

balerno



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but
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the magazine and newsletter of Balerno Parish Church; for the Church and for the Community

Issue number 20

December 2022
January 2023

Remembrance and Christmas - bringing us together

No more more than six weeks separate Christmas and Remembrance at what is always a very busy time of the year. These are both times for reflection and for renewal and in this issue we bring both together to look back on how we approached Remembrance, and how we and others are looking forward to Christmas.

Many who heard the Prayer for Ukraine at the Remembrance Service on 13th November were moved both by the music but also because we welcomed into our congregation that day people from that country with direct experience of the conflict and of the consequent risks and disruptions which Russia's invasion has brought. there and across the world.

The effects of that invasion have reached far beyond the borders of Ukraine. The soaring price of energy and the general rate of inflation in our own country are in part at least a result of that conflict. Food banks were virtually unknown twenty years ago; now they are part of the fabric of everyday life. The Trussell Trust, the largest Food Bank organisation in the UK, distributed over 197,000 emergency food parcels in Scotland alone in 2021/22, and the need for that assistance in Trussell's network has increased by over 30% in the past five years. That is why we also draw attention in this issue to the continuing need for support for Food Banks and for poverty relief in general across our local area.

But Christmas also draws on and by the time you read this you may already have heard the Christmas Carols, songs and stories in 'Christmas is Coming!', presented at the Bowling Club by One Bar Rest and Friends. This was a joyous celebration which brought many people closer together, and you can read more about it in this issue. And if you missed 'Christmas is Coming' then you can still get the Christmas Music at the Broxburn and Livingston Brass Band's 'Concert for Christmas' on 3 December at the Parish Church, or the Service of Lessons and Carols on 18th December and all the other services advertised in this newsletter; they're all listed on the back page.

Remembrance and Christmas bring people together; and that can only be a good thing.

Christmas is a season of joy and good-will. Let's make that true for everyone! Happy Christmas everyone!



The cast of 'Christmas is Coming' taking a bow at the end of a spell-binding show at The Balerno Bowling Club. on 25th November

News in brief

Presbytery Plan Edinburgh and West Lothian Presbytery approved the draft Presbytery Mission Plan at its meeting on 15 November. At its meeting on 9th November Balerno Kirk Session had determined that it would not seek to amend the draft Plan and would vote to approve it, as it did on 15th. The Plan was approved by a vote of 158 to 5 with uncounted abstentions.

The effect of the vote is to progress the Plan to a next stage which ought to be a formality given that Presbytery will have discussed the draft at length with the Church and the various committees at 12 George Street. More on the Presbytery Plan on page 2.

Community for Food are doing 'Christmas Parcels' for families who they are supporting. If you'd like to help then you can drop off donations at Scotmid in Balerno, (up to 10 Dec) or contact Community for Food direct at Communityforfood@gmail.com. And you can donate direct using CfF's QR code, here.



in this issue!

Website - Hub of the Wheel?

Crossword Corner

Christmas is Coming

Christmas Dinner - In a Bag

The Groan Column - gets worse

Woof Communication

Treasurer's Thumb

Letters to the Editor

Once in a while we have to stop and look at where we are. For months the Blether has been prodding away at the Presbytery Plan, and you may have noticed that we haven't been overly impressed with some of its proposals, or indeed the process adopted by Presbytery. That process seemed to start with the best of intentions as a 'bottom-up' consultation, but it certainly morphed into a 'top-down' and rather heavily directive exercise which could also have done with being more transparent. The truth may be that Presbytery was overwhelmed by both the scale of the project and the unrealistic timetable which demanded implementation in 2025.

The Plan as agreed on 7 November is, however, an improvement on that published in December 2021. So far as the Blether is concerned, while still of the view that the Plan overall retains the character of Curate's Egg, we are glad that the ill-considered Border Mission District idea has been deleted.

But all that's in the past and all of us now have to make the Plan work. There may be a temptation to say that we now at least know where we are. But all that we really know is that we now have to start investigating and promoting the practicalities of union with Currie Kirk; there is also the matter of developing collaboration with our neighbours, in the new united parish of Juniper Green and Colinton. We start in a positive position as the good relationship which has existed between Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church for many years has continued throughout the discussions which were prompted by the Presbytery's Mission Plan.

It needs to be recognised that the agreement to move ahead with a view to eventual Union between Currie Kirk and Balerno PC is not the end of a process; it is only the start, and from now on the road may become more challenging. For the moment, the Presbytery Mission Plan accepts that the buildings of both congregations should be retained, but that is subject to annual review.

The template of the Church of Scotland's Mission Plan appears to be based on a model of parish ministry which may have served congregations well in the past, but whose suitability for the 21st century is debateable. While nobody would argue that the relationship between parish church and community is as strong now as it was even twenty years ago, the link is still there and probably more apparent outwith an urban setting.

The congregations of Balerno and Currie understand the identification of church with community, and the need to foster and encourage it to ensure that the identities and strengths of our communities are retained for the future. Any developments which were to have the effect of closing the associated assets of either congregation would represent a massive loss to community life as the church buildings provide a focus and resource for community activity and wellbeing.

While the congregation of Balerno Parish Church might have a clear sense of outreach to the community through the sharing of its assets, the harsh reality is that their age profile suggests that these assets will be lost unless there can be engagement with a new generation who are aware of the positive role of the church in the community at large regardless of the personal belief of individuals.

After a year of engagement with the Presbytery, it would be fair to say that our energies have been reactive in the face of an inappropriate and unacceptable proposal. Having successfully overcome that problem there is a need to be proactive in discussions with Currie Kirk and in our own community about the future of both our congregations and our resources.

Kirk Session Report

The Meeting of the Kirk Session on the 9th of November discussions were dominated by the Presbytery's Mission Plan and its implications for the future of the parish of Balerno. After a lengthy period of discussion which has been well documented in the Blether the Kirk Session had to make a decision as to whether it would endorse the Presbytery's proposal for Currie and Balerno which was to be ratified by the Presbytery on 15th November. After ratification, the Presbytery's proposals were due for submission to the sub-committee of the General Assembly for their approval.

It had become clear that continued resistance to the Presbytery's insistence that Currie and Balerno should enter into a Deferred Union would be futile as it would appear that it is the policy of the Church of Scotland nationally that there will be no Linkages between congregations set up to progress the Mission Plan.

