

balerno



Wether

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

FREE

But this Christmas please
donate to a charity of your
choice

Issue number 29
December 2023
January 2024

December at Cockburn



Believe in
children
Barnardo's



HOLY
TRINITY

Christmas appeals

One of the attractive features of Christmas is tradition. It's the time of year which many of us anticipate with a sense of warm expectation based on shared past experiences with family and friends around food and presents. After having paid homage - in whatever small way, by listening to carols on the radio or singing them in church - at the manger we relax and persuade ourselves that the spirit of giving which was exemplified in Bethlehem has been reflected in the retail therapy which has been evident throughout December.

Over the last decades, another tradition has emerged - but a less comforting one. It is the tradition of Christmas appeals. The Salvation Army, Christian Aid, Crisis, Barnardo's, and the Samaritans are only a few of the familiar names which have become part of our modern Christmas experience as they try to bring a little light and humanity into the lives of people who are, perhaps euphemistically, referred to as the 'underprivileged.' A harsh reality of life in the twenty-first century is that Christmas is a time of year when the inequalities in the world become more painfully evident to some members of our society as they realise that many of the colourful products promoted in TV adverts are simply beyond their means. How do you explain that to a child?

Christian Aid exemplifies the principles expressed in John's first epistle where we are encouraged to, "not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." At a local level, it has always been the mission of groups like the Salvation Army to show Christian 'love in action.' There has been much discussion about what the mission of the new combined parishes of Currie and Balerno should be after their union in a year's time, but whatever our differences may be, we should all, individually and collectively, remember that the world would be a better place for many people if the spirit of Christmas giving were more evident throughout the year. While the news headlines constantly reflect deprivation and destruction caused by world conflict and disaster, we should not forget that there is isolation, need and hunger close at hand too.

image by Shutterstock_161548748

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For the Christmas issue **Jenny Beck** tells us about growing up, and especially about a short but clearly very memorable time in Currie during early childhood

Both my father and mother were born and bred in Muirkirk, Ayrshire, and I was born a few miles from there in Lugar on the 15th July 1945. My father left school when he was 14 and went to work down the coal mine, but by studying and working hard, he was able to go to the Glasgow College of Science and Technology. (later became Strathclyde University) He left there with a string of letters after his name. When a post was advertised at Heriot Watt College in Edinburgh, he applied thinking that he would have no chance, even though he had the qualifications. He thought that they would not want a "rough miner" but a college boy. He got the job and became a lecturer in the department of Mining Engineering.

At that time, so soon after the war, there was a terrible shortage of houses, and he had to go into digs, while my mother, brother John and I went to stay with an aunt and uncle. This was when we moved to Currie. Somehow (and I've no idea how) my father leased a house at Mallyn Ranges. I think it belonged to Lord Rosebery. To get there you walked up past Currie Kirk, and where the road swings right towards Balerno, you kept going straight ahead past a wood towards the Pentlands.

The house was wooden and looked like a ranch house in the western films, with a verandah round it. We had no electricity but had tilly lamps for lighting. There was water in the house and a big range in the living room, which provided heat and also heated the water. My mother also had to cook on it. The range was very greedy and gobbled up the fuel very quickly. Coal was rationed at that time, and my parents got their ration, and bought as much other fuel as they could afford. This was not enough to keep the range going, and one of my earliest memories is of John and me in the woods with my father while he chopped and sawed dead wood to haul up to the house. John and I had on winter coats, hats, scarves and gloves while my father was stripped to the waist, and the snow was lying thick on the ground!

A condition of the lease was that the local scouts had the use of one of the rooms on the ground floor. I can still remember the boys going into this room, and as a 3 year old could not



understand why I was not allowed in too. I used to stand at the door and try to listen to what was going on.

Mallyn Ranges was just short of 2 miles from the school, so did not qualify for transport. John was 6 years old and had to walk to and from school every day. He left home each morning with an empty milk can which he handed in to a farm (East Kinleith, I think). On his way home from school he picked up the milk can, now full of milk, to take home. Of course before going home, he spent time playing with the farm children. At weekends I used to go with John to the farm to play, although I don't remember playing. I do remember, however, walking past the wood with John, and knowing about Little Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks, telling John that I was frightened that the big bad wolf or the bears would come out and get us. Of course being 3 years older than me he told me they were just stories and not real. I didn't really believe him, and so I used to sing all the way so that he wouldn't know that I was still frightened.

We lived At Mallyn Ranges for, I think, a little less than a year - 1948-1949. Then we got a house in Musselburgh. When I was in my mid teens I went to the Youth Fellowship at my local church. We did a hike from Nine-Mile-Burn over the Pentlands to Currie and came right past where our house had been. Sadly all that was left were the founds and some charred wood. The house had obviously burnt down, but I don't know when.

When I left school I went to work as a GPO telephonist at Talisman Telephone Exchange in Fountainbridge. I continued there until I married Allan in 1969, when I moved from Musselburgh to Edinburgh. About 1971 or 1972 Dalhousie Castle was advertising for singers, so I auditioned and became a lady of the Court of Dalhousie. I left there when I became pregnant and my costume became too tight.

We moved to Balerno at the end of 1980, and then moved to Currie in 2003. I feel that by coming back to Currie, I have come full circle, but often wonder if there is anyone in the area who remembers the house at Mallyn Ranges.



