

# **Fogo Parish Church**

*“an interdenominational congregation  
with a place for everyone”*



## ***Doors Open Days***

***Saturday 2nd. September  
10 a.m. — 4 p.m.***

***Sunday 3rd. September  
12 noon — 4 p.m.***

# ***Welcome***

Our church at Fogo is an ancient one which can trace its roots back to the reign of King David I who, in 1116, gave the manor of 'Foghou' to Robert Corbet, a Norman knight who came over with William the Conqueror. There would have been a church in Fogo at this time and records show that in 1159 this church was granted to the Abbey of Kelso by Gospatrick, the Earl of Dunbar.

On 29<sup>th</sup>. March, 1243, the Bishop of St. Andrews, David de Bernham, in his tour of the Borders, visited Fogo and dedicated the church. This was not its first dedication but was designed to bring any churches which might have been founded under the old Celtic or Columban Church into line with the Roman Catholic practice.

It is worth remembering that at this time there were three ecclesiastical 'powers' competing for the loyalty of the people – the Roman Catholic Church from its base in St. Andrews, the monasteries based in Kelso and Melrose and the itinerant friars of the Franciscan and similar orders.

In 1253, just ten years later, Kelso Abbey provided three resident monks to establish a priory at Fogo.

The story of Fogo can, however, be traced even earlier for Christianity came to Berwickshire in the seventh century. Fogo is about the midpoint of the three great centres of Celtic Christianity in this area – Holy Island, Coldingham and Old Melrose. It is certain that many Christian people crossed and re-crossed this area, setting up small Christian communities here. There has, for example, been a ford across the Blackadder at Fogo for many centuries and where better to build an ancient kirk?

Indeed, ancient records speak of a chapel of St. Nicholas here in Fogo and many archaeologists believe that the present church is built on the site of that even older building.

Suffice it to say that Fogo Kirk is ancient and that people have been worshipping here for many, many centuries. During the years of the Border raids life will have been hard for the folk from Fogo and for its church, but we have the record of the names of all of the parish ministers from the time

of the Scottish reformation until today and it is a record of care and service to God's people in a small rural community which stands beside many others within the Scottish Borders.

It is tempting to imagine that Fogo has always been a hidden backwater but in 1890, when the church was searching for a new minister, more than one hundred clerics applied for the post!

By 2016, however, the Church was in decline with only a tiny worshipping congregation and a building which was riddled with damp. Most people thought that the building would close and the congregation be dissolved but a small group determined to save it and rebuild the congregation even although it would never again have a stipendiary minister.

Today the building has been beautifully restored with an air-to-air heating system ensuring that there is no damp in the building and that it is always warm. The interior of the building has been lovingly restored and filled with many beautiful items made by members of the congregation. You will see the picture 'Enter these doors' painted by an artist from Switzerland on a visit to our church, the pictures coloured by our children, the pulpit falls and Stations of the Cross all locally made and much more beside.

New seats have replaced broken pews in the South Aisle, a coffee bar has been installed in an old box pew and a new organ installed in the Harcarse Loft.

At the same time the congregation has grown significantly. Today we number eighty-nine and there are almost always more than thirty folk in church for every service. We are also very active in supporting others, particularly a school in Bethany near Jerusalem — a school which provides education for children regardless of their faith background or financial status — and a project in Malawi which enables folk from broken families to set up their own local businesses to provide support for themselves and their children.

Current problems in the Church of Scotland have led to decisions made centrally for the Church to divest itself of many of its buildings. Here in Fogo a Community Trust has been set up to seek the transfer of the building into local ownership. The Trust, which has been in operation for a number of years, has been raising funds to support the future of the church building

by organising a programme of music and cultural events, even bringing the New Orleans Jazz Band, Frog and Henry, to perform here.

At present the congregation is led by a non-stipendiary minister and a very active Kirk Session. Many of the Sunday services are conducted by members of the Church worship team which has developed real skills over the years.

The congregation now proudly describes itself as ‘an interdenominational congregation with a place for everyone’. We have members who are Roman Catholic, Anglican, Episcopalian, Baptist, Methodist, Evangelical, Church of Scotland and just learning! We invite ministers and priests from the whole range of Scottish faith to come and stay with the congregation and lead our worship, and worship is at the heart of everything that we do.

As a congregation we enjoy our food and have a congregational lunch on the first Sunday of every month following a service of Holy Communion. When the weather is good we enjoy a Bar-B-Cue in the church grounds. Every Wednesday morning we meet for ‘coffee and chat’ in the church coffee bar. We have regular film shows, Bible Study, and a few years ago twenty-seven of us went off on pilgrimage to the Holy Land together.

Around the churchyard you will see a pilgrimage pathway which reminds our local pilgrims of the heritage we share in this part of the Scottish Borders and tells something of the story of our Church. You will also see a small avenue of trees each one of which remembers someone from our congregation who has died.

Ours is a story of what local people have achieved, or more properly of what God’s Spirit has achieved through local people! It is a story of a congregation which continues to serve others, to praise God and to grow. If you would like to come and visit us we would love to see you — you will be made very welcome — and it would give us enormous pleasure to welcome you back.

**Fogo Parish Church**  
*“where belonging matters”*