It was with regret that a significant majority of the Kirk Session agreed that our congregation's representatives at the Presbytery Meeting should vote in acceptance of the plan without any expression of reservation. A not insignificant consideration in this decision was a desire that any expression of concern about the plan should be agreed by Currie Kirk and Balerno PC and there was not enough time for meaningful consultation in the time remaining before the Presbytery Meeting.

It was pointed out that there was a danger of considering that the approval of the Presbytery's Mission Plan does not represent the end of a process. It sets the stage for further discussions and there will be annual review by the presbytery over the coming years to monitor the process and progress of congregations as they start to engage in collaborative working.

On a more practical level, the Fabric Convenor informed the Session of the intention to hold a DIY day when anyone with a toolbox – or simply willing hands – would be welcomed to try to tidy up some of the smaller bits of remedial repair and maintenance that are needing done around the church campus.

The Session Clerk repeated the appeal – which had recently been made before a morning service – for people to continue to make contributions to the boxes available in St Joseph's for the Holy Trinity, Wester Hailes, Foodbank which is finding increasing demand for its limited resources as winter begins to set in and energy costs rise. JB

Care Van – January to November

A team of volunteers from Currie Kirk go out in the evening on the 3rd Tuesday of every month between January and November, in the Care Van.

The team distribute soup and rolls to the needy in the centre of Edinburgh.

If you would like to join the team please contact Fiona Pigott on 07874 282480.

The Mill Café will be open right up until close of business on Friday 23rd December when it will close for two weeks to give all the wonderful volunteers and staff a festive break!

The Café will reopen on Tuesday 10 January.

The Mill does an excellent job for the benefit of Balerno Parish Church and for the entire community of Balerno and beyond.

Happy Christmas to the Mill Cafe, and thanks for being there for everyone!



The Mill Cafe

from the pews to the mews

The period of Advent is now upon us which means the arrival of something new and important! It depicts a sense of waiting...and yes a feeling of expectation. It is almost as if another box must be opened, revealing a special gift. I am talking of course of God's gift to us in and through Jesus Christ.



As we light our Advent candles week by week, we should remember that although there are many kinds of darkness in our world and in our lives Christ is the Light to our dark, broken world. It is a timely message for all of us, especially in the dark times that we find ourselves in. We need the LIGHT of Jesus Christ to give us perspective again on what is important in life.

It is so easy to become preoccupied with the secular celebrations of Christmas - writing cards, buying and wrapping presents, stocking up with far more food than we need - that it is all too easy to forget the real meaning of Christmas. We must never forget Christmas is not about US. It is about a child that was born to save us and give us hope for a better future.

I wish you all a merry Christmas full of the hope, love and faith in the Lord.

With all my blessings,

Rev Dr André Groenewald

Do you have a Minute, Lord?

We seem to be back on the unrelenting conveyor belt that takes us to Christmas and I'm feeling slightly guilty. I am hearing all manner of things on the news about deprivation and vulnerability, but it feels rather surreal because I am not really feeling any serious deprivation myself. Yes, the electricity bill has gone up quite significantly and so I'm feeling the chill more in the late afternoon as the central heating timer has been changed - but that's not really deprivation - it's inconvenience. I suspect that I am going to get a bit of a fright when I get my bank statement in January and see that Christmas has cost a bit more than last year, but I probably can afford it and will maybe spend a little less on holidays later in the year, but I have this nagging feeling that I'm missing something. I probably should be doing something to help those who are really up against it and are having trouble feeding the family in a normal week, never mind at Christmas. It's easy to forget to by some extras as you go around supermarket so that you can add it to a Foodbank collection on the way out - and even if you do remember, then a couple of tins of baked beans and a couple of tins of soup are not really much more than a drop in a bucket.



That reference in the Bible to the rich young ruler who was told that he should give all that he had to the poor is definitely preying on my mind. I think I probably need to put my hand a bit deeper into my pocket if my conscience is going to let me have a happier Christmas - but even at that I am hoping that someone else will roll up their sleeves to help to solve the problems of the deprived.

I suppose if you are born in a stable, there's no way that you and your family can avoid getting your hands dirty; point taken!

Mrs Frances Burns

Members and friends will have been saddened to learn of the passing of Mrs Frances Burns at Lorimer House, on 11th September. Frances and her late husband John, had lived for many years in Marchbank Drive, and Frances had also worked for a considerable period of time in Balerno Post Office. Both John and Frances had been closely involved with the Church Youth Club which met in the Old Hall and Invercauld before the New (now Ogston) Hall was built.

GOODBYE, 'LADY LOVEDALE'

Only months after we said our final Goodbyes to Ronnie Dickson, we found ourselves gathering to celebrate the life of his widow Ishbel, who died in October. Ishbel was born in 1932 in Cardross, on the Clyde, where her father George owned a grocery and garage -the first Shell Petrol Station in Argyll and Bute. George, Margaret and the young Ishbel watched the bombing of Clydebank from the air raid shelter at the bottom of their garden in 1941. Ishbel was close to her extended family - one of her cousins, George Macdonald Fraser, was author of the Flashman novels as well as several screenplays, including Octopussy. She loved fast cars - Jimmy Stewart, brother of the racing diver Jackie, was a lifelong friend - but never passed her driving test ... which Ronnie used to say was obvious!

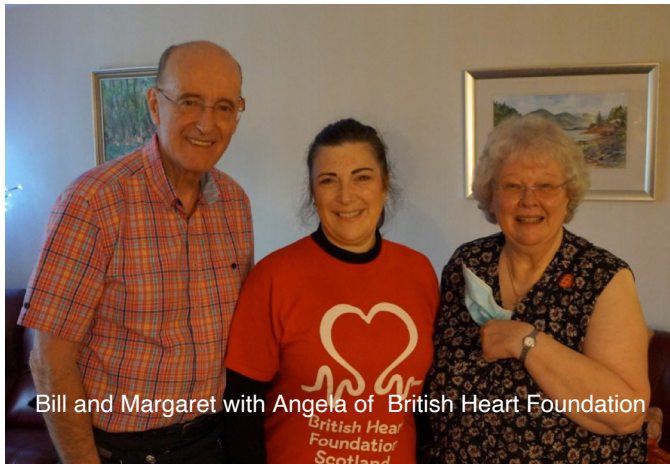
Ishbel worked as a legal secretary and then book keeper with a Dumbarton law firm, developing a huge store of legal experience, and later on she worked for a law firm in Edinburgh. In 1959 she went on holiday to Jersey, and met Ronnie, from Edinburgh, who was staying at the same hotel - and for the next two years they met at weekends alternately in Edinburgh and Cardross, until they married in 1961! They moved to Balerno in 1963, and stayed in Lovedale for almost 60 years, bringing up their son and daughter, Keith and Lynne, and becoming deeply involved with life in Balerno. Their long service in Balerno Parish Church included editorship of the Church Magazine for thirty years, from the early days of the Gestetner copier to a later word processor. Ishbel's other great interest was the SWRI - now the SWI - in turn being Secretary, Vice President and President, and working with the Planning Committee for the first Balerno History Book in 1998, updating it in 2015. She was also one of the early Presidents of the Currie and Balerno Ladies' Probus Group, and sang with the Pentland Singers as well as with other choirs. For over 20 years she organised an annual dinner for the neighbouring ladies of Lovedale, becoming affectionately known as 'Lady Lovedale'.

