Welcome to the Parish Profile of Duns & District Parishes
Presbytery of Duns Church of Scotland
Our Parish

Duns & District Parishes is located in the Presbytery of Duns in the centre of rural Berwickshire – one of the most beautiful parts of the country. We are 1 congregation of around 140 regular church attenders and 600 members, in a community of 4,800 people. Duns, the county town of Berwickshire, is home to 2,800 ‘Dingers’ with 1,600 more in nearby villages of Allanton, Gavinton, Preston and adjacent countryside. Most of the parish comprises the rugged, sparsely populated Lammermuir Hills, home to 400 in the village of Longformacus and surrounding upland. We’ve big skies, great views and compact communities.

Our vacancy is of Unrestricted Tenure, following the departure of our minister to a new charge. We hope this profile gives you a taste of the life of our church, people and community – as we seek to follow Jesus’ example of ministry in a rural area.

Our Past

Our church and land has a proud history, which provides inspiration for the future. We have given Scotland and the world important religious thinkers like John Duns Scotus, Thomas Boston, Thomas M’Crie the Elder and William Cunningham. In the sixteenth century Covenanter armies based themself here and “Scotland’s religious liberty was saved not by civil law, not by canon law, but by Duns Law”. Previous ministers and elders pioneered psalmody, led great home missions, and even introduced the rickshaw to India!

Victorian attendance and membership was higher here than anywhere else, and we once stood at the vanguard of change in the Church of Scotland: the first pipe organ, introducing many worship and decorative innovations, and some of the first Christmas and Easter services. We are not quite such rebels and pioneers today – but our determination to share God’s love in our community is undiminished, with a heritage going back 1,000 years.
Our Present

Duns & District Parishes was formed from 2014-16 by the union of 4 congregations, 1 a product of several old amalgamations. From 8 churches and 16+ services per month in the mid-2000s, we have worked to make our charge manageable. We now have 4 churches at Duns, Bonkyl, Edrom and Gavinton; we also retain Cranshaws in the Lammermuir Hills, where services are led by a retired auxiliary and reader. We recognise the need to work with our new minister to further review our presence and service patterns, to best reflect resources and need.

One of the successes of our previous ministry was dealing with these transitions and we are now very much a united congregation, working together to spread the good news of Jesus in our corner of Scotland. Members have described a wheel with hub and spokes, or a planet with its moons – our activities are grounded in the town of Duns but extend across the local countryside into our villages and rural community.

Our Future

Like most congregations in Scotland we face challenges – aging membership and declining attendances, a changing society and a search for renewed relevance. We do not regard these challenges as insurmountable, and believe we have the time, capacity and opportunity to overcome them. We believe God still has purpose for the Church of Scotland in Duns & District. We feel we are a strong congregation wanting to get stronger.

Many parish profiles list a long series of ‘wants’ in a new minister. We would prefer to highlight the 3 areas we feel are most important to us:

- **worshipping God** through our Sunday worship and throughout our daily life
- **inspiring faith** by active discipleship and showing love in pastoral care
- **connecting people** in our mission to neighbours and communities

*Is God calling you to join our journey?*
Our Worship

Services are held at Duns every Sunday at 11am, and at Bonkyl, Edrom and Gavinton twice-monthly at 9:45am. Cranshaws also has a twice-monthly service at 11:30am. Worship takes the traditional form of praise, prayer, preaching and the Word. On fifth Sundays we unite at Duns. We currently have single bible & prayer groups meeting in members’ homes.

To try and make ourselves more accessible to families and discern new directions for Sunday worship ‘The Early Gathering’ runs once a month, at 9am in Duns church hall, primarily lay-led and utilising a wide range of worship songs and instruments. All other services are organ accompanied – pipe organs at Duns and Edrom, electric elsewhere – but use is made of piano, CD and videos at Duns, and we have tested ‘virtual organist’ equipment in country kirks. CH4 is used everywhere, via projection & TV screens at Duns. Before and during our vacancy we have been privileged to host 3 familiarisation assistants, 1 sabbatical minister, and can call on a wide circle of retired ministers and readers.

