

Area Profile: Parish of Central Cowal



Working together as a Family of God to fulfil His purpose here in this place



Table of Contents

A Warm Argyll Welcome to Central Cowal	3
Church and Parish Profile - St. John's.....	7
Church and Parish Profile - Kirn and Sandbank Parish Church	10

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A Warm Argyll Welcome to Central Cowal



Dunoon is a pleasant and friendly seaside resort, located on the banks of the Firth of Clyde at the southern edge of the Cowal Peninsula in Argyll. The town has a population of around 10,000 people including the adjoining villages of Kirn, Innellan and Sandbank.

Dunoon not only prides itself in being the “Gateway to the Western Highlands” but also is now recognised as the marine gateway to the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. The town is surrounded by some of the most stunning natural scenery Scotland has to offer. Nearby is the Younger Benmore Botanical Garden of national fame.

The scenic beauty of the Cowal Peninsula is complimented by a nearby busy and expanding marina, 3 golf courses, several bowling clubs including an indoor club, tennis courts and all the usual rural indoor clubs. The area is also well renowned for outdoor sports such as mountain biking, hill walking, a rapidly growing hill running event, sailing and fishing (both fresh water and sea water).

Dunoon is also widely known as the home of the world famous Cowal Highland Gathering. The Cowal Highland gathering attracts up to 10,000 people and is fast becoming a Highland gathering with a family approach with entertainment for everyone. The event is held over the last Thursday, Friday and Saturday in August.



The Local Economy

Cowal is a rural economy with forestry and land management, local government services, Education, Social Work and Roads being major employers together with a number of Residential Homes for the elderly employing many locals. There is also considerable employment provided in the hotel industry and other local service industries including a call centre in the Industrial Estate in Sandbank.

Local Shops and Amenities

Dunoon town centre has a busy main street with shops selling fresh produce, clothing, hardware, electrical and fancy goods. The town is also served by two large supermarkets, two petrol stations, DIY outlets and garden centres. The recently upgraded Cinema, Studio A, shows all the latest releases. The Queen’s Hall is a venue for both local and international bands, shows, and exhibitions and is at present undergoing an £8 million major upgrade, featuring a new soft play

area, new library, Cafe, and many other facilities for locals and tourists. The recently refurbished Riverside swimming pool and sports complex, completed last year, has a 25-metre pool, a fully equipped gymnasium and a health suite offering a modern swimming programme catering for all ages. The £1 million upgrade included the integration of the former café area and reception desk and the expansion of the gymnasium area by fifty percent to meet customer demands.

Education

The area has a modern state of the art Grammar School constructed in 2007 and is very well equipped with educational, technical, art and sporting facilities. The school serves the secondary needs of the entire Cowal Peninsula and has a roll of about 1000 pupils. Those unable to travel home each day are accommodated in the school hostel.



The academic record of the school is very good.

The three non-denominational primary schools in the Central Cowal Parish are Dunoon Primary with a roll of 200 pupils, Kirn Primary, which has just had a major refurbishment, with 260 and Sandbank with 100. Sandbank also has a Gaelic medium unit with 34 pupils. There is also a Roman Catholic primary school (St. Mun's) within the town. All four schools have pre-5 school provision.

Transport Links



Cowal is a peninsula of Argyll, one of the main land masses. The drive to Glasgow takes about 90 minutes over scenic highland roads and includes the “Rest-and be-Thankful” and Loch Lomondside. The quicker



route, however, is to use the 20 minute [duration and frequency] car ferry service which takes you directly into Inverclyde and access to the A8/M8 and the A78. In this way Glasgow can be reached within the hour from Dunoon, in fact it is often said that by using the car ferry a Dunoon person can be in the centre of Glasgow in a shorter time than a resident of East Kilbride! At the moment, a second passenger only ferry operates from Dunoon Pier and connects with the train at Gourock and on to Glasgow.

Health Care

The town has a Community Hospital under the control of NHS Highland. Serious cases are transported to Inverclyde Royal Hospital in Greenock or to Glasgow by ambulance



(emergency ferry callout is provided free by the ferry operator overnight) or by helicopter. There are three General Practitioner Surgeries in the town, two in Argyll Street and one in Church Street.