Malleny Ranges and the Malleny Pavillion

Little is now left of The Malleny Ranges which had opened in May 1885 as a military firing range for the Queens Edinburgh Volunteers/ later 4th /5th Royal Scots (Queens Edinburgh Rifles). One of the ranges was over 1000mtrs in length and so they were extensive. Access to them was up the track at the top of Kirkgate in Currie and the ranges themselves were located on the strip of moorland, just beyond the woodland named Whiteside plantation. This meant that troops were marched up the Kirkgait and to avoid that there were proposals for the extension of a branch railway line from Balerno goods yard to the Ranges while also allowing rail access to Galloway's Mill.

The North British Daily Mail of Monday 29th April 1901 records the official opening of Malleny Pavilion the previous Saturday ('a cold but bright day'), by **Lt Gen Sir Edward Chapman**, the then commander of Scottish District. The Pavilion was described as 'new and handsome' and having been erected during the winter months.' The report mentioned the General's regret at the the absence of the former Prime Minister (and Derby winner), **Lord Rosebery**,



"to whom the ground belonged"; seems a bit like a military rebuke.

The new Pavilion was set out with a caretakers house, hot and cold water, lavatory accommodation, officers and mens rooms, cooking arrangements, lockers for rifles and eventually a telephone (once a wayleave with Caledonian Railway had been arranged).

The shooting Range was very busy most weekends. However once the War Office set up Dreghorn Army Camp (on Redford Road, Colinton) in 1913, they wanted to give up the Malleny shooting range. Dreghorn Camp had been set up with shooting ranges (and cavalry manoeuvring areas) within the area of camp. This caused arguments as many felt that Malleny shooting ranges were superior to those at Dreghorn, and moreover Malleny could also offer a target range at 1000 metres.

There are records of a shooting competition at Malleny as late as 1920, but it seems that by 1927 it was out of use. A map of @1937 refers to 'rifle range disused'. The Pavilion had apparently become a Shepherd's cottage and by 1930 it was occupied by the Hardie family.



Mrs Hardie pictured at Malleny Pavillion @1930

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Be Careful What You Wish For!



It was inevitable that at some point in the course of the joint meeting of the Kirk Sessions of Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church that elders should be asked to look forward to identify what might be the main features of a shared vision for the future. The subject of 'young people' came up. There was a time when we might all have reasonably assumed that we were talking about the under twenty's – or perhaps even thirty's - but nowadays, the under sixty's seem to be the 'young people that are being referred to.

It is unusual for a conversation about the future not to incorporate some reminiscence, often predicated with the words, "I remember an occasion when . . ."

It was at a meeting of the Congregational Board of Balerno Parish Church in January c 1990 that there were some serious complaints about the Christmas Nativity service. This was not about language or the way in which this annual rite of passage for young families had been presented; the accusation was that there had been too many children and that the church had been too crowded! Thirty years later, this would have been referred to as a Health and Safety Issue - but in those days, I think that health and safety was still a growth industry.

It wasn't really surprising that the church was packed on that December Sunday in the late '80's. After all, there were over 40 people on the Sunday-School staff, each of whom had a group of about 5 children – and parents – who weren't on the staff - wanted to be there as well.

So, we don't have this problem of overcrowding any more and those children have grown up and, whatever their belief, very few of them have grown up to be involved in the church of the 21st century. Did we get it wrong? Did these children grow up to have no faith or is it simply the fact that organised worship has become a niche interest for a small group of older people?

One way or another, we can be confident that the numbers of children in church are unlikely to present a Health and Safety issue over the Christmas period through overcrowding – but it would be a good performance indicator if that were a concern.

Money Matters

notes from the treasurer

Winner
Pirie Award
for
Journalism
Nov 2023

As our year-end approaches, it is time to take stock of the performance to date. Like all businesses we have to set budgets and targets – so did we get it right or have our ever rising costs run riot with our expenditure?

In previous years, whilst costs invariably increased, this was nothing like we've seen this year, with heating and lighting bills, insurances and staffing costs all well in excess of the equivalent figures from last year. Spending on our campus buildings on repairs, renewals and maintenance is double last year's figure, although we would expect that to reduce next year.

We are fortunate to have some wonderful buildings which are hired out for concerts, functions and parties and a very popular after-school club, Kids Insight. These facilities are seeing increased use and uptake has risen 7% this year so far.

We have begun to see responses to last month's appeal for increased monthly giving and I would urge those members who have yet to decide to be as positive as possible. Our gratitude will always be evident in the facilities we provide.

In 2025, Balerno Parish Church is to form a Union with Currie Kirk. Both places of worship and all our buildings will remain but with a single minister to cover both. Discussion involving both Kirk Sessions are ongoing to ensure that all our current interests can be served to our mutual advantage. The Union will see the 'joint church' adopt a new name and if you can suggest an appropriate name we shall be pleased to hear your suggestion.

Regular cash flow is the lifeline of the church and is becoming our problem area. Sadly church member numbers have decreased in recent years – as we get older we must accept some 'natural' loss but in today's generation children don't seem to be either brought to church or encouraged to attend, and there are many competing distractions for their time. A visit to our campus needn't just be for faith or religion but can provide fellowship and social contact with other members of your peer group. If you'd like to find out about the range of opportunities available to you and all groups in the community please just ask – we'll be happy to welcome you and give you details.

David Booth

Do You have a minute Lord?