After Deanpark Primary school was built, children from Lovedale had to go to Johnsburn Road and round to Deanpark Brae. Ishbel was instrumental in getting the Council to lay a path between Lovedale Road and Deanpark to enable the schoolchildren to get to Deanpark Primary School by a much safer and quicker route. The children called the path 'the black path' and it was also known as 'Ishbel's Alleyway'.

A full life, centred on family, friends, Church and community. Goodbye, Lady Lovedale.



Balerno's Annual Christmas Sale in aid of The British Heart Foundation



Bill and Margaret Black's annual event in support of the British Heart Foundation is an established part of Balerno's calendar; Bill told the Blether that it is now at least thirty years since the first such sale, which each year seems to get larger and post Covid is now getting back to pre pandemic levels. Sale goers were greeted at the door with offers of tea, or coffee, and cake, and one could easily have collapsed onto a settee and wondered just how long it took to assemble the Aladdin's Cave of Christmas with which one was surrounded. Well that's a state secret, but it takes less time to get the house back to normal again, according to Bill, who was promising himself that all would be restored within two days after the last customer was ushered out at 8.30pm, bearing rolls of wrapping paper, cards, candles and hosts of Christmas presents. If you were looking for the cuddly Rudolf, then give up now because I got that around 12.30pm.

Bill told the Blether that this year's sale had raised something around £5.6K which though down

on pre-covid was nonetheless, he thought, a very good result bearing in mind, amongst other things, that we were still in the emerging from the Covid phase. This year's sale marked a return to the format established over the past 30 years, and certainly involves a lot of very hard work.

As to the future, well it is certainly an established part of the calendar now. Bill noted that several customers had asked whether they took electronic payment, but one suspects that the established pattern will continue, and let's face it there's a lot to be said for systems that have been working for years. And from 'early doors' church members and local residents had been flocking through the door aiming to stock up with all those Christmas essentials – cards, rolls of wrapping paper, books and small gifts and so much more. So the system certainly works!



DIY Day - November 12th 2022

Long before the 20th-century DIY movement, there was a long-held interest in practical work which could happen in the home, not the workplace.

Joseph Moxon's book *Mechanick Exercises* is the grandfather of all modern DIY manuals.

Published in 1683–5, it described how to be a blacksmith, cast metal, draw, do joinery with wood, engrave, print books, make maps and mathematical instruments. Moxon wrote that

'many Gentlemen in this Nation of good Rank and high Quality are conversant in Handy-Works... How pleasant and healthy this their Diversion is, their Minds and Bodies find.'

Then Mary Gascoigne in 'Handbook of Turning' in 1842 entered the lists with

'Why should not our fair countrywomen participate in this amusement? Do they fear it is too masculine and laborious for a female hand? If so, that anxiety is easily removed...'

Mary Gascoigne was an extremely accomplished wood turner, born in 1810 and passed away in 1891; a real trail blazer but of whom sadly no images remain.

So, fast forward now to 12 November 2022 and Moxon and Gascoigne set the scene for Balerno's first DIY Day when leaves were swept up, gutters cleared, balloons unstuck from ceilings and other good works to tidy up and do the jobs that we all know need to be done but can never quite get round to.

Thank you therefore to everyone involved in the DIY Day



Brian and Pam
take a break



Brian and Jim make
sure Ronnie's
ladder is secure

So what is a website; and are they important?

Most readers will be aware that Balerno Parish Church has its own website, and of course you may even be reading this article on-line. But what can a website do and is it an important facility? Well, on the question whether it's important the answer is emphatically yes. A website is a shop window and that's as true for a Church as anyone else. In our case the viewer should be able to tell immediately who we are, what we stand for and what we do. A website will never be as immediate as social media because while the latter will clatter into your inbox or whatever immediately it's sent, you have to choose to visit a website.

Some people will know what website they want to visit; others may simply surf the internet until they alight on something interesting. So a website has to be immediately attractive otherwise surfers won't call, and regular users might be put off over time.

Part of the aim in website maintenance is to make it so attractive that people will want to come back time and again. That is difficult, but at the least a website has to be as up-to-date as possible. For instance if sermons are maintained on a website then they have to be easily



and immediately accessible

The primary purpose for most websites including the Parish Church is to present, share, or display relevant information or content online about the Church. That content can be current, but also importantly it can and ought to include archive material

And there's a real downside to not maintaining the site and that is that few things will put people off from bothering to investigate as encountering out of date material purporting to be news, six months after the event. And by the same token if material which ought to be archived hasn't been then the whole website loses credibility; and that rubs off on the organisation hosting it.

If the website as the shop window is well-designed and maintained it will communicate a certain responsibility and care, and form an impression that the church takes itself seriously. First impressions often count.

When you see a well-made website, you subliminally think, "This organisation cares about excellence." If we can do that then more people will search out our website and that will be to the benefit of the Church in Balerno.

Balerno Baby & Toddler Group

After a 2 year pause during the pandemic we are pleased to welcome back the Balerno Baby and Toddler Group. As previously, the Group can be found in the Ogston Hall, Balerno (behind the Mill cafe, opposite the Scotmid car park). They meet every Thursday in term-time from 9.30-11.30am, offering fun indoor play for babies, toddlers & little ones up to 5 years old along with their parents, carers or guardians. There's tea, cake and chat for adults, snacks and play for babies and kids. It is a great space for meeting other local carers and getting five minutes peace with a cuppa while the little ones play. A brilliant opportunity for them to burn off some energy, especially now the wintry weather is upon us. All this is provided for a suggested £2 donation per family, or whatever you can pop in the tin.

It is a relaxed, welcoming group run on a drop-in basis by parent-volunteers.