Our Organisations

- **our Guild** has 40-45 members and meets fortnightly from autumn to spring. They play an important role in many aspects of congregational life.

- **our Choir** is a recent success story of growth, now numbering 15-20 members, its weekly practices providing a source of fellowship as well as of musical accomplishment. They are a core part of our worship at Duns, lead services from time-to-time, and hold concerts

- **Berwickshire Churches Food Bank** is run on ecumenical lines in which we play a key role, including providing premises

- **Kirk Kids** meet in the hall every week

- **Prayer Shawl** meets every month

We assist Berwickshire Christian Youth Trust, ParentSpace, Christian Aid, Shoe Box appeal, and weekly Healing Rooms.
Our Manse

Built in 1992 our manse is considered among the best-appointed in the Borders and is located on the edge of Duns town centre. Downstairs are a kitchen with dual fuel 2-range cooker, double sink, dishwasher, microwave, tower fridge-freezer; utility room with sink, washer-dryer; lobby; large living room with patio doors; dining room with glass wall onto corridor; study with 1 wall fully book-shelved; toilet. On the first floor are a bathroom with additional shower and 4 bedrooms. An illustrated brochure with specifications is available on request. Outside are a large drive, single garage, lawns, patio and rockery.

Over the course of 2017 a new kitchen and a new bathroom were fitted to high standards, and the entire building is kept in a fine state of repair. We intend to undertake a scheme of repainting and install new carpets throughout and we would do this in conjunction with our new minister to ensure they meet their own tastes.

Our Facilities

In recent years we have invested heavily in expanding and refurbishing our facilities for church and community organisations. We own most of the properties on Church Square in Duns, directly off the Market Square. Connected to the church are upper and lower halls with a projector, meeting room and fully equipped kitchen.

Opposite is the foodbank (a refurbished garage) and our church office ‘6A’ with a shop-front facing onto Market Square. As well as the office itself, with IT facilities and commercial printer/copier, there is a meeting space for small groups and pop-up shops. We employ a secretary 5 mornings a week to support the minister, deal with enquiries and bookings, type-up orders of service and upload all projection material for Sunday services. We own flats above the halls and office, which are let to raise income. Glebes are retained at Gavinton and Bonkyl, let locally for agricultural use, overseen by our Fabric committee.
## Our Churches

### Duns Parish Church

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usual attendance</td>
<td>60 to 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion attendance</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas attendance</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of elders locally</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current service pattern</td>
<td>every Sunday, 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion currently held</td>
<td>every 3 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duns is the only town within the parish. There are Scottish Episcopal and Roman Catholic churches with whom we’ve good relations.

In recent times substantial investment has been made to the church roof, a comprehensive audio system, visual projection and TV screens installed in both the church and hall, and the kitchen and toilets thoroughly refitted.

### Langton Parish Church, Gavinton

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usual attendance</td>
<td>15 to 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion attendance</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas attendance</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of elders locally</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current service pattern</td>
<td>2x monthly, 9:45am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion currently held</td>
<td>every 6 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gavinton is a planned village built in the later 1700s when people were moved from the ancient village of Langton. Our spire is a dominant local feature. There is an adjacent hall built in the 1990s with kitchen and toilets, used for teas & coffees after services. It is also used twice-weekly by a “Mens Shed” group and for some other church events.

Polwarth Parish Church, not far away, was closed and sold in 2004. By invitation of its new owner an annual Christmas service is held, attended by about 130 people.
Bonkyl Parish Church

Usual attendance 20 to 25
Communion attendance 35
Christmas attendance 40
Number of elders locally 5
Current service pattern twice monthly, 9:45am
Communion currently held every 6 months

Bonkyl – meaning ‘the church at the bottom of the hill’ – is 10 minutes north-east of Duns. Preston village, home to about 200 people, sits halfway between Bonkyl and Duns.