Aspects of Common Ministry

Tenure

The united charge of Kirn and Sandbank is linked with St. John's and is known as the Charge of Central Cowal. It is an unrestricted charge and is operated on the basis of a team ministry with a Deacon appointed to assist in pastoral care and other associated work in the linked congregations.

The Manse

The charge has a modern well-equipped manse built by a renowned local builder. Centrally located in the Parish of Central Cowal, it was built in 2003 and has two public rooms, a study, four bedrooms and is fully fitted with white goods. There is gas central heating and double glazing throughout.



Church Minibuses

The charge has two minibuses providing an invaluable mode of transport for those members of the congregations who are less mobile.



These minibuses are also used to transport our Sunday schools on their outings and to other events. This service is provided by a very willing group of volunteers. The minibuses are also available as an asset to the local community. The mini buses are used by the local eXp group with trips to

Glasgow, Oban, Ardroy Outdoor Centre in Lochgoilhead ,Benmore Botanic Garden and many more social events for the young people of our town. The mini buses are also used as a resource for Churches in the local area who do not have access to transport.

Church and Parish Profile - St. John's

The Parish

The parish is relatively compact, composed mainly of private housing with one large and one small area of social housing. Many of these houses are in private ownership. The parish joins with that of Kirn on the one side and South East Cowal on the other. It operates within the Presbytery of Argyll and contains a fair spread of denominations including Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist, Free Church of Scotland and Apostolic. The parish also contains Dunoon Primary School (the chaplaincy currently rests with St. John's), the local library and the majority of retail and public buildings and offices.



The Church Building

The Church, imposingly situated in the centre of town, is probably the first physical feature of Dunoon to be seen when approaching the town by ferry. Erected in 1877 and recognised as a leading example of the architect Robert Bryden's work, the church and its magnificent interior are Grade A listed by Historic Scotland under whose auspices a major restoration has recently been carried out. A magnificent three manual pipe organ is situated behind the pulpit in a raised choir loft. The building is open to the public in the summer months.



The Congregation

Membership of the church is approximately 186. This is supported by an active and loyal group of Elders and office bearers who oversee an active Sunday School, a coffee club for older children, a very active Guild (who are joined by members of Kirn and Sandbank Parish Church), Choir practices and other events.

Church Services

The format of worship is traditional Church of Scotland. At present, there is one service on Sundays at 10:15am. The Sunday School is held in the adjacent hall each Sunday during term time, coming into the sanctuary for the children's talk and hymn. The Sacrament



of the Lord's Supper is celebrated in March, June and November during the morning service. Maundy Thursday is also celebrated with a Communion Service. At least once per year the Elders conduct morning worship. The Kirk Session and Deacon's Court meet on alternate months throughout the year with special meetings being called as requested. It has been agreed that the Morning Worship be adjusted to commence at 11.15a.m. to accommodate the arrangements with our linked congregation.

Community Involvement

St. John's Church is part of the Open Church Scheme and attracts many visitors during the summer months, (opening weekday mornings



from June to September). Our excellent organist, Dr. Frank Barclay, who brings notable musicians and choirs to this popular event, gives an annual series of concerts in September. We have held successful barbeques as joint ventures with Kirn and Sandbank Churches prior to their union, further cementing our relationship with these

congregations. Our church hall is used by a considerable number of local groups throughout the year. Their donations make welcome additions to the church funds! In addition to the hall being used by community groups, which include the Cowal Choral Club and the Archaeological Society, our minibus is available to other church groups and also supervised youth groups in the area. Each year a large group of children are taken by minibus to Crossover at West Linton and they benefit greatly from this event.

For many years St. John's has provided the pastor to Dunoon Primary School. Apart from the usual end of term services this also brings a tremendous Christmas service with the excellent school choir leading the praise.

St. John's comprises a vibrant congregation offering genuine warmth, sincerity and deep spiritual understanding who are looking forward, as part of the Charge of Central Cowal, to the appointment of a minister who can rise to the challenge and "feed My people" in this beautiful part of Scotland.



Church and Parish Profile - Kirn and Sandbank Parish Church

The Parish

Kirn



Our Parish is compact with a mix of private and social housing. We have two residential homes, one sheltered housing complex and two supported accommodation facilities within our boundaries. We also attract visitors from Hunter's Quay Holiday Park which is a very popular tourist destination within the Northern end of our Parish.