I suppose it's become par for the course that we all associate Christmas with children. There are all the images of children under sparkling lights with faces shining with anticipation about what Christmas will bring for them. These images tend to obscure the original message of the shepherds and the magi gathered around the Holy Child.



We have made Christmas a celebration of tradition in a way that has masked the child in the manger, but occasionally he manages to peep through. Children are regularly invited to sing the first verse of the hymn 'Away in a Manger' before the congregation joins in with the remaining verses, but for some reason, some of the words of the last verse always bring me back to reflect on the importance of the first Christmas. 'Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay close by me for ever and love me I pray; bless all the dear children in Thy tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.'

There will be many parents in the war zones of the world this Christmas whose children are now cold in the earth or irreversibly damaged by the events of recent months. These parents were someone else's children and they have now been irrevocably traumatised by events which were beyond their control. Thanks to modern media we have perhaps all been traumatised to a degree by the relentless coverage of death and destruction which has been exposed to the world.

But there is another side to that coin, and the possibility that we might all be becoming desensitised to such pain, suffering and loss. Lord, help us to remember that each death is a personal tragedy and not just a statistic. As we move towards a new year, help us all to make it a better one than the one we are leaving behind in whatever way we can.

contributed

Presbytery Plan

This is the point where it all starts to get a bit sticky. It is a bit like the military strategist before D-day who openly admitted that a plan was fine until you hit the beaches; after that, anything could happen. We're not quite there yet, but we are approaching the point when all sorts of minutiae which could not be anticipated at the time of the conception of the Radical Action Plan start to come to the surface. While these points can be dismissed as relative trivia in the overall scheme of things, the reality is that they are important to the grass roots and in some cases can present significant emotive obstacles to progress. As the Presbytery's deadlines for progress towards the next stages of their Mission Plan approach, many of these little impediments are emerging across the presbytery.

We have been fortunate in that the discussions between the representatives of the congregations of Currie and Balerno have all been progressing with a positive view about the future. A joint meeting of the two Kirk sessions took place in the Heriot-Watt Chaplaincy on Saturday 18th November at which there was discussion led by the Mission Co-ordinator for the Presbytery, the Rev Ken Brown. This was the second time in recent weeks that there had been an opportunity for the two Kirk Sessions to get together and the meeting went well with a variety of ideas shared about what was important to the two congregations.

There is no question that there is a willingness to work together coming from both sides, but it has to be said that there is still a long way to go when it comes to the sorting out of the detail and trying to find an solution to the big issue of how can we become one congregation and yet retain the practise of worship in two churches? Even with the best will in the world, there will be difficult decisions ahead.

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Huge Thank you from FreshStart

helping people make a home for themselves

Uplift of the Autumn 2023 Collection

Monday 30th October

FaceBook Message from Fresh Start, 2 November

'A huge thank you to Balerno Parish Church and the congregation for the amazing haul of starter pack goods collected for Fresh Start.

The collection came at a perfect time, now that the first phase of our warehouse renovations are complete and we are open again for donations, we can get re-stocking the warehouse with all these household essentials to help make a house a home.'



**162 boxes!
Fantastic!!!**

After late additions the grand total of boxes collected in the 2023 Autumn Collection for Fresh Start, and collected by the charity on 30th October was revised from 146 to 162 boxes!

Remembrance 2023

A congregation of over 80, swelled by members of Balerno Ranger Scout Group, witnessed a moving Remembrance Service on Sunday 12th November, led by Rev Sheena Orr, and exited into bright sunshine as the lone piper played Flowers o' the Forest, and the Scouts provided a Guard of Honour. The Last Post and Reveille were both played by Abigail Dow.

The Garden of Remembrance and display of poppies had both been prepared by Janet McCracken and her team.



Christmas Worship Calendar for Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church

- 3 December, 10.30am Joint Carol Service, at **Currie**
 3 December, 6.30pm Evening worship in **Balerno** .
 10 December, 10am Gift Service at **Balerno**
 10 December, 10.30am Morning Worship in **Currie**
 16 December, 12 – 2pm Quiet Day in **Currie**; short
 bereavement service at 12.30pm..
 16 December, 6.30pm 'Mary and Joseph and a donkey
 called Hank' A Christmas musical for
 all the family from 'Out of the Box'
 Production company. Gibson Craig
 Hall
 17 December, 10am Lessons and Carol Service in **Balerno**
 17 December, 10.30am Lessons and Carols in **Currie**
 24 December, 10am Carol singing service in **Balerno**
 24 December, 10.30am Family Morning worship in **Currie**
 24 December, 6pm Quality street Café church" in **Balerno**
 24 December, 6.30pm Christingle Service and Nativity in
 Gibson
 Craig Halls. (Christingle making from
 5.45pm)
 24 December, 11.30pm Watchnight Service in **Balerno**
 24 December, 11.30pm Watchnight Service, **Currie**
 25 December 10am Christmas Day service in **Balerno**
 25 December 10.30am Christmas Day service in **Currie**
 31 December, 10am Morning worship in **Balerno**
 31 December, 10.30am Morning worship in **Currie**

ARE YOU READY FOR A TOUCH OF FAIRY DUST

Several years ago now a member of the congregation gave the flower committee the title of 'Flower Fairies' as we appear quietly and decorate the church for services and special events such as Easter, Harvest & Christmas. Now we are seeing if there are any potential fairies out there.

