

authorities were needing accommodation to enable Ukrainian family to put down more permanent roots. The government was offering additional payments to encourage hosts to provide accommodation for a minimum of two years and looking in some cases for a more permanent arrangement.

Unfortunately, this was beyond what was possible for the congregation. As indicated earlier, if the congregation is to continue it requires a base for a minister to come and stay. There will be no assistance from the Church of Scotland which is prepared to see the congregation close and so this building becomes vital to the future of Fogo Parish Church.



Fogo Parish Church — vital to its rural community

It also becomes vital to the projects which the Parish Church supports, whether that be the Jeel al Amal School in Bethany where children of all races and faiths come to together to be educated regardless of their backgrounds or their parents' poverty, or supporting Linus Malu, the congregation's partner in Malawi, through whom the congregation has helped more than a dozen small businesses be set up to support broken families without other hope for the future.



Children at Jeel al Amal

The congregation also provides for everyone within its parish offering an open and warm door each day and every day during these cold and worrying days.

Thus the Hen House has now become the Fogo Church House, the base for meetings and social gatherings for everyone until the first of the congregation's visiting ministers arrives in April.



The Sunday morning stroll to Fogo Kirk

Finally there is a future for the congregation — and it started out as an 'I don't know why we are doing this' exercise by Tom and Dane so many years ago!

Tom and Dane would not like this story to be told without recording their gratitude to several people who have been incredibly kind to them.

John Baird, joiner, plumber, painter, electrician and general manager, has supported the project tirelessly, as have Tom Thorburn and Ryan Purves (joiner extraordinaire), Liz and Jim Casey, John and Kirsten Arthur, Ian Sproule, Ann Roberts and Olive Gardiner and many, many others who will all know who they are.

Dave Jones built the units from Howdens into a kitchen with help from Barry Henderson. Our contact at Howdens was Tara Foggon and she was fabulous! Ian Bates laid the stone pathway into the Hen House. Abigail Adams of Northumberland Glass provided us with a replacement window unit for the downstairs bedroom (it had got broken during the restoration) and we got our usual help and generous assistance over several years from Southern Timber and MKM Timber of Berwick and Pearson's of Duns as well as from Abbey St. Bathans Sawmill.

This has been a strange journey for the congregation and particularly for Tom and Dane. They set off with no clear idea of where they were going — **so nothing should be ruled out for the future; and when it becomes possible for us to do more to help our Ukrainian friends we shall certainly jump at it.**



You are always welcome at the Hen House!



# Fogo Kirk News

“where belonging matters”

January, 2023

**A Special Edition to tell you about the ‘Hen House’ and to thank everyone who has been involved in its restoration.**

When the minister and his wife arrived at Mount Pleasant to start Dane's retirement the building next to his Granary home was derelict. But to Dane and his friend Tom, our Fogo Session Clerk, this made it into a challenge.

They hadn't a clue why they were doing it but they thought it would be a fine project for two retired old men to rebuild the building which for many years had been a home for hens. It was for this reason that the building got the name of the 'Hen House'.

The first problem was that the building had been filled with boxes and boxes of 'stuff' which had arrived at Mount Pleasant as part of the removal.



Tom makes sure that this new beam is now secure

Once this was cleared the scale of the task ahead was immediately apparent. Yes there was a roof but several of the roof beams had fallen and the roof had twisted. So the first task was to jack the roof back into position and then to replace and refix the beams. That done, we breathed our first sigh of relief. Of course, given that we were on the first floor (in order to reach the roof) we now had to build a staircase — initially, access to the first floor was by ladder.

It was a great day when we finally got the staircase in place. It was a very tight fit and had to turn twice on the way from ground to first floor. A second sigh of relief.



It has been a long day but now we have a staircase!

The next task was to work through the first floor, framing it out, stuffing as much insulation behind the plasterboard and above the ceilings and under the floors as we possibly could. (Rachel became an expert.)



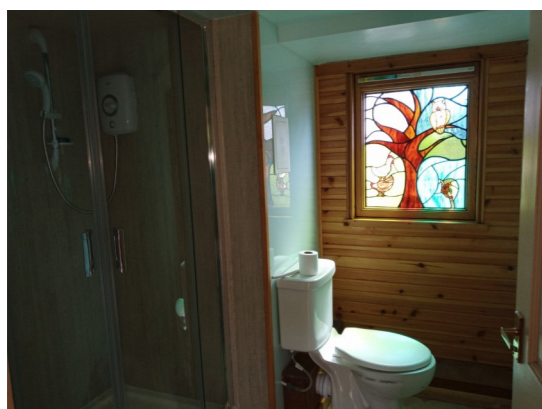
Framing out the upstairs lounge

The initial wiring of the building was done at this stage but, as events turned out, much of this had to be redone at a later stage.



