

9th March 2024

History

**"Ghosts of my history will follow me there,
And the winds of the old days will blow through my hair."**

Joan Baez, *Winds of the Old Days*

A few miles along the coast from where I live is the historic site of Morrison's Haven. What was once a bustling harbour close to the Prestongrange coal mine, is now almost unrecognizable as part of an extensive greenspace, beloved by dogwalkers, joggers and cyclists.

The name comes from the "Morisons [*sic*] of Prestongrange". John Morison, a "Burgess, Baillie and Treasurer of Edinburgh", purchased the land in 1609, and his son, Sir Alexander Morison, developed the harbour. But the history goes back a further century, when the Cistercian monks of Holyrood and Newbattle Abbeys constructed a port from which they collected "port monies, customs and duties". Building materials, troops, artillery and siege equipment, salt, oysters, local glassware, bricks, ceramics, coal, chemicals, French brandy, Port wine, Delft China, leather and furs were shipped in or out of Morrison's Haven over the years. The harbour functioned till the late 1920s, when it was still exporting coal and bricks. When it fell into disuse, it was filled in and the site landscaped.

History matters. Morrison's Haven has an important story to tell, of which many are unaware as they walk their dogs or jog through the site. It's hard now to imagine a busy harbour in such a tranquil location. But Morrison's Haven is still significant. Its history should never be forgotten. (See www.scottish-places.info/features/featurefirst4114.html)

In all the changes in our Church life at present, we should remember that locations have a history. The decades and centuries will see dramatic alterations in our Church landscape. But the stories of the past will continue to be valued and spoken of, as we remember where we've come from, learn lessons and give thanks for all that has been. History matters.

And if you were to pause for a moment in the tranquility of the present-day Morrison's Haven, you might do well to let the "winds of the old days blow through your hair", and find that, with the ghosts of history, you're at the heart of an important commercial port, surrounded by people, noise and life, and know that you're actually part a living story.

A prayer for today

Lord, I thank you that I am in your story – like many people and places before me. Amen

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