Opposite the church the congregation owns a small cottage which has a toilet and hosts teas & coffees after services. Every year a popular ‘Harvest Supper’ fundraiser is held in Preston Village Hall.

Edrom Parish Church

Usual attendance 15 to 20
Communion attendance 25
Christmas attendance 45
Number of elders locally 4
Current service pattern 2x monthly, 9:45
Communion currently held every 6 months

In medieval times Edrom was an important place of pilgrimage and the Logan Arch, in the care of Historic Environment Scotland, has been described as “the finest piece of Romanesque architectural sculpture left in Scotland”. Allanton village, with 100 people, is in the south-east of the parish.

There is a toilet in the church. There are no hall facilities, but pews at the back of the church have been cleared leaving an area usable for teas & coffees. Allanton Parish Church was closed and sold in the 1960s and is now in private use. In recent years a well-attended ‘Harvest Praise’ has been held annually using the village hall.
Cranshaws Parish Church, Lammermuir

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usual attendance</th>
<th>10 to 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communion attendance</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas attendance</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of elders locally</td>
<td>4 (with Gavinton)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current service pattern</td>
<td>twice monthly, 11:30am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Services at Cranshaws, ‘the Kirk of Lammermuir’ and 20 minutes’ drive from Duns, are currently led by a retired auxiliary minister and a reader. Recently a toilet was installed and pews at the back of the church reorganised to host teas & coffees. Messy Church is held bimonthly in a local hall. Longformacus village, the only in the hills, is 15 minutes to the west and has a population of 100. Though few in number the ‘hill folk’ are a distinctive community.

Cranshaws is the last active place of worship in the Lammermuir Hills, after Abbey St Bathans Parish Church was closed in 2011 and Longformacus Parish Church in 2013 and both sold to church members. Each is used twice a year for ‘Songs of Praise’ and Christmas services, latter drawing about 60 and 40 people respectively.

Our Fabric & Finances

All of our buildings are kept in the highest state of repair and we are blessed to have very substantial fabric funds, built-up from the sale of old churches and manses. Nevertheless our fabric committee highlight the issues represented by the number of churches and other buildings we continue to maintain and insure, and the need to review our estate periodically and as required.

We have been a substantially “aid-giving” congregation since our unions, and during vacancy this has presented increasing challenges. We have responded with a well-supported fundraising appeal and are starting up a stewardship campaign.
Our Community

Duns is the focus of life, with the church and community halls the only institutions left in surrounding villages. We share the opportunities and challenges of rural areas.

There is still a respect for and valuing of the church locally. Around 1 in 5 adults are members of the congregation and two-fifths of the population adhered to the Church of Scotland in the last census. Duns Parish Church is full several times a year for Civic Week, Remembrance Sunday, Christmas Eve and 3 schools services. Parish-wide approaching 1 in 3 people attend a festive service. Berwickshire is a pleasant, relaxed place to live and especially to bring up children.

Duns is less than 30 minutes by car or bus from Berwick-upon-Tweed to the east on the A1 and East Coast Main Line. Galashiels is under 45 minutes’ drive west, while Edinburgh can be reached in around 1 hour, and Newcastle in about 90 minutes.

Our Amenities

Duns has all the local facilities you would expect from a county town including supermarket, grocery shops, butcher, baker, delicatessen, restaurants, cafes and pubs. Healthcare facilities include 2 GPs surgeries, cottage hospital, pharmacy, dentist and optician. There are new primary and high schools, plus 2 garages serving petrol, a bank, post office, and garden centre. There are local branches of Rotary, Probus and the ‘Rural’.

Sports lovers are well catered for with a football stadium and a rugby ground as well as cricket, hockey, lawn bowls, tennis, badminton, squash and walking clubs, an 18-hole golf course, driving range, fitness gym and swimming pool, as well as a new community cinema; a nature reserve is only 5 minutes’ walk.

