post Office/grocer's shop/general store, a grocer/butcher/general merchant/garage/fuel pumps/bottled gas supplier, a café/takeaway/hostel, a hotel/pub and B&B accommodation.

Banking

The Royal Bank of Scotland has a full banking service available on the island once a week.

Haulage

A local haulier operates an excellent daily service between Kirkwall and Stronsay, carrying everything the island needs from small parcels to large machinery to livestock.

Eating out

The local hotel provides evening meals to sit in or take away. The recently refurbished Fish Mart café is open daily and provides a range of meals, snacks and home bakes. Attached to the café is an excellent hostel with four en-suite rooms which can sleep up to ten in total and in addition one of the B&Bs will provide pre-booked lunches and evening meals.

Healthcare

A doctor and two nurses are resident on the island, with the doctor also dispensing prescriptions. Anyone requiring emergency treatment is flown by air ambulance to hospital in Kirkwall. 'Care in the Community' also works well in Stronsay with an excellent caring service enabling our older or infirm residents to maintain their place in the community as long as physically possible.

Mobile Library

An extremely well-stocked mobile Orkney Library van visits the island once every two months.

Community Library

As a recent outreach project, members of the Church sought and received grant funding to set up a small Community Library in the Church Hall for use in periods when the Mobile Library van doesn't call. In addition to a 'lending library' it is also used as a social event with teas and coffees provided and is proving to be very successful. This was originally set up to be open on alternate months when the Mobile Library didn't call but, due to popular demand, is now open once a month.

Broadband

Although there is definitely scope for improvement of speed, the island has good, reliable broadband capability, which allows for networking, internet shopping and for remote working, which some on the island choose to do.



Play Areas

There is a small play area in Whitehall Village and a newly refurbished and very well-equipped play area close to the Community Centre.

Leisure

Some of the organised activities in the community include:

Badminton Club – Held weekly throughout the winter in the School Hall.

Community Centre – Next door to the school, the Community Centre is where many of the island events and meetings are held. Attached to the main hall are a smaller hall and two community rooms. A pool table is available for hire in one of the rooms.

Community Greenhouse – This is an innovative island project where a large community greenhouse has been erected on land leased from the church. Small plots within the greenhouse are rented to individuals or groups to cultivate and grow what they wish, and there is also a social area for having the obligatory cup of tea and a natter! A sheltered area is also provided outside for relaxation, picnics or simply enjoying a well-earned rest. Leaders and children of the Sunday Club have also used part of this area for setting up a 'Bible Garden' complete with biblically themed plants.



Companions – This is a weekly social afternoon for the over-50s. Their programme is fairly relaxed and informal, usually just a chat and a cup of tea.

Crafting – The 'Craftship Enterprise' visitor centre offers crafting workshops on a broad range of skills and a wide variety of crafting materials are readily available to purchase. There is a strong crafting community in Stronsay and 'table-top' craft displays and sales are held three times a year where local crafters come along to display their goods.

Drama Group – Following on from two very successful community pantomimes, a new Drama Group has been set up to raise money to buy extra equipment and to enable further drama productions.



Healthy Living Centre – Opened in 2009, there is a very well equipped Healthy Living Centre attached to the school where most of the usual gym equipment and trained fitness advisers are available. It is open for a time four days a week and can also be used outside the normal opening hours using the 'buddy' system.



Heritage Centre

Opened in 2019, Stronsay's Heritage Centre has an array of artefacts, many relating to the days of the herring fishing, and a large and varied selection of written records and reference material pertaining to Stronsay.

Musicality – A recent addition to Stronsay’s musical tradition, Musicality is an informal group open to all with a desire to play, regardless of which instrument they favour, and the group is now making the occasional public appearance as they grow in confidence and move from strength to strength.

Stronsay Stitches - Meeting monthly in the Church Hall, a very informal gathering of islanders to sew, knit, do other handicrafts or just have a natter. Following on from this, a small group meets for instruction on learning how to spin.

Silver Darlings – This is a musical group open to all budding or accomplished musicians of all ages and abilities who play basically for their own pleasure, but also regularly perform at local events and have released three CDs.



Sports Club – Now run under the banner of the Community Association, the club organises and runs football and netball through the summer, with visits to and from other clubs to play friendlies and ‘cup’ games and also an annual ‘North Isles Sports Day’ where athletes and spectators from most of Orkney’s North Isles meet on one island for a day of sports and social interaction.

Swimming Pool – attached to the school is a fifteen-metre pool that is open to the public two nights a week and on Saturday afternoons, with additional weekly ‘swim club’ sessions for school children. In addition, it is also possible for anyone to hire the pool for ‘pool parties’, individual groups etc.