At present there are eight of us who work in a rota to ensure that the church has a floral presence. This means 'doing' a vase of flowers about 5-6 times a year and of course joining in the fun for those special dates. Since the bad old days of covid we have reduced the amount of flowers, because of rising costs (and partly because the average age of the arrangers prevents some of us climbing up to put vases on the window sills!)

You do not need to be a qualified florist just enjoy seeing flowers in the sanctuary regularly. If you don't want to commit to being on a rota how about being a 'guest arranger'. Choosing a date once a year to do the flowers just to share the task.

If that is not your thing we also need to rethink the dismantling of arrangements and giving bouquets to members of the congregation on both happy and sad occasions. Again BC (before covid) we had a very complicated system with many volunteers but a list of people we could call on now and again would be sufficient.

Please speak to me or anyone who you know is a 'Fairy' if you are able to help.

Wendy Williams



**A Very Happy
Christmas
from everyone
at the Mill Café**

...and a big thank you to all of our customers who have supported us in 2023. We hope to see you again in 2024.



**Please note that we will be closed for the
Christmas and New Year weeks.**

**We will be open right up until and including Friday 22nd
December. We re-open on Tuesday 9th January, so why not
drop in and warm yourself up on a cold winter's day with a
delicious home-made soup or a coffee? We also have bacon
rolls, fresh-griddled pancakes, baked potatoes, toasted
sandwiches, paninis, and more.**

*The Mill Café, St Joseph's Centre, 2 Main Street, Balerno.
Normal opening hours are Tues-Fri, 9am-2pm, and on Farmers'
Market days from 9am to 1pm.*





Did you remember to open the door on your advent calendar today? Light the advent candle?

Yes! There's always a fight to see what's in it today. What kind of advent calendar have you got this year?

What do you mean, 'what kind'?

Well, I mean what's it got in it?

It's got wee pictures of Christmas things – a star, an angel, a Christmas tree, a candle, presents, etc. right up to Christmas eve and there's a nativity scene.

Isn't that rather dull? You've no chocolates or wee gifts?

Dull? No, it's all Christmas stuff!

Well... rather traditional, then? I mean, modern Advent calendars have lots of different themes...

How can they be different? It's for Christmas – you know, the birth of Jesus Christ? That's the theme!

Oh, we've had one with wee samples of different teas. Or little toiletries. Lego, for the kids. Seed samples for gardeners. Pringles...

Pringles?? As in...?

Aye, the crunchy things. And you can get one for your cat as well!

The cat...

One for the dog as well!

Well, I don't think the Lutherans would have approved.

What have the Lutherans got to do with it?

They introduced the idea, in the 19th century. They were made of wood or paper, with Christmas themed pictures painted behind numbered doors.

No chocolates then?

No. Just reminding us of the theme of Advent, the approach to Christmas day...

The Treasurer's Thumb

Remember the Thumb at Christmas

There are many things it is more difficult, if not indeed impossible to do without the assistance of, yes, you've guessed it, a Thumb; or indeed in one case at least The Thumb.

While there are some who may think they can manage everything as easily without, as with, the self-same thumb, I would, respectfully as ever, argue they are mistaken. I leave you, my friends, to conjecture quietly amongst yourselves, all those myriad things which are rendered problematic without my assistance or that of my friends and colleagues the *pollices* of the world.

Now I do know the limitations of my condition; I cannot choose where I go or when I might go there or when I might be required to retire for, albeit well-earned, repose. For I am, plainly, tied to the Great Man. Nor can I hope to reach the giddy heights of approval and recognition to which the Treasurer may, apparently justifiably, lay claim. And I say that in particular since I recently learned of A N Other who was awakened on the Saturday following publication of this esteemed rag, by a reader calling to ask for assistance as to how he might offer congratulations to the man with the money, on his article in the November issue. Do not not ask me how I, a mere thumb learned of this; be generous and grant me some indulgence especially as it is almost Christmas.

Now, and returning to my theme, (yes, you read that correctly for, there is a theme), I should have enquired whether this caller recognised that the Treasurer must have had assistance in writing his column. And yes, yours truly must have been involved in that process and not simply in striking keys, but also in turning pages, in scratching of ear whilst inspiration is sought, in cradling and scratching of chin as thoughts begin to assemble, and indeed in my virtuoso thumbs-up gesture as the lights come on at last, so to speak. Yes so, so very much is owed to The Thumb for that article; and yet so little recognition accorded. But perhaps twas ever thus. So this Christmas, please spare a thought for *polices mundi*. And may God Bless us one and all.

WOOF.....

Hello again folks – to all those of you who were sympathising with me after my heartbreak – yes, it was as bad as that, thank you so much – I got the 'vibes' just by looking at you.

Trouble is that since that horrendous let down – (the language says it all and I wish you understood doggie parlance) – everybody has been patting my head to show how sorry they are for me. It is a bit of a girlie thing though – a good slap on the shoulders is what I really need.

There have been advantages – the number of bones I've received, mostly from people I've never met, has been quite encouraging – and that started me thinking. Now I'm probably like you in that I like sympathy, especially when it's coming in my direction and I gradually started to hatch my little plan. I thought that if simply looking miserable brought bones galore, what extra benefit could I derive from doing something rather more devious.

It didn't take long to see that the answer is there before my very eyes – the island in the park! If I could escape to there and hide out for a few days without anyone seeing me, what gifts would be showered upon me when I eventually returned. I started to slowly transfer a supply of bones to the island – all that swimming was hard work and it's a good job my coat is short and doesn't hold water. There is plenty of cover on the island and I easily arranged whatever junk and fallen trees and bushes I could carry or drag around to keep me warm and dry.