There are no fixed hours so arrive any time, and if you can't make it for 9.30am that's not a problem. They understand all about naptimes and the challenges of leaving the house with a small person! If you do happen to be out early or are coming straight from school drop-off feel free to arrive a little early – they're always delighted to have extra hands when setting up the toys.

They're always on the lookout for volunteers to expand their friendly team of community & parent-helpers too; as they say, many hands make light work (and more time for fun!). So, if you think you might have a bit of time to pitch in just pop in – you'll always be welcome.

You can get in touch or follow the group via their Facebook page, 'Balerno Baby & Toddler Group', for current info, term dates & weekly updates (including any last minute unscheduled cancellations).

They love to see new faces alongside those already joining them regularly, so come and give their sessions a try!



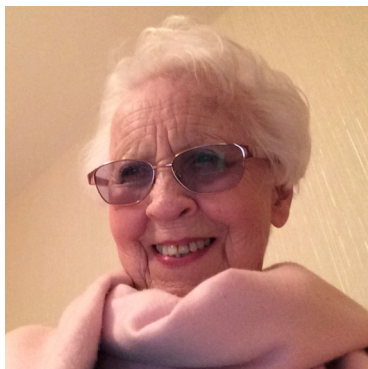
BPC at the Market

Balerno Parish Church has had a presence at the Farmers Market over the second half of 2022 with a stall at every second Market and those staffing it have enjoyed the opportunity to meet and talk with the community about the work of the Church.

The Church's newsletter/magazine. The Balerno Blether has been available at the Market along with other leaflets and materials, and judging by the fact that at the November Market we had some thirty copies of the Blether and forty of the new Short Guide to Balerno Parish Church, we reckon that folk must have been picking them up.

So thanks to everybody who has been involved!





Salute the Author

It's always amazing to learn that someone you know has a hidden talent that you didn't know about and that is certainly the case in Balerno. Local resident and church member Elizabeth McIvor is an established author of childrens books and has quite a number of titles still in print. Her target audience is clearly young children and most titles are based on childhood experiences of her family and their various pets.

She admits to an emotional element which has influenced her writing over the years and didn't actually commence her writing until after the death of her mother in the 1980's. Since then she has watched her nephews and nieces grow and many of the stories recall their childhood experiences and the love of their pets. Her own dog Sandy was bought as a pup from a friend at church and another dog Ollie belonged to her brother. Elizabeth says that whilst her nephews and nieces are now in the 40's and 50's they still enjoy reading the books and reliving some earlier life experiences through the memories of their pets.



The books are written in language suitable for young children to supplement their early reading skills and are beautifully illustrated throughout. As Elizabeth says, most of her output is sold in aid of charity – several titles were on sale at the recent British Heart Foundation sale run by Bill and Margaret Black – and parents as well as children will ensure that the pets in the stories will very quickly become family favourites.

Christmas Dinner in a bag

Soup Kitchens, as a response to the moral obligation to feed the hungry are recorded back to the days of ancient Egypt. Their most modern expression is the Food Bank, first noted in the 1960's in the USA, but not until 2000 a feature of life in the UK, when the Trussell Trust opened its first.

In 2022 over 2,572 food banks were officially recorded in the UK but the total is likely to be far higher. That growth can be ascribed to cuts to the welfare state and caps on the total amount of welfare support that a family can claim. Whatever the reason however there is no doubt that reliance on food banks is growing and is present in all communities.

Unsurprisingly, the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation does not record Balerno generally as a deprived area. Yet we know that there are families in Balerno who are receiving food assistance through locally arranged schemes, including Dean Park Primary School's informal food parcel scheme and Community for Food's support for families experiencing food poverty.

Many food banks operate under the auspices of churches, including Holy Trinity in Wester Hailes, which Balerno Parish Church supports and which as at July 2022 was providing for over 200 people per month.

This year, to make Christmas a little bit special, Holy Trinity are providing "Christmas Dinner in a bag" for their foodbank clients and are asking neighbouring churches to help by supplying parts of the dinner. We at Balerno are asked to donate tinned fruit of any variety, and chocolate coins.

Christmas Dinner in a bag is not the way you might want to mark Christmas, but for many it may be the only hint of Christmas that they may be able to experience. Please help and donate before 13th December when items will be taken down to Holy Trinity

And please also remember that contributions to the Food Bank continue to be necessary, and will be welcomed. You donate also via churchoffice@holyltrinitywesterhailes.org.uk or tel 0131442 3304



Christmas is Coming!

One Bar Rest & Friends' evening of songs and readings certainly did what it promised on the tin, kick-starting the Christmas season for us all, with a packed programme at Balerno Bowling Club on Friday 25th November.

OBR, along with the Balerno Parish Church Choir, who appeared on the bill under the guise of Friends, which of course they are, played to a thoroughly appreciative and near capacity audience of over 70. Together they presented a programme of carols old and new along with readings drawn from a variety of sources, including imagined conversations between characters from the Christmas Story, contemporary recordings from Bethlehem Local Radio, and the mutterings of the Roman auxiliaries on the ground at the time in the City of David, possibly legionaries from *Cohors I Augusta Lusitanorum* (don't say the Blether doesn't research its stories).

The songs started, appropriately, with the traditional nursery rhyme 'Christmas is Coming' and ranged thereafter from the 17thC hit parade's 'Barwell Old Hark', through the traditional 'Sweet Bells', to the rumbustious 'Boar's Head Carol' which with its interpolations of Latin can prove the undoing of serious choirs; so that lets OBR off the hook nicely. Before the interval the audience had also heard the Friends present 'Bethlehem Wind', a lyrical and evocative piece by North Carolina - born Joseph M Martin, written in 1959.

After sandwiches and conversation during the interval One Bar rest reprised the Shepherds story with *Hail Chime On*, another traditional South Yorkshire pub carol, popularised by Kate Rusby but presented by OBR in something more like the pub tradition - complete with sliding notes, sometimes referred to within OBR as a *glissando*. 'Tinwood', another carol from the 18thC if not earlier followed on, telling the tale of weary travellers and their various struggles; but it has a twist in the tail, if you're listening for it.

Dating from 1328, *In Dulci Jubilo* is another of those pieces which can, and does, trap non-native Latin speakers, but it is pure Christmas. Happily the Friends were on hand to rescue the show with 'Child in a Manger', and the curtain came down finally with 'White Christmas', which needed no introduction.

The audience excelled of course, in their renditions of *Little Donkey* and *Calypso Carol*, and joined in with choruses throughout, completing the transformation of the Bowling Club into a Pub Carollers howff.

