balerno blether

Christmas EXTRA

FREE

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15th December 2023

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

Happy Christmas!

It's a busy time of year for everyone and there's been a packed and varied programme of events for Advent so far at Balerno Parish Church. We know that not everyone can get to everything, so the Blether thought we could give you a flavour of things you might have missed.December

One Bar Rest and Friends played the Balerno Bowling Club on the 2nd to a great crowd of well over 60, opening the Christmas season with a superb programme of a selection of songs and readings. More on p2!

On Saturday 9th The Parish Church hosted the Balerno Christmas Tree Festival which this year was, for the first time since loclkdown, accommodated once again in the Ogston Hall, where it was fixture between 2011 2019. The first ever festival was in 2010, and there was no festival in 2020 because of Covid 19 restrictions, although the event was revived as an out of doors happening in 2021 and was also outside in 2022. More on p3.

Then, also on the 9th the Broxburn and Livingston Brass Band played a Concert for Christmas in the Church. It was great to see them nack for the 13th year More on this fabulous band and concert on p4.

In the meantime the Mill Volunteers Christmas Party was on Monday 4th December and you can see a picture of that on p4. Well done to the Mill for all the hard work they put in throughout the year .

The Church Choir & Friends also sang Carols at the Christmas Farmers Market, as they've done for at least the last fourteen (possiblle even 18 years), and there were lots of smiles and complements.

We hope that everyone will have a very Happy Christmas and we'll be back in the New year with the February Blether!

The Christmas Tree Festival, which first started in 2010, has always been scheduled for the weekend of the December Farmers Market, which in turn had started in 2005, and for more years than I can remember Balerno Parish Church Choir has led carol singing around the heart of the Market in the Square, during the Market. This year was no exception, and once again the choir encouraged other folk to join in and make a joyful noise, which they did. You can hear on Balerno Parish Church's website what the combined community choir are singing in this photograph.

One Bar Rest & friends

One Bar Rest & Friends presented 'The Month Before Christmas' on 2nd December at balerno Bowling Club as a follow up to the very successful 'Christmas is Coming' event which had been offered at the same venue on 25 November last year. That in turn had stemmed from John Burnside's hugely successful 'Advent on Line' series during Advent in both 2020 and 2021. That of course was the period of lockdowns and therefore on ;ine was the only medium available. Both of those two series involved short daily broadcasts and they still be available on the Church website. The end of lockdown, however, meant that the idea could be translated from the virtual to the real world, and the venue chosen - Balerno Bowling Club - was thought not only to be more intimate than the Church halls but could also show the Church in the community.

The format of monologues interspersed with songs worked well and as the Blether itself recorded in the December issue, ' 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!'

And so it was this year also; *oh yes it was*.

Last year the readings came largely from a series of monologues which tried to promote some reflection on what it might have been like for the people who were present on the first Christmas Eve. This year, the readings were chosen to encourage some reflection upon the way in which we approach Christmas 2,000 years later. Of the twelve readings, some were more serious and some more familiar than others. Among the authors featured were Arnold Bennett, Dylan Thomas, Ken Nesbitt, AA Milne, Richard Middleton, Bruce Bairnsfather, John Bejeman and Anon - who has contributed quite a bit!

The evening itself started with the company 'Happy Birthday' to Alan Woodburn who was celebrating his ** th/nd/rd birrthday (or whatever).

One Bar Rest & Friends' evening of songs and readings caught a mood both serious and humorous and certainly once again did what it promised on the tin, kick-starting the Christmas season for us all, with a packed programme at Balerno Bowling Club on Saturday 2nd December. The sens e overall was that people would have liked it to have gone on and on and on, But all good things must end, and when that came around the entire cmpany joined together in *Away in a Manger.*

Christmas Trees all around

The Christmnas Tree festival came back indoors on 9th December as 2023 marked the 14th Balerno Christmas Tree Festival with a return to the Ogston Hall after three years Covid related absence.