On Wednesday I had a good breakfast and set off and it wasn't long before the king was in his 'castle'. I could have done with a little extra food but settled in and relaxed.

It went dark three times whilst I was there so I calculated that it must be Saturday, and that was the day the lady of the house always went to the butchers. So if I turned up looking all bedraggled, sometime before lunch, my luck was bound to be in. This had to be done professionally – no good looking as if I'd simply walked through a puddle! I swam across the lake, out of sight of humans, and rolled my wet coat and face in the most awful mud I could find. I walked home slowly and looking more miserable by the yard, and sat by the door whimpering and when that didn't work, upgraded it to a soft bark. Then the door opened – I really was the prodigal dog – a warm bath was run and I accidentally (yeah) spilt some of 'his' deodorant over me. A huge, warm towel followed and a front seat by the fire to get completely dry.

After that, all I remember was 'her' saying, "I'm just going out – I won't be long"

If you thought this month's diary was good you'll be in tears after next month!



It's never too early to start talking about Christmas?!

A great programme of fantastic events is coming up for the Christmas Season, starting on 2nd December with 'The month before Christmas' presented by **One Bar Rest and Friends** at Balerno Bowling Club. and after that there's loads of Christmas Trees, pipe band, choirs, brass band concert; you name it we've got it covered!



The **Main Street Christmas Treer and Lights** will be switched on on **Thursday 7th December**. The Tree and lights are courtesy of the Community Council and the switch on will be at around 6.45pm. Provided the weather is kind there should be another big turnout especially since **Dean Park Primary School** choir will be singing carols and the **Balerno and District Pipe Band** will be on parade and piping in the season.

The Main Street event is co-ordinated with the switch on for the **Rotary's Tree of Life** in the Church front garden, where there will also be a brass ensemble playing seasonal music outside to accompany carols. The Rotary event will be around 6.30pm.

There's also likely to be mulled wine and juice in St Joseph's

Hall, and also, courtesy of the Village Trust at the Community Centre.

The **Balerno Christmas Tree Festival** was started by Balerno Parish Church in 2010 and was managed by the Church for the first eight years of its life before Harmeny School took over the organisation of the annual event in 2017. The Gala then took over for the 2021 event and has run it for the past two years. Because of Covid it was a one day outdoor event on each occasion. It was cold. Brrrrrrrr!! This year it's going to be (mostly) inside in the Ogston Hall, and since it coincides with the **Christmas Farmers Market** there's be the chance to get a hot drink, scone, cake - you name it!

The 'traditional' **Concert for Christmas** with the **Broxburn and Livingston Brass Band** is on Saturday 9th December, and tickets are on sale from the Church Office and also on line through the Church website.





What's On!

Christmas at The Parish Church



The Broxburn & Livingston Brass Band play a **Concert for Christmas** on **Saturday 9th December at 7.30pm** at Balerno Parish Church

Tickets £10 (u16 £4) from Balerno Parish Church Office and online via Balerno Parish Church website

The Month Before Christmas! One Bar Rest and Friends invite you to Quintingle and Balerno Parish Church Choir

The Church Choir in Balerno Bowling Club on **Saturday 2nd December at 7.30pm**. A light supper will be provided. Tickets - price £7.00 - are available from the Church Office. **Tickets on sale from 22nd October**

the 2023 Balerno Christmas Tree Festival (presented by Balerno Gala) in the Ogston Hall Saturday 9th December

Come and help switch on the lights on the Rotary's Tree of Life Christmas Lights at Balerno Parish Church (6.15pm) and the Community Council's Christmas Tree and the Main Street Christmas display (6.45pm) on **Thursday 7th December**.

Brass group, Balerno and District Schools Pipe Band and Dean Park Choir will help to get the Christmas spirit going!

Don't forget the Christmas Market on 9th December

It's time to visit the Mill!

The Mill Cafe is open four days a week, Tuesday to Friday 9.00am to 2.00pm and also on Farmers Market days 9.30am to 1.00pm.

Come in, get warm! And enjoy our scones, cakes and treats, not to mention our teas, coffees, juice, hot chocolate, Go on! Come on in!



The Mill Cafe

Balerno Christmas Lights 2023

switch on

Rotary Tree of Life from 6.00pm at Balerno Parish Church Garden with Brass Ensemble

Main Street Tree and Lights

from 6.30pm

with **Dean Park Primary School P4 Choir and The Balerno and District Schools Pipe Band**

refreshments available at Community Centre








The Guild in November

November was a busy month with two very different Guild and very interesting meetings.

On 1 November Janet McCracken demonstrated how to decorate a Christmas cake, taking us through the different stages from the marzipan to the royal icing and finally the piping of decoration.

It was an interesting and informative talk which encouraged us all to try making and decorating our own cake. Janet decorated two Christmas cakes and showed us one Christmas Day birthday cake she had recently been working on.

Janet also had albums with photos of cakes she had made over the years. An evening enjoyed by all.

On 16 November, we have a very honest and articulate talk from 22-year-old Cara, who had battled anorexia.



Cara is now a volunteer for BEAT (Beat Eating Disorders) a UK charity which supports people with eating disorders.