Cultural interests include a library and museum, music, performance, history, arts, wildlife and several youth groups.
Our Young People

We see the priority area for us in future as children and their families. Sunday club in its traditional form has seen a decline in recent years and we have lost a number of young families from more regular attendance, although 5-7 are still involved in the life of the church. We want to reengage with them and with others, and efforts like ‘The Early Gathering’ are aimed at meeting their needs. They are the future of the church, and we want the church to play a part in their future. We have about a dozen baptisms annually, half-a-dozen weddings.

Several success stories give us confidence. ‘Kirk Kids’ is bustling with mums and toddlers every Wednesday morning. ‘Activity Days’ run on SU lines are attended by 50-60 children on school in-service dates and often oversubscribed. We have good links with both schools, particularly Berwickshire High, where the local Christian Youth Trust is active. ‘Messy Church’ runs bimonthly in Cranshaws and is proving popular, so we want to see if this approach can be replicated as successfully in Duns.

Our Older People

We consider the other priority area to be older people. Like many congregations we have a growing number of elderly members and Duns is a popular area for retirees. There are 3 sheltered housing complexes where services are held monthly or quarterly, by the minister or by members of a rota of retired ministers, often with communion. We see ripe potential for enriching lives and engaging in mission. We have also trialled a ‘Forget me Knot’ dementia-friendly café.

An elder visits members resident in care homes elsewhere in the Borders who might otherwise lose formal connections to the church. Most hospital visiting is to the cottage hospital in Duns or to the Borders General in Melrose about 35 minutes away. Few patients are treated in Edinburgh. We conduct two dozen funerals a year; cremations are at Melrose or Houndwood (20 minutes).
Our Leadership

We have 35 elders on our Kirk Session who meet every 2-3 months, alternating with our Congregational Board which has a dozen elected members. Most of our elders are aged 60+, although the Session Clerk is 30; most Board members are in their 40s & 50s; several people undertaking other roles in church life are in their 20s & 30s. We see smoothing and mixing these distinctions and bringing through new generations of leadership as a priority for the coming years.

Fabric, finance and social committees each with their own convenors relieve the minister, session and board of day-to-day efforts in these areas, along with ad hoc groups e.g. Fundraising and Pastoral. We have a broad though heavily-committed set of officers and coordinators in important areas of congregational life.

We currently operate a ‘territorial districts’ system of elder organisation and visiting, which includes delivering newsletters to over 500 households. However we plan to undertake a thorough and open-minded review of the whole question of the eldership and district organisation over the course of 2019, ideally with our new minister, creating a sustainable system to assist our mission currently and in future.

Our New Minister... that could be you!

We hope these few pages have helped you learn more about our congregation, parish and community, and that God may be directing you to come and minister among us. We do not expect you to be Superman or Wonderwoman, or to do everything yourself; but rather someone to walk with and guide us as we give witness to the gospel in this part of the world. We are eager to share in worship, discipleship and mission; be open to new ideas; and support you and your family - oh, and respect your days off!

If you sense a call to help share the love of Jesus in Duns & District, or want to know more, we’re ready to get started.
As would be expected from a rural area Duns & District Parishes is home to fewer students and young adults and more elderly than nationally. Employment has strong representation of agriculture and forestry, and fewer people working full-time – but twice as many self-employed, and more people who have to work very long hours.

This is not an ethnically diverse area – in the census there were 35 non-white residents and 44 followed other religions. However 5% of people describe themselves as neither Scottish nor British and 6% of households use a language other than English plus we have 3 times the national average of people from elsewhere in UK.

There are more 2-parent and fewer single-parent households, lower home ownership v higher private renting, and more homes with people in ‘good’ health.

How to Get in Touch

Our website  http://www.dunsanddistrict.org.uk
Our facebook  https://www.facebook.com/dunsanddistrict

Interim Moderator
Rev Alan CD Cartwright
Drumgray, Edrom, TD11 3PX
01890 819191
alan@cartwright-family.co.uk

Clerk to Nominating Committee
Anne Hartley
50 Hawthorn Bank, Duns, TD11 3HH
07788 163735
anne.hartley50@yahoo.co.uk