Although Kirn parish is contiguous with the Dunoon boundary it retains a village atmosphere and has its own characteristic features. It also includes Hunters Quay with its own identity and where the ferry terminal is located. Kirn has also an active community group, EnviroKirn, who organise community projects and have been successful in achieving some success in Britain in Bloom competitions for floral displays around the village.

Sandbank

Sandbank is situated on the shore of the Holy Loch, some two miles from the centre of Dunoon.

Many years ago, Sandbank was renowned for its yacht and boatbuilding expertise, at one time achieving fame as the builder of the America's Cup challenger "Sceptre". The connection with boats still remains in the form of an expanding Marina complex.

The well-known Younger Botanic Garden, which in turn shares its boundary with the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, lies just outwith the parish boundary and is an attractive and popular visitor attraction.

The lochside village runs approximately 2.5 miles along the shores of the Holy Loch. It has a rural economy with farming, land management and forestry (transport of logs via ship/container rather than road haulage). Health Service, Local Government, a Call Centre, Social Work and Education are important employers in the area. The village has a local Primary School.

The Church

The Church sits prominently on the sea front and is very identifiable with the characteristics of the local area, together with the adjacent tenement



flats which are also in red dressed freestone. Designed by the renowned architect McGregor Chalmers, the stone was brought from a quarry at Corries on the island of Arran. The internal woodwork, including pews, is in light oak and the organ is a two-manual mechanical action wind-blown instrument with enhanced stops. We are justifiably proud of our beautiful sanctuary which, in itself, is an inspiration to the congregation.

Both Kirn Primary School and Dunoon Grammar School lie within the Parish. We currently hold the chaplaincy for Kirn Primary and our minister is part of the Fraternal who support the Assemblies at Dunoon Grammar School. Dunoon Community Hospital is also within our boundaries.

The Congregation

We maintain an enthusiastic, happy and proactive congregation of 259 members which has now been augmented by a number of former members of Sandbank Church following the Union last year. Sandbank church had a total of 92 members on the Electoral Roll and 6 members of Session and 6 other elected members some of whom have been transferred to the new congregation.

As we became a “new” congregation on the date of the Union, we were required to adopt the Unitary Constitution as defined by the Church of Scotland. The effect of this involved the establishment of a Kirk Session to replace the former Congregational Board and Kirk Session of Kirn Parish Church, and to merge the former members of the Kirk Session of Sandbank Church with it, to administer the affairs of the united congregation of Kirn and Sandbank Parish Church. The final arrangements are still in transition and the transfer of members and officials is now progressing.

In terms of the Basis of Union between Kirn and Sandbank within the linked charge of Central Cowal the former Sandbank Church, which is now vacant, will be placed on the open market for sale by the Church of Scotland and the free proceeds of any sale shall be applied to the fabric funds of Kirn and Sandbank Parish Church. This situation has resulted in the absence of any community or other interest in the property being forthcoming. The procedure is ongoing at the present time.

Church Services

At the present time Morning Worship commences each week at 10:30am with a Family Service on the last Sunday of each month and attendance averages around 75. The children of the Sunday School attend for the first part of the Service before leaving to complete their own programme of work after the children's



address. Members of the Congregation participate in Worship with Bible readings. All Acts of Worship are enhanced by an enthusiastic choir, capably led by our organist. We have the services of two other organists when required. We celebrate Communion formally twice a year with a further two less formal on Maundy Thursday and at New Year. Kirn Primary School holds its Easter, End of Term and Christmas Assemblies in the Church. In order to accommodate morning worship in the linked charge following the Union of Kirn and Sandbank, it has been agreed that the time of the service in future be adjusted to commence at 10.00a.m

Youth Activities

We have an enthusiastic Sunday School who meet every week during morning service, At present there are about 10 children aged 3-12 who enjoy singing, stories, making things and participating in services. There is a rota of 4 adults who lead the Sunday School activities in discussion with the minister and deacon. We have a prize giving service for our children in June every year and we always organise a barbeque or picnic at around the same time. In recent years this has been a joint celebration with the St. John's Sunday School. The children also lead a nativity service in December each year and this is greatly enjoyed by the whole congregation.