The National Guild support different charities over a three-year period, and they are known as the Guild projects. Guild Branches fund raise for the six projects, and this year Balerno Guild had a fund raiser for BEAT raising £571 at our 'Summer Treats' event in June this year.

The Guild members were moved by Cara's forthright talk, a meeting that gave us much to think about.

The Guild will have a break from regular meetings until January. However, members have been invited to Slateford Longstone Guild to the Edinburgh Guilds Together meeting on 6 December at 2pm, where our guest speaker will be from the newly formed Young Adults Guild. Then on 20 December at 12.30pm we will be having Christmas Lunch at the Riccarton Inn, in Currie.

Our 2024 programme starts on Wednesday 17 January at 7.30pm in the Ogston Hall. with a quiz night and bring and buy stall. Please think about joining us. You will be made most welcome.

For information, please contact,
Kay Coull on coullkay@hotmail.com.



from the Blether team

Our church has flourished over the years through the commitment and hard work of very many people who have worked selflessly for the good of others and of the community at large. In many ways that must reflect the sense of mission that we are all called on to espouse. But people can only individually do so much and there is a time when people are entitled to stand back and say that it may be time to take one's foot off the pedal, possibly turn to one's attention to another pressing project or simply to have a rest.

This month we have two examples where people are withdrawing from activities which they have pursued over decades. The Helping Hands initiative was started over 20 years ago and provided what it said on the tin; it helped people with the everyday things that customers couldn't do for themselves. So they gave time and skills and transport and the like, and many people benefitted and were grateful.

The other example is the British Heart Foundation Annual

Christmas Sale; a monumental annual undertaking which is featured in a separate article.

We would like through the pages of the Blether to thank everyone involved in those enterprises, if we may, on behalf of our Balerno Parish Church community, for everything they have done for the community through those initiatives.

Balerno Parish Church faces challenging times as we look to the future, to union with Currie Kirk and to identifying and delivering our joint mission and vision for the future.

This is difficult stuff, and we can expect a bit of a bumpy ride. With examples, however, from these two initiatives of what success can look like, then we can be encouraged, but we do have to live within our means and in particular we have to look carefully at what resources will be available to us.

The future cannot simply be a replay of the past; but the past can and should be an inspiration for the future.



Dear Lesley

Isn't it about time we started thinking radically!

10th November

This is an article on Balerno's need to seize the opportunity to develop its own RAP. It is not another article on the Church of Scotland's RAP.

For some time now the Church of Scotland has been spending more than it has been receiving. The Church of Scotland's Radical Action Plan is a poor attempt at addressing the problem. The title implies a dynamic new approach; the reality is much less, a savage, shortsighted, cost cutting programme akin to the Beeching cuts to the railways in the 1960s.

This year, for the first time in a great many years, Balerno Parish Church has more leaving its bank account in a normal month than is coming in. As Mr Micawber said in David Copperfield 'Spend more money than you've got, and you're headed for trouble.' At present Balerno Parish Church is 'headed for trouble' and needs to change.

Society, family life, expectations and costs have all changed and will continue to change. Change has always with us but thanks to the Covid pandemic, and a realisation that how we treat planet earth really matters, change has accelerated. This can be seen in a number of ways e.g. more people walking and cycling and people being encouraged to do things locally. Thanks to the foresight and commitment of our forefathers Balerno Parish Church is ideally positioned in the heart of the community we serve. The fact that we have a church building, 2 halls and a meeting room means that we have an excellent opportunity, and a responsibility, to help our community with the growing desire to do things locally.

The big question is are we going to change and if so in what ways?

1. We can carry on as we are, and we will survive for a while using our reserves and squeezing a little more income out of our halls and dwindling membership.
2. We can enact our own version of the Church of Scotland's Radical Action Plan and close things down in the forlorn hope of reducing costs faster than we reduce income.
3. We can look at the opportunities and what we can do that will make a difference.

As Christians we are called to tell others about Christ, and this includes using the skills and resources we have been given to put our words into actions. As a parish church we have an added responsibility to look after our parish. To be here for the community we must be viable financially. Simply put, we need to find ways to bring the finances into line again either by reducing costs or increasing income or probably both.

The following list of potential projects is hopefully a 'starter for 10'. As they say in Strictly 'in no particular order'; we should investigate the costs and benefits of:-

- replacing our lights with LED lights. LED lights use a fraction of the energy of tungsten filaments and halogen bulbs.
- installing solar panels on the roof of the St Joseph's Hall, and possibly the church. The South facing elevation of St Joseph's Hall is ideal for solar panels and the West facing elevation of the Church may also be worthy of consideration. This would reduce the amount spent on energy and be environmentally beneficial.
- installing additional insulation in the roof of the Ogston Hall. The insulation in the roof of the Ogston Hall will have met the

regulations in the 1970's but is not even a quarter of what would be required now. This would reduce heat loss and reduce our energy bill.

- replacing the gas boilers with air sourced heat pumps. This should reduce energy costs as well as our use of fossil fuels.
- adding the facilities to the church building so that it can become a multi-use venue. The church is greatly underused despite being an excellent auditorium for concerts, but it lacks the facilities needed to be a multipurpose facility. i.e., there are no toilets or changing rooms and disabled access is poor. This would enable much wider use of the church building.

These, mainly energy saving projects, should not only be good for the pocket by reducing our energy costs, they are also environmentally friendly, the sort of actions we should be taking to look after the planet and the need to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

As a congregation we have the skills needed to seek out grants, prepare a business case where needed, manage large projects and we have proved very capable at raising the money needed when there is a good case made.

