

# balerno



# Blether

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

**FREE**



**BUT**

Celebrate the  
New Year !  
Donate to help  
Blether printing  
costs!

Issue number 30  
February 2024

January at Greenfield

It may be a bit late to say so, but we're still going to:  
**HAPPY NEW YEAR, BALERNO!**



Cold January Sunday at the Red Road

and the even better news is, there are

## Price Reductions at The Mill

Yes, you read it right! The Mill Café *has* reduced the cost of its 5 best-selling hot drinks:



*The Mill Cafe*

|            |           |     |       |
|------------|-----------|-----|-------|
| Americano  | was £3.50 | NOW | £3.20 |
| Latte      | was £3.50 | NOW | £3.20 |
| Capaccino  | was £3.60 | NOW | £3.40 |
| Flat White | was £3.60 | NOW | £3.30 |
| Tea        | was £2.65 | NOW | £2.35 |



*The Mill Cafe*

Why have the Mill decided to do this? And why now? Here's the Mill's statement.

'As regulars of the Mill Café will know, we had to bump up our prices back in September. We were obliged by law to start charging VAT on all of our sales – so that's what we did. We did it with a heavy heart, but we had no choice.

It was quite a hike in prices all of a sudden to ask customers to swallow and we honestly didn't know how it would affect the level of business. Would everyone stop coming?! Fortunately, that didn't happen. Our customers were amazingly understanding, for which we are very grateful.

However, we are, above all, a community café and we are all too aware of the pressures people are under with the cost-of-living crisis. We keep our prices under constant review and, with the full year's figures now complete, we decided to take a look to see if there was anything we could do to make it a little easier for our customers.

One thing we haven't done is compromise on quality to make it cheaper. It is the same coffee, the same strength and the same size as before. It is vitally important to us that you have the best possible experience every time you enter the Mill, whether that's the coffee, the home baking, the home-made soup, the scones or any of the other snacks, not to mention the warm welcome. Cutting corners is definitely off the menu at the Mill Cafe!

And the Blether say 'thank you to the Mill'. This is a great way to start the New Year and will be much appreciated.

Opening hours for the Mill Cafe are Tuesday to Friday 9.00am to 2.00pm and on Farmer's Market days, which are held on the second Saturday each month, from 9.00am to 1.00pm.

## Money Matters

notes from the Treasurer

Never did two words have such a true depth of meaning. So, that's 2023 over and done with – and if it's okay to pray about money, let's look for a much better outcome, all round, in 2024.

Readers will recall my comments in the October issue when our income was decreasing and our expenditure increasing, with the corresponding reduction in our reserves balance, and whilst the underlying reason is always monetary, the actual reasons are rather more varied.

Last year saw the passing of eight long-standing church members, together with others who have either moved away from Balerno or simply chosen to withdraw their regular giving. As all those contributions qualified for Gift Aid they were 'grossed-up' to 125% by the tax man, but of course that only made the position worse.

Income from the letting of our church and halls – yes, the church regularly hosts two choirs for their practices and still has dates available for hire – maintained the previous year's success and without that we would have been in true problem territory. Welcome contributions from our popular Mill Café have also given us extra breathing space.

On the expenditure side, staffing costs have risen, mainly as a result of additional staff joining us. Those readers who regularly pass the St. Joseph Centre will undoubtedly have witnessed much repair work to the roof – a result of the theft of lead and subsequent water ingress – and more work still has been required to the drains which run under the church grounds and the manse, to remove blockages caused by damage from tree roots over many years. Lighting and heating costs continue to rise and our property team is currently examining ways in which costs could be reduced – anything from solar panels to simply switching off lights when not in use.

Church members have all been approached and requested to review their regular giving where means permit and whilst we are so grateful to those who have already done so, the potential average increase in their giving is still outweighed by the annual value of the amounts no longer received. So, please forgive my polite reminder here, and if you haven't already done so but are able to, whatever increased amount you can offer will be greatly appreciated. After all, most of us make good use of the church facilities, even if it's just a cup of coffee and a cake in the Mill Café, and your generosity will help to protect those facilities for years to come.

Hopefully, the same level of repair work will not be necessary this year and any benefit from that would help towards funding the other improvements I've mentioned.

Let's all wish ourselves a Happy and more prosperous New Year in readiness for our union with Currie Kirk in 2025.

## Being a sustainable congregation

notes from Fabric Committee

With heating and lighting costs for the 11 months to end of Nov at £10000 (yes £10K!) compared with £8200 for previous year reduction of heating costs is becoming increasingly urgent. We know electricity costs will double with the new 2 year deal arranged centrally by 121 George street, to which parishes can subscribe. Gas price increases are also very likely when the existing contract expires in November.

Fabric Committee are therefore being invited to consider a number of initiatives, including :-

- An audit of all lighting with a view to changing to LED with new fittings as required and to reduce lumination in a number of areas;
- Possible installation of Solar Panels to St Joseph's west roof - subject to 121 formal agreement, structural report, Planning permission (Church in conservation area). The options might include battery storage etc. Cost benefit analysis will be involved;
- Improving insulation in St Josephs and Ogston halls;
- Improving control over gas boiler heating and hot water scheduling. The Committee has had Initial discussion with Enviromental Automatics Ltd who were involved in commissioning our relatively new gas boilers - installed respectively in 2018 and in 2019. The Committee are also looking at options using wifi control systems, and will probably do a site visit to