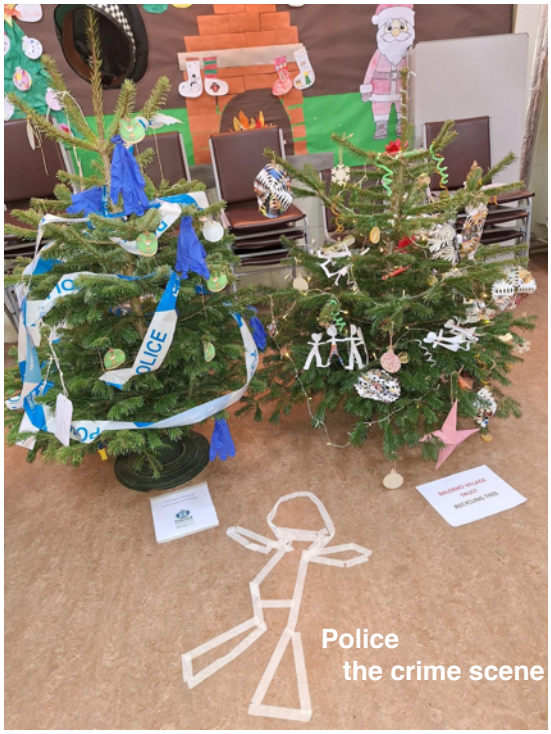
Balerno Parish Church entry

The winner
Harmeny School

The first ever Balerno Christmas tree festival was held on 11 and 12 December 2010 with trees in St Joseph's. That was just before the builders moved in to revovate it and create the St Joseph's Centre. 2020, 21 and 22 were all held outside because of Covid, and was it cold !……

But in 2023 Balerno Gala who took over the running of the event from Harmeny in 2021, decided to move it back inside. So the Ogston Hall played host to the 2023 Festival on Saturday morning, 9th December and over 200 people went to see it between 9.30am and 1.00pm, co-inciding with the opening hours of the Christmas Farmers Market.

There were 18 trees in this year's event with the most votes being cast for Harmeny School's entry.



Police
the crime scene

2023 also marked the return of the Police to the competition; those with long memories will remember how on the evening before the first Festival opened in 2010, as the trees were being decorated for the Festival starting on 11th, two constables called in to ask at St Joseph's what was going on. So we said it was a Christmas Tree Festival. They asked what that was and we said we didn't really know either but this was it, and we had a spare tree 'would you like it?' They said yes please and came back on the Saturday morning with blue tree lights, lots of lego and incident tape. And they nearly won the prize. This year they came third in the public vote, but they have to come back next year to solve the crime scene.

Balerno Fairtrde Village Group

The church was represented amongst the 18 entries with an entry under that banner, and there was also a Balerno Fairtrade Village Group Tree, along with C&B Ne3s, Balerno Village Trust, Harlaw Hydro, Currie Community Council and Balerno Community Council.

We hope the Fesrtival will be back again next year! The halls have been booked already!

Concert for Christmas

2023 marked the Broxburn and Livingston Brass Band's 12th visit to Balerno Parish Church as part of the annual programme of events for Advent. Formed in 2005 from the amalgamation of the Band quickly established a reputation of excellence, and a good sized audience of just short of 80 people were entertained in the Parish Church on Saturday 9 December with a programme covering seasonal songs and carols along with virtusoso pieces.

The programme started with *Repton* better known perhaps as O Lord and Father of Mankind, before Patrick Boaler played the exceedingly complex euphonium solo in the *Variations on My Grandfather's Clock*, receiving an extended ovation.

The Ragtime favourite, *'I wish I could shimmy like my sister Kate'* was followed by *Nightingale Dances* and then that perennial brass band Christmas number *Stop the Cavalry*. before then *Maria's Song* from West Side Story cloaed the first half of the concert. Earlier, in the first section of the concert the band had played JS Bach's famous and beautiful Advent chorale, *Wachet Auf* (*Sleepers awake);* one of Bach's most mature and complex cantatas with melody and counter melody skilfully picked out.

Lauren Hand
Flugel Horn

After the interval the Christmas theme really took over. Lauren Hand led with a moving Flugel Horn solo in *Away in a Manger*, and the audience got their opportunity to contribute to the music with three carols. *Deck the Halls, Hark the `Herald Angels Sing* and *Still the Night* ; it is amazing how moving singing to the accompaniment of a brass band can be.

Rocking around the Christmas Tree upped the pace the followed by the evergreen *Christmas Song* before the sudience were invited to join the band with the more reflective *Sill the Night.* Then it was Slade's *Merry Christmas Everybody* before finally, Maria Carey's *All I want for Christmas.*

If you weren't there then you really did miss a treat; but there is always 14th December 2024, when the Band are booked to return

Patrick Boaler
Euphonium

The Mill Cafe Volunteers' Party

The Mill Volunteers Party was held on Monday 4th December at the Mill Cafe, and tthere were over 50 volunteers who enjoyed a full supper. Well done Mill Cafe Volunteers for helping to procide a wonderful service for the church and the community!