The audience response - loved it! Thanks to all involved! And now for the recording studios.....

Fairtrade News

Fairtrade at the Christmas Market

Don't forget that The Balerno Farmers Christmas Market is on Saturday 10th December and that there will be a Fairtrade stall at the Market run by the Balerno Fairtrade Village Group featuring Traidcraft and GoGo Olive goods. We'll see you there, but in the meantime Happy Christmas to all and thank you all for your support in 2022!



Probably most people will have heard of the Fairtrade Foundation which is a UK independent non-profit organisation that licences the use of the Fairtrade Mark in the UK and accredits both producer organisations and communities. It helps to grow demand for Fairtrade products and empower producers as well as raising public awareness of the significant role of Fairtrade in making trade fair. Balerno Parish Church is accredited as a Fairtrade Church, as is St Mungo's and the Village itself is of course accredited as a Fairtrade Village.



The Scottish Fair Trade Forum is the national membership network which works to promote Fair Trade in Scotland. The Forum was established in January 2007 by a group of Fair Trade campaigners, Scotland-based non-governmental organisations, and civil society groups, supported by the Scottish Government, to promote the cause of Fair Trade in Scotland and, in particular, help secure Fair Trade Nation status for Scotland. After years of hard work, Scotland achieved Fair Trade Nation status in February 2013, and this was re-confirmed in March 2017.

The Scottish Fair Trade Forum's Community Award for 2022 was awarded to Lesley Henderson of Balerno Fairtrade Village Group on 10 November. The citation read;

Lesley is the undoubted driving force of current Fair Trade activities in Balerno. Her infectious energy, passion and enthusiasm continue to inspire and drive Fair Trade in the village. From gathering the wealth of evidence required in securing Balerno's award as a Fairtrade Village to engaging local politicians, businesses and organisations, and organising the Balerno Fair Trade events.



Scottish
Fair Trade
Forum

The Blether says, Well done Lesley!



Pictures from a fantastic evening !

Thank you everyone who was involved and especially to One Bar Rest, the Church Choir, all those who helped on the night. and not forgetting the audience!

Happy Christmas!

Remembrance 2022

Remembrance is special every year, and it is made more special by the Field of Remembrance and the creation of a poppy meadow and cascades in the church garden. It provides a striking sight as one approaches the village along Bridge Road.

There are literally hundreds of poppies, most of them made by hand in 2018 for the commemoration of the Centenary of the Armistice, for which Balerno also prepared an exhibition and an archive of memories in Voices 2018. That archive is available on the church website, and you can locate it easily via the QR code below.

Quite often you see people, and families with young children coming into the Church Garden to view the display, and probably to reflect on the message that the display brings.



Natalia Duncan with her husband Niall and her parents Ludmilla and Gennadiy Lashkov joined with Andre, members of the Choir and Cllr Graeme Bruce after the Remembrance Service for coffee and cake. Ludmilla and Gennadiy came to the area from Ukraine soon after the war started.



A Prayer for Ukraine

This year's Remembrance Service included a prayer for Ukraine sung by the Church choir. In preparing the song the Choir were greatly helped by Nadya Leshchenko who helped with translation and pronunciation. Nadya had been introduced to the Choir by Natalia Duncan a member of the Pentlands Ukrainian Support Group, formed in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 to support Ukrainian guests arriving locally and their hosts. Natalia's parents had come to the UK to stay with her and Niall, just as many other Ukrainians had come to the country to be hosted by local families.

The inclusion of the Prayer in the service was clearly appreciated by all who attended.

Thank you Balerno Parish Church Choir!



Images of Balerno's Field of Remembrance



Janet McCracken with some of The Team who put it all together



Voices 2018 is an archive of stories and memories of conflict published by Balerno Parish Church for the Commemoration of the Centenary of the Armistice which brought an end to the hostilities of the First World War.

You can access the archive on the Parish Church website or by clicking on the **QR code below** using your smartphone camera, or search for Voices 2018 on the Parish Church website.

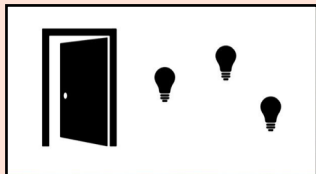


It's the Christmas puzzles page!

It's time to see if you're still awake! So here's the Blether's famous Christmas Puzzle page!

Puzzle number 1

You are in a room that has three switches and a closed door. The switches control three light bulbs on the other side of the door. Once you open the door, you may never touch the switches again. How can you definitively tell which switch is connected to each of the light bulbs?



Riddle number 1

I can travel at nearly 100 miles per hour, but never leave the room. You can cover me up, but that doesn't slow me down. You will not know if I come only once or again and again and again. What am I!

Riddle number 2

You can touch me, but I can't touch you back. You can see me, but I only reflect you and can never reject you. What am I?

Puzzle number 3

I left my campsite and hiked south for 3 miles. Then I turned east and hiked for 3 miles. I then turned north and hiked for 3 miles, at which time I came upon a bear inside my tent eating my food! What colour



Puzzle number 4 The Name of which Capital

- 1 sounds monastic?
- 2 started as a district in Calvados?
- 3 uniquely honours a foreign statesman?
- 4 appears to place yellow bellies in Lancaster?
- 5 is derived from a Fort built by a St Louis fur-trader?
- 6 features in a hymn translated by the warden of Sackville College in Sussex?
- 7 commemorates one of two successful gold miners?
- 8 was reminiscent of a view of the Thames?
- 9 seems to be misplaced in Suffolk?

Puzzle number 2

Who owns the fish?

- The Brit lives in the red house
 - The Swede keeps dogs as pets
 - The Dane drinks tea
 - The green house is on the left of the white house
 - The green house's owner drinks coffee
 - The person who smokes Pall Mall rears birds
 - The owner of the yellow house smokes Dunhill
 - The man living in the center house drinks milk
 - The Norwegian lives in the first house
 - The man who smokes blends lives next to the one who keeps cats
 - The man who keeps horses lives next to the man who smokes Dunhill
 - The owner who smokes BlueMaster drinks beer
 - The German smokes Prince
 - The Norwegian lives next to the blue house.
 - The man who smokes blend has a neighbor who drinks water
- We think the German owns the fish - but you've got to work it out. Draw out each

Puzzle Number 5 -

Can cats see the same things as humans can? Is the answer,

- No, cats have better vision in the dark but can't see colours as well as humans can
- No, cats can see exactly the same during the day and during the night
- Yes, cats can see the same things humans can see

Puzzle Number 5 -

Why do clocks spin clockwise? Is it

- Because we read from left to right, so it makes sense that clocks should spin from left to right
- Because the first clocks, which were sundials, moved clockwise
- Because the inventor of clocks decided they should spin clockwise

Where's Wally?