None of this happens by accident, we have been given the skills and the opportunity for a reason. I leave you with a message from chapter 2 James - faith without action is worthless. Now is the time for action to enable Balerno Parish Church to continue to serve Balerno in years to come.

Martin Petty

Curtain lowered on 20 years of 'helping hands'

Dear Lesley

14th November

After more than 20 years the last organising committee is announcing the formal end of our Helping Hands scheme. Like so many other aspects of life we were affected by Covid when Helping Hands could not operate and recently we did not have any requests.

Over the years we organised hundreds of requests for help from members of the congregation, but also the wider community, with lifts to the surgery, hospitals, dentists, hairdressers, help with shopping, ironing, light gardening work, etc.

Our heartfelt thanks goes to the many, always willing volunteers who helped with these requests, many of them for years, we could not have done it without you, thank you so much. Big thanks also have to go to all the members of the church who started and ran the scheme over the years, taking it in turns to 'have the book' and match the requests with volunteers.

Therefore, unfortunately, it is time to close Helping Hands down. The age profile of our volunteers is going up, some of them had dropped out altogether, others found it increasingly hard to help. Like in so many areas of our church life, we had no younger people coming forward to help.

With our kindest regards to all our ex helpers, scheme users and supporters over all these years,

Adele Higham,
Heather Jarvis,
Dorothy Simpson,
Jill Weir,
Beate Dennis

What a finale!

Bill and Margaret Black will have hoped to get their house back again after an absolutely cracking 30th and final edition of their annual British Heart Foundation Sale on 14th November.

The house was a buzz of conversation with clinking of tea cups as patrons went round the seemingly endless supply of Christmas things to buy, before collapsing on the sofas and armchairs for a cuppa, with shortbread, mince pies, cakes and conversation.

A Christmas tradition has passed into history; but after 30 years Bill and Margaret and their family and army of helpers are surely entitled to some rest as well as our profound thanks!



The Annual British Heart Foundation sale

Reflecting on 30 years of a major item of the annual calendar

It's difficult to think about life before the BHF sale which has developed into a well-loved social occasion in the life of Balerno and including family and friends near and far.

We think it began in 1988 with a donation of £135.

For each sale we begin with prayer and bring the whole day before the Lord for His blessing on each one who comes through the door.

So many things have happened – so many people have been involved... my Mum and Dad – Auntie Belle – and MAUREEN WOODBURN who is the other half of the sale... with Helpers over the years including Thea – Betty – Isobel – Ann – Eleanor – Francis – Margaret – Jeanette – Donna – Linda.

The sale begins with Allan Woodburn and Bill collecting 7 trestle tables from the church hall and then removing the doors from the lounge and dining room.

There's been lots of fun and laughter – friendship and fellowship – renewing acquaintances and meeting new friends... over coffee, chat and cake! It's been likened to an Aladdin's cave where you could discover some exciting things!

The way the sale was organised and run has improved over the years – stacker boxes in garage instead of attic – Bill introducing the coloured pricing code which was a breakthrough!

No-one could come to our home during Covid so we emailed photos of the goods one year – and the next a friend photographed them for us... what a struggle! Although it was hard to see all the items – our friends did their best and supported the BHF.

Memories: some trestle tables sliding out of Bill's car at the roundabout at Larchfield – Maureen's contact in Waterstone's had a note of her telephone number on the till so she could be told when suitable goods were due to come on sale – and one year Tesco gave us a whole load of Christmas goods and roughly about 30 Christmas trees to sell – another memory was when a lady we didn't know came to the door and wondered if our house was for sale!

Margaret was BHF Fundraiser of the Year in 2013... but this must include Bill and Maureen and all the Helpers who've been such a support for this effort.

Over the years of the Christmas sale – the monies given have exceeded £100,000 which is amazing but true! This will help research which the BHF undertake for cardio-vascular disease and more...

Bill and Margaret and Maureen are truly thankful for everyone's support and encouragement and help over the years... it's been a privilege to host this event... and we feel blessed!

Bill and Margaret



Fire & Flood

November was a bit of an eventful month fabric wise what with a minor flood in the gents toilets and a fire in the Ogston roof. These incidents followed each other in close succession even if the other way around.

The fire was in the event fairly minor, although it could have been a lot worse than it turned out. Importantly the fire caused no injuries, and the emergency services were quickly on scene to bring matters under control. The damage to the roof was quickly repaired. Precautionary checks were made on the electrical circuits and for any heat damage in the kitchen attic, and lights, but all were quickly declared OK and the power was restored.

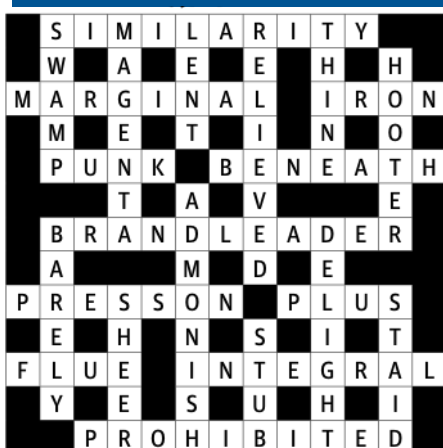
Speaking to *The Blether* Fabric Convener Dilys Conway said, 'Above all we're grateful that no-one was injured as a result of this incident, and we're also grateful that a vital part of the Parish Church's facilities remains open and available to our community which relies on its being there for the benefit of all.'