The congregations in the linked Charge are involved in providing resources for eXp which include appointing personnel on the trust which runs Exp, free transport with use of mini buses for eXp groups going to outdoor weekends, events in Glasgow and trips throughout the West of Scotland.

A new initiative last year involved working with the Exp group in the door to door collections for Christian Aid which previously raised over £1,400. and is the only congregation in the area who organise a door to door collection. It is hoped to continue this exercise.

What is eXp?



eXp is a Christian youth project for young people across Cowal. Supported by churches and mainly funded by the Augusta Lamont Bequest it is open to every young person in Cowal. We have a Christian core to our work, believing the words of Jesus when he said:

“I have come to bring life, life in all its’ fullness”

(John 10:10)

We do this by providing high quality youth work that emphasises quality relationships, excellent programmes and a high commitment to helping every young person be the best they can be.

At the heart of eXp is an invitation:

- For young people and children to make new friends, have great adventures, develop their potential and eXplore the way of Jesus.
- For parents and carers to share in the growth of their children.
- For churches to help support and plan the work and share the life of eXp

Conversion to form Church Centre

As a result of the loss of former hall accommodation with the demolition of our Church Centre at Hunter Street, Kirn we have undertaken a major fund-raising effort to provide a much needed hall/meeting room facility within the existing church building. This project has now been completed by transforming the North Aisle into a separate entity to include a new entrance, disabled toilet, storage and small kitchen/servery as well as seating for up to eighty people. The area has been partitioned off by forming glass panels between the stone pillars in a most attractive manner. The area will also have the flexibility for use during services, concerts, presentations, etc.

A state of the art venue for the Sunday School will include a new audio-visual sound system allowing the use of new technology to enhance the teaching of the gospel.

A new sound system with audio visual equipment and an up to date loop system is also being introduced in the main part of the church which will improve the presentation of services.

In addition to these changes, the heating system has been upgraded so that it is zoned to allow the choice of whether to heat the whole church or each individual area, depending on use.

Community Involvement



Kirn and Sandbank Parish Church seeks to be involved in as many aspects of our community as possible. On Friday mornings the Church Crypt becomes a venue for morning coffee and tea. This provides the opportunity for an informal chat with the Minister. This facility can now be expanded to the Church Centre if required. We run a

Fairtrade stall and regularly contribute to the Raven Trust which sends containers of much needed essentials to Malawi. Kirn and Sandbank Parish Church is home to a warm, welcoming and adaptable congregational family who await the appointment of their new Minister with prayerful anticipation.

The Church of Scotland Eventide Home at Inverreck is within the parish and receives regular visits for services and other events

The church participates in the local Sandbank Gala Day which is an opportunity for fellowship and outreach.

An annual Act of Remembrance is held at the local War Memorial at Lazaretto Point.

There is an active Scout Group which met in the former Sandbank church and which is supported by the united congregation.

Church Minibus

The Church has a minibus which is available to transport members to Church and for other Church related uses. This has proved an invaluable asset and is well used and served by a willing band of volunteer drivers.

Church Newsletter - The Frontier

This is a monthly publication and includes a letter from the Minister, relevant rotas, items of interest from members and news and events

Kirn Gala

One Church member has been involved in the local Kirn gala for over five years and has been part of the success of the gala over that period of time. An appeal for help in 2016 saw a further three members join the new committee helping present the 2016 Gala. The gala was once again a huge success. It is estimated 2500/3000 people enjoyed this event, being the biggest charity event in Argyll and Bute. This event is aimed at the family unit. On this night Kirn and Sandbank Parish runs a tearoom in the crypt where one of our relief organists also provides great music on her accordion. We hope to see our new Church Centre, in the north aisle, open for this year's event.

The event includes the closure of the road in front of the Church and the erection of a marquee on the main road.

The Kirn Gala event is the largest event run in Kirn Parish and plays a huge part in the promotion of local Charities. Last year there were 21 charity stalls able to promote their services and raise awareness of their position in the local area.

There were also 10 stalls which included local crafts and business. The event was supported by the local rugby club setting up the stalls which are pivotal to the presentation of the event.

It is estimated that local charities and shops accrued £7000.00 income on the Gala night.



Further information can be obtained by contacting Rev. Ruth Griffiths, Interim Moderator - (ruthgriffiths@gmail.com) 01369 830145