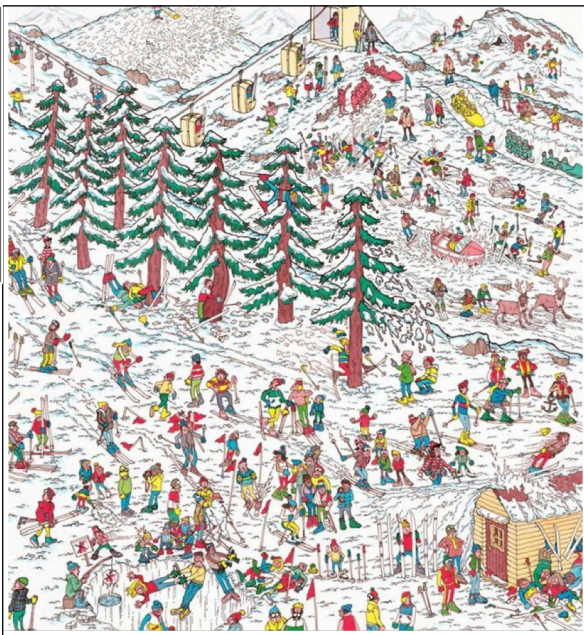


We can't see him?

He's hiding somewhere on the slopes.

Can you spot him? We think he's somewhere in this section of forest.

Please help!



ANSWERS

Puzzles Page;
Acknowledgments to
ReadersDigest,
The Guardian,
&
Wally

Merry Christmas

Answers to Riddles

- 1 - A sneeze
- 2 - Mirror
- 3 - Phoenix (Arizona)
- 4 - Boston (Massachusetts, in Suffolk County)
- 5 - Richmond (Virginia)
- 6 - Juneau and Richard Harris
- 7 - Juneau (Alaska, formerly Harrisburg, founded by Joe Salem)
- 8 - Salem (Oregon, J.M. Neale's Lights Abode, Celestial Pierre (South Dakota, Pierre Chouteau)
- 9 - Lincoln (Nebraska, in Lancaster County)
- 10 - Bismarck (North Dakota)
- 11 - Montgomery (Alabama, Sainte-Foy-de-Montgommery)
- 12 - Des Moines (Iowa, "of the monks")

Answers to Puzzle no 4 - Capitals

live at the North Pole, and they are white.

Your starting point is the North Pole. Polar bears are the only bears that south, then east for 3 miles, then north for 3 miles and end up back at the only place you can hike 3 miles White. The only place you can hike 3 miles between green and red.

colours look more like pastels to cats; they have trouble distinguishing which detect light. But they don't see as many colours as we do. Vibrant dim light than humans can as they have more "rod cells" in their eyes. can't see colours as well as humans can. Cats can see much better in No - cats have better vision in the dark but

Answer to Puzzle No 5

Answer: Puzzle No 1 Turn on the first two switches. Leave them on for five minutes. Once five minutes has passed, turn off the second switch, leaving one switch on. Now go through the door. The light that is still on is connected to the first switch. Whichever of the other two is warm to the touch is connected to the second switch. The bulb that is cold is connected to the switch that was never turned on.



Castles Galore

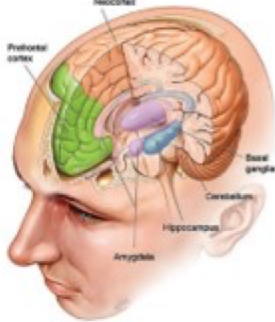
If there's one thing Scotland has in abundance, it's castles, ranging from the small to the very large. Most people, especially after recent events, would probably name Balmoral as their first choice.

What though of the smaller ones, many of which have names which will be unfamiliar to us, and of those how many of them could we accurately place on a map? Not only that, what about some that are situated only a few miles from Balerno – how many of those can we name.

One such Castle is Shieldhill Castle, situated between Biggar and Quothquan.

Learning & Memory

The human brain is divided into several important areas, each with its own function governing what the memory chooses to store and how important that is. The main area is the hippocampus which controls the episodic and recent memory. The neocortex is in charge of long-term memory with the prefrontal cortex governing the short-term whilst the amygdala deals with emotional memories, fear and learning. The brain uses a number of automatic mechanisms to determine what information to retain. Everything else naturally fades away. The brain's overriding principle, is to retain whatever is likely to be useful later for long-term survival. Memories are generally stored in relationship with emotions - labels able to give priority and strength to memory. If a fact is emotionally neutral, it's likely not to be remembered for long. To make these choices the brain uses functions known as synapses – there are thought to be up to 1000 million of these in the average brain, so little chance of a memory overload! In modern terminology it's our 'neuro-hard drive'.



Shieldhill is a grade 2 listed building, set in six acres of grounds. The original building was the Big House of a private estate belonging to the Chancellor Family and dates from the early 1100's.

It was in 1434 that Thomas Somerville, the then 1st Lord Somerville, granted the whole of the Shieldhill lands and half the Quothquan lands to George Chancellor, the Lord of the Estate at the time.

A William Chancellor fought at the Battle of Langside on 13 May 1568 for forces loyal to Mary, Queen of Scots, and the opposing forces acting in the name of her infant son James VI.

The result was a resounding Government victory after which the Chancellors' main house at Quothquan was destroyed, with the Chancellor family then moving to Shieldhill. The square Keep is the oldest remaining part of the building and dates from the 16th century. Various other improvements have taken place since then and although Frederick Hume Chancellor sold the house and lands at auction in 1898, members of the Chancellor family occupied the house until the early 20th century when it opened as an hotel. A plaque records the hotel's most famous visitor as Nelson Mandela who was attending the 1997 Commonwealth Summit in Edinburgh.

The minister of Quothquan accused the wife and daughter of John Chancellor of using charms to heal a sick child and the daughter was hauled before Presbytery to confess her guilt. Then in 1639 John Chancellor was charged with breaking down the door of the Kirk in order to bury his wife in the Kirk. He too was censured by the Kirk Session.