Rachel is a dab hand with insulation

Now it was plaster-boarding every day for many a week, and once this was done it was laying tongue and groove flooring throughout the first floor and then painting, painting and more painting. The first floor was now complete and we stopped for a little celebration. It had taken us several months but we had done it ourselves.



**Not many toilets have such a beautiful window — Rachel's handiwork again**

We imagined that the ground floor would be easier. We wouldn't have to carry plasterboard up the difficult staircase — well, in some ways it was. But all the plumbing is downstairs and we hadn't done anything like this before. But soon we had a toilet and a shower and we had two sinks as well.



**The smaller bedroom**

We framed out the rooms, plaster-boarded the frames, went through a mountain of insulation, and tongue-and-grooved the floors. We also had to fill a huge hole in the walls — the original way in — and soon the building was more or less complete.

At this point work stopped. It wasn't that there wasn't more to do but by now both Tom and Dane had got involved in Fogo Parish Church, Dane as Minister and Tom as Session Clerk. The previous minister had retired and it seemed for a while that the Church would have to close.

Although there had been a church at Fogo for more than 850 years the congregation had dwindled and it was made clear that the Church of Scotland would never again be able to make a minister available for the congregation.



**The larger bedroom ...**

Dane and Tom set about rebuilding the congregation with very considerable success; the congregation has increased its numbers significantly year on year.



**... with plenty of wardrobes**

But what of the future? Clearly Tom and Dane could not serve the church for ever: a succession plan would need to be established. The Kirk Session met with officials of the Church of Scotland General Trustees and asked for permission to use some of its funds to purchase a small cottage which could be used to provide a place to which retired ministers (and others) might be invited to come and spend time enjoying the Borders in exchange for conducting worship at Fogo.



**The lounge**

This would only be from time to time — the rest of the time services would be led by members of the congregation, trained for the purpose. Already a large team of members share in leading worship Sunday by Sunday, and this is hugely appreciated by the congregation and contributes to the increasing membership of the Fogo Church family.

The Church of Scotland refused permission to the congregation to purchase a cottage. At this point everything went into hibernation because of the arrival of covid. It was all hands to the pumps to provide online worship of the congregation and to develop new ways of keeping in touch.



**Speaking to the congregation on-line during covid**

The worst of the pandemic passed by and the new task was getting back to normal — and just as this began to happen the war in Ukraine began.



**Medical kits being loaded for Ukraine**

Fogo Parish Church desperately wanted to do something to help. Immediately a number of military first aid kits were purchased and sent to Ukraine.

Now came the need to provide six months accommodation for refugees who were arriving in our country.

Although, over the period of covid, our plans for the long term use of the Hen House had changed to take the place of the cottage we had been forbidden to purchase, everyone agreed that the needs of the refugees were greater than our own. The church registered as potential hosts.



**A welcome delivery from Howden**

So Dane and Tom turned their attention back to completing the building. Nothing had been done about a kitchen — why not? Because it was next door to the minister's home and there was a perfectly good kitchen there. But now a kitchen was required for us to proceed; additional wiring and rewiring was required.



**The kitchen — a gift from Howden**

All of this was done with Howden's offering the congregation kitchen units without charge; all the church had to do was to purchase an oven (and this at a reduced rate as well!)

The kitchen was completed and the building was granted a completion certificate; those who required it were checked under the protection of children and vulnerable adults legislation.



**The dining area with the garden beyond**

The Hen House was ready to accept its first visitors.

Unfortunately things had changed over the months it had taken for the church to complete the Hen House.

Initially there had been concerns about whether the Hen House would be attractive to a refugee family. Most of the refugees had come from the cities of Ukraine and little could be more rural than our situation. Two other homes close to us had waited for many months without being able to attract a Ukrainian family and had eventually given up.

That wasn't the church's experience. Some six months or so after the church folk had started to complete the Hen House it became clear that the church would be able to host a family, but the situation had now changed quite dramatically. It was no longer a six-month commitment that was required but the local