Women’s Institute - The local branch of the WI is open to all ladies and girls aged 11 and over and meets monthly for talks, demonstrations, competitions etc. Occasional meetings of ‘general interest’ are open to everyone.

There are also numerous fund-raising and social events organised by the various organisations in the island such as: sales, dances, darts nights, card nights, quiz nights and concerts. For more information on what is happening on Stronsay please check out www.stronsaylimpet.co.uk which takes you to the online version of Stronsay’s own little community newspaper. Published monthly, this contains reports of past events, notice of forthcoming events, short stories, poetry and articles of local interest in addition to other useful local information.



Stronsay is a bird-watcher's paradise, with many migrants and rarities, as well as resident birds, to be spotted. There is also a wide and varied selection of flora and fauna. Because of the low light pollution, millions of stars are easily visible on a clear night. The 'Merry Dancers' (Northern Lights) regularly provide a fascinating spectacle in the northern sky. Spectacular sunsets are commonplace. There is sea fishing and free trout fishing in the lochs. There are several easily accessible lovely sandy beaches and also many other places to walk, whether along a gently sloping shoreline to see the seals, or a more spectacular walk along the clifftops.



Orkney has been voted 'the best place to live in Scotland' and is counted among the top of the list of best places for the whole of the UK.

In so many different ways, Stronsay proves this designation to be well-deserved.



What we intend to give you:

Christian fellowship and friendship; prayerful and practical support; a safe and happy environment to live in; a life where the pace is slower and the lifestyle that bit more relaxed. A Church where members of the congregation continue to be involved in worship in various ways, as our different talents allow.

What we hope you are able to give us:

Someone to provide leadership and encourage the talents within our Church; to agree a joint vision for progressing our Church into the future; to be willing to immerse yourself in the wider community; to help us reach out to the community.

SWOT analysis of our Church and Island**Strengths**

A strong core of committed Christians; an ability and willingness to adapt and move with the times; an inbuilt respect and concern for others; a respect built up over the years for the church and what it stands for; excellent healthcare, and educational facilities second to none; a safe and caring environment in which to live and bring up a family; a growing feeling of confidence due to the upturn in farming markets nationally, still the island's backbone; a strong sense of and commitment to 'community'; a healthy integration of incomers into the community and social structure of the island; superb natural habitat and wildlife; a relaxed and crime-free lifestyle.

Weaknesses

A feeling of despondency with regard to the short-term prospects of the church and concern with regard to the longer term; looking back to the 'good old days' rather than being positive today; lack of employment, leading to the loss of young people; cost of travel; feeling of isolation.

Opportunities

To build on our strong foundations, moving into the future with a new leader; to promote, encourage and utilise the talents within our church; for members of the congregation to continue to be involved in worship in various ways, as our different talents allow; for a Minister to become an important part of our beautiful, caring and unique community; to build on the church in the wider community, where so much support is shown for the Church and what it stands for but where many of our parishioners have 'got out of the habit' of attending worship.

Threats

The loss of young people from our church and island; the large number of empty properties and 'holiday homes', leading to a smaller resident population; with the current political climate, a concern as to how our island will be supported in the future.

Our hope for the future is that our Christian community will grow in strength. A new minister will be sincerely welcomed, will be given our earnest prayerful and practical support and be offered our warmest hospitality.

We very much appreciate that this post is not a full time one and will do our very best to ensure that this doesn't become a full time post with a 0.5 salary!!

The Kirk Session has agreed to depart from the Church's practice in relation to human sexuality and the Nominating Committee welcomes interest from all. This reviewable charge offers a 0.5 FTE post based on the C of S minimum stipend scale plus islands allowance of £1566. The stipend for Probationer ministers in Orkney begins at stage three of this scale.

If you wish more details, an informal chat or wish to apply for the charge please contact:

Interim Moderator:

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East Church Manse

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Park of Hunda

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For further information on Stronsay, Orkney and how to get here, you may find the following websites helpful:

www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/STRONSAYKIRK/ Church website

www.stronsaylimpet.co.uk/ Stronsay's community newspaper

<http://www.visitstronsay.com> Stronsay's 'official' website carries a wealth of information for anyone wishing to find out more about the island and its community.

www.visitorkney.com/stronsay/index.asp Stronsay tourism site

www.visitorkney.com/ The official Orkney Tourism site

www.orkney.com/ Information on all aspects of Orkney life

www.northlinkferries.co.uk/ Aberdeen/Kirkwall and Scrabster/Stromness ferries

www.pentlandferries.co.uk/ Gills Bay/St Margaret's Hope ferry

www.orkneyferries.co.uk/ Orkney internal inter-isles ferries

www.loganair.co.uk/reservations/ Details of inter-island plane service