As with all such buildings, Shieldhill has its eerie side. A grey lady ghost has been witnessed in the corridors of the hotel. She was reputed to be a former occupant of the house whose father forbade her relationship with 'a person of lower class'. A male ghost in the guise of a butler is also said to have appeared.

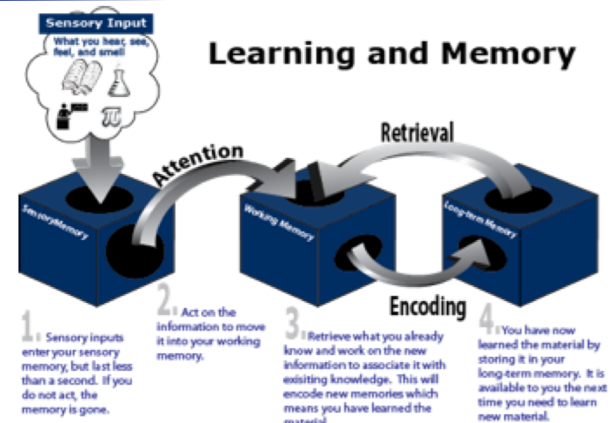
Don't forget your camera when you choose to stay there!

DB

So then, why the 'Gentleman's Guide'? As we chaps have long known our own memories are trained to be most selective. The very fact that the memory itself chooses which bits to retain suggests that much of the gossip from our spouses must fall into the 'discarded' section. How often does the conversation commence, 'do you remember when I told you about.....'? when in reality we don't have the slightest memory of that conversation. Surely this would suggest the matter wasn't worth keeping especially as we chaps would have no need to recall that data even if it were retained. A gentlemen's memory almost always categorises and compartmentalises these facts in degrees of importance, suggesting categories for sport, friends and colleagues, repeat-worthy jokes, domestic tasks etc etc. How many times have we

shown the ladies how to unblock the sink? – do they remember, of course not, because they know that we will always do it, so they don't even attempt to remember. When out for a drink, we always remember what they like, we know how to top up the tyre pressure,.....need I go on?

Please note that this is not intended as a guide for anyone attempting DIY brain surgery merely a critical appraisal of the usefulness of having a retentive and retrievable memory to ensure an easier



life. In future, when your spouse speaks, you'll know instantly what choice your brain is going to make.

DB
10 of 12

What's your Christmas tree like this year?

Oh, we haven't got it yet. Waiting for 1st December!

We put ours up at the beginning of Advent.

So do we - 1st of December!

No, actually, Advent started on November 27th this year.

What, you mean it changes every year??

Well yes – because you count the Sundays! It's a shared experience of meditation and prayer that celebrates the arrival of Jesus...

Yes I know that, but I thought it was in December?

It's from the fourth Sunday before Christmas, up until Christmas Eve.

Really?? Since when?

Since always! Well, not quite - probably about the 4th century, but as a time of fasting and preparation for Epiphany, rather than anticipating Christmas. That came later in the 6th century, with St Gregory the Great.

But Epiphany is later, isn't it – when the Three Wise Men turned up?

That's right, but later people started to focus on four topics – Hope, Peace, Love and Joy, leading up to Christmas. Which is where the four weeks comes in.

Gosh – you'd need a lot more windows on the Advent Calendar back then! And a lot more chocolate!

Eastern Orthodox churches that use the Julian calendar start Advent earlier, on November 15th, and lasts for 40 days – same as Lent – instead of 4 weeks!

I like the sound of that – I'd get lots more chocolate if we did that!

A Christmas Carol

Or the tale of a Festive Thumb *not quite*

We last saw or rather heard from the Thumb in the November issue and we were aware of, and indeed shared in the sighs of relief that peace and harmony had at last been restored twixt Thumb and treasurer

However, disturbing reports that the Thumb had not in fact been seen in public since publication of that issue shattered the calm of the Blether newsroom, or wherever it is that gossip first comes within the purview of the editors of this august publication. The drama began of course in the early autumn when the Treasurer's Thumb (along with the Treasurer) was/were involved in a serious existential encounter with horticultural glass from which both it (thumbs are not gender assigned) and the Treasurer thankfully completely recovered.

In late November it was revealed that the Thumb had not been seen in public for *fully twenty four hours*. The Treasurer remained tight lipped at a hastily convened press conference but declined to speculate on the Thumb's whereabouts, saying only that if the Thumb wished to absent himself from society for a short time then that was completely understandable, given the traumatic events of the past couple of months. The Treasurer then muttered his apologies and left the bewildered gathering of newshounds, and with a growled



'Goodnight, and Happy Christmas!', arms still folded firmly across his chest, having put aside his Guinness, got up and left the room. 'Goodnight and Happy Christmas to you', the hacks responded, and as if in echo, there came back from the closing door, 'and from me also, Happy Christmas!'

'Oh, and Happy Christmas, Thumb!', from the Treasurer.

And The Thumb replied, 'and God Bless Us Everyone!'

Walkies

Woof! Woof!.... Woof!

Hello my friends, well, what a way to leave you last month – I have to say the thought of being covered in tomato ketchup to get rid of my squirrel smell, (which now I'm told was from a fox and not a squirrel – no matter) was not an attractive one but lo and behold it really does appear to have its benefits.

I'd heard the adults saying that French people call tomatoes 'love apples' (pommes d'amour for the intellectuals among you) – they believed that the tomato had aphrodisiac powers! Naturally, when I heard that, the whole situation changed. Do I tell my pals and risk them taking unfair advantage of my new-found benefit or do I 'go-it-alone'? You've guessed, I opted for the latter. It was a risk I was prepared to take, even though the female doggies in front of whom I intended to parade may well think I smell like something left over. For once, I can tell you that my little ruse worked a treat and the local ladies (doggies) were around me like a rash. Sadly it didn't remain that way – word spread rapidly and some rather larger chaps from other districts soon muscled in on my patch. Ah well, it was good whilst it lasted, and could come in handy again sometime.

So then, after getting all the eccentricities of Halloween out of the way, November the 5th is upon us with lots of little hooligans throwing fireworks at us four-legged chaps. They throw 'bangers' and 'jumping crackers' at us and find it great sport when we are startled. Yes, they're pretty, once you get used to the noise, but sparks can be dangerous to us if they land on our fur. It's easy for cats – they just hide under the bed, but then, cats are rather boring.

So please, encourage the adults in your family to ensure you will be safe when fireworks are close by. We'll just enjoy them by looking out through a suitable window.

Have a good time everyone, I'll see you again next month – by which time I hope to have written to Santa!!



The Groan Column

Christmas, a time for family and fellowship,..... and the most appalling jokes, including these drawn courtesy of the Derbyshire Times from the Christmas Cracker;

Q - What is Santa's favourite pizza?

A - One that's deep pan, crisp and even.

Q - What's the best Christmas present you could receive?

A - A broken drum, you just can't beat it!

Q - What happened to the man who stole the Advent Calendar?

A - He got 25 days.....

Another one? This then from the Daily Telegraph;

Q - What do angry mice send to each other at Christmas?

A - Cross Mouse Cards.....

And one to close off 2022, a reminder that if you want to you can contribute to the cost of production of the Balerno Blether, and demand an end to groan jokes.

Q - How much did Santa pay for his sleigh?

A - Nothing; it was on the house.....



An ode to the pan drop and its friends

When the history of the Church in Sotland is finally written a space should be left to celebrate the contribution of the Pan Drop - otherwise known as "scotch mint", "pan drop", 'granny sooker' or "mint imperial" - and its younger relative the Polo Mint.

Pan drops are thought to have been invented by Leith baker John Millar and Sons in 1884. His modest bakery sweets became so popular he had to move into larger premises in Edinburgh from his small shop. They were described by James Beyer in "The Land of Sweets", Scottish Memories (April 2009), p. 34, as 'a boon to bored church-goers throughout the land as they slowly sucked their way through many a long, tedious sermon, the air over the pews becoming more heavy with mint than piety.' Possibly they were in fact consumed in similar circumstances across the length and breadth of the UK, and beyond.

The Polo mint is, if you like, an updated pan drop. It's been produced at Nestlé's York site for at least the past seventy years. That plant can produce up to 22,000 sweets per minute, or over 32 million single Polo sweets per day: that's 1.37 million packs per day.

In the UK there are something like 1500 Church of Scotland congregations, 12500 CoFE, 4000 Methodist, 3500 Roman Catholic congregations, and we haven't got stats for other denominations or faith groups.

You can do the maths to work out roughly how many mints are in action every Sunday.



Diary dates

December

1 -	5.00pm	Christmas Tree Lighting in Church Garden
3 -	7.30pm	Concert for Christmas with Broxburn and Livingston Brass Band
4 -	10.00am 3.00pm	2nd Sunday of Advent Service Bereavement Service
10 -	9.30am - 5.00pm	Christmas Tree Festival 3rd Sunday of Advent Service
11 -	10.00am	- Gift Service to provide gifts for underprivileged children. - Monetary donations only please.
15 -	9.30am	Christmas Toddler Party Ogston Hall
18 -	10.00am	4th Sunday of Advent Service of Lessons and Carols
24 -	6.00pm	Family Service in anticipation of Christmas Eve
	11.30pm	Watchnight Service
25 -	10.00am	Christmas Day How did Santa do?

January

1	10.00am	New Year Worship Service
8	10.00am	Morning Service
15	10.00am	Morning Service
22	10.00am	Morning Service
29	10.00am	Morning Service

Answers to November Crossword

1	P	R	A	C	T	I	C	A	L	J	O	K	E
2	O	N	H	A	I	T	P						
3	P	I	G	T	A	I	L	N	O	T	C	H	
4			U	W	L	G	E	E					
5	P	U	L	L	T	E	L	E	G	R	A	M	
6	I	A	B	D	R								E
7	K	E	R	N	E	L	M	I	R	O	R		
8	E			R	C	E	A	A					
9	S	U	N	V	I	S	O	R	E	V	I	L	
10	T	A	B	C	T	I							
11	A	D	D	L	E	O	M	I	N	O	U	S	
12	F	I	R	O	F	L	U						
13	F	O	R	E	I	G	N	O	F	F	I	C	E



December 2022 Crossword

& Christmas Lights!

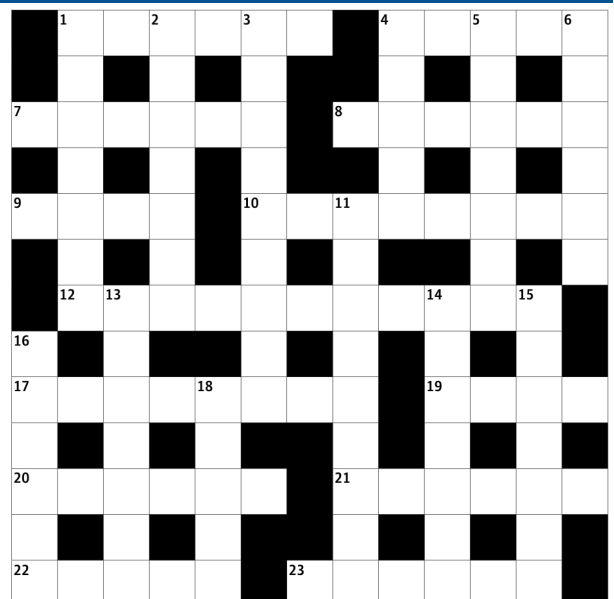
Balerno's Christmas Lights switch on in Main Street, will be on Thursday 1st December at about 6.45pm, after the switch on of the Church Christmas Tree Lights by Rotary.

There will be an appearance by the Balerno Pipe Band in Main Street and the Dean Park Primary School Choir will carols.

And of course it never rains.

Then on Saturday 3rd we welcome back the Broxburn and Livingston Brass Band for the Concert for Christmas, after an absence since 2019,. Don't miss it, this is a fantastic band and it's always a fabulous evening.

- DOWN**
- 1 Extreme (7)
 - 2 Reinvigorate (7)
 - 3 Habit (9)
 - 4 Wear the crown (5)
 - 5 Dynamic (7)
 - 6 Food store (6)
 - 11 Having no limit (4-5)
 - 13 Self-inflicted harm (3,4)
 - 14 Hostile (7)
 - 15 No longer living (7)
 - 16 Exist on very little (6)
 - 18 Small oil-producing fruit (5)
- ACROSS**
- 1 Smear (6)
 - 4 Opponent (5)
 - 7 Old pub (6)
 - 8 Supple (6)
 - 9 Salt Lake City is its capital (4)
 - 10 Stretch (8)
 - 12 Thoughtful - and esoteric (anag) (11)
 - 17 Clear soup (8)
 - 19 Rule out (4)
 - 20 Dry - wry (6)
 - 21 Audacious (6)
 - 22 Heartbeat (5)
 - 23 Onset (6)



FEBRUARY 2023 BLETHER - Copy Deadline 15th January

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