Dilys paid tribute to the speed with which the incident was dealt with and thanked the emergency services who had attended.

'Everyone reacted very calmly and professionally,' she said, 'and that contributed to the minimising of damage. We can consider ourselves very lucky that matters did not turn out differently, and while there was some tidying up and repair work to be done that's all been done quickly and everything, if it hasn't yet, will soon be back to normal again.'



November 2023 solution



Copy and publication dates for February 2024 issue

THE COPY DATE

for the February 2024 issue of the
Blether is

Sunday 21st January

Publication date for February issue is
Fri 2nd February.

Copy must be in by Copy Date

Fairtrade news

Great news this month: the Scottish Fair Trade Forum has made their Special Recognition Award to **Jane Forster**, one of the founder members of Balerno Fairtrade Village Group (BFTVG). This is in very well-earned recognition of all her work over many years promoting FT not only in Balerno, but across Edinburgh, and in the One World Shop, and we're all so happy that she continues as ever to help FT, and us, thrive!

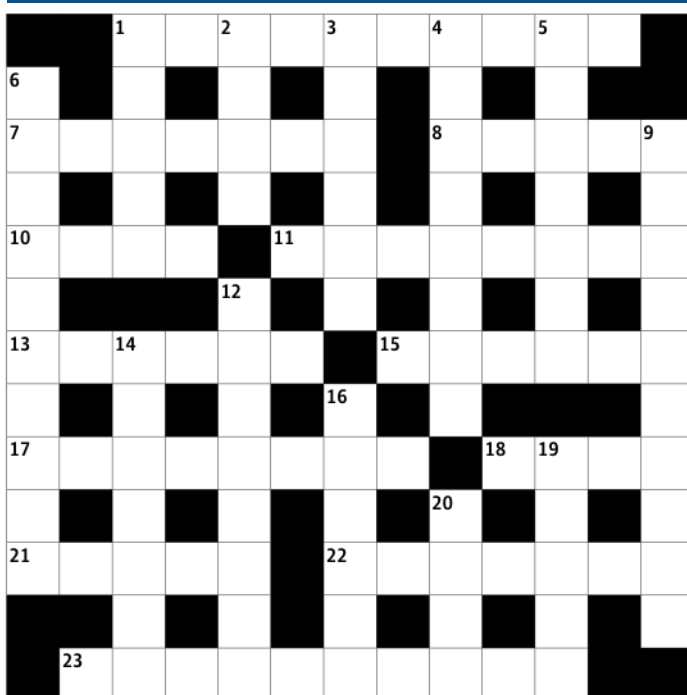
And a date for your 2024 diary: please keep free the morning of **Saturday March 2**, for a FT Morning in Balerno Parish Church (BPC) Halls. At this stage, we hope for presentations to the prizewinners in the local Schools FT Art Competition, planned for January/February; a display of their work, in our wonderful year-round FT-supporting Mill Cafe; stalls, FT and we hope climate-related; refreshments; children's activities; and the famous FT banana smoothie bike.

Please go on asking for FT in the shops, for your home and for whichever BPC groups you support – remembering that we're still committed, as a Fairtrade Church, to using FT drinks, and other FT products whenever we can, even when some shop supplies are less reliable these days.

Thank you to everyone for your continuing help and support, and all our very best wishes for a really happy Christmas!

LH, for Balerno Fairtrade Village Group

December 2023 Crossword



Across

- 1 Loathsome (10)
- 7 Afterwards (5,2)
- 8 Ape (5)
- 10 Hindquarters (4)
- 11 Affecting the first month after birth (8)
- 13 According to Sinatra in 1946, they've got an awful lot of this in Brazil (6)
- 15 Artist's workroom (6)
- 17 Many riot (anag) – threatening (8)
- 18 Cheese-like food made with soya milk (4)
- 21 A levels, for example (5)
- 22 Patron saint of musicians (7)

23 Caught unawares (10)

Down

- 1 Piece of information (5)
- 2 Rent – unable to decide (4)
- 3 Vocalist (6)
- 4 Coiled fossil shell (8)
- 5 Restricted (7)
- 6 North Devon seaside resort (10)
- 9 Vernacular (10)
- 12 Get rid of (8)
- 14 Kind of pigeon (7)
- 16 Synopsis (6)
- 19 Stared at inappropriately (5)
- 20 What turns blue litmus paper red (4)

Useful Numbers

Mimister

Rev Dr André Groenewald, 449 3830
agroenewald@churchofscotland.org.uk

Church Administrator (Church Office)

Pam McKeon 449 7245
bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk

Session Clerks -

Kay Coull 449 6151 or 07415 506947
Elaine McCulloch 449 5876
Marion Milne 07971 718892
balerno.sessionclerk@gmail.com

Treasurer:

David Booth 449 3516
bpc-treasurer@balernochurch.org.uk

Roll Keeper:

Pam McKeon 449 2541
pammckeeon@bt.com

Fabric Ctte:

Dilys Conway 449 7245
dilysconway@blueyonder.co.uk

Pastoral Care Co-ordinator:

Kay Coull 449 6151
coullkay@hotmail.com

Mill Café:

Lynsey Inglis
themillatstjosephs@gmail.com

Balerno Blether:

Lesley Burt 449 4314
lesley.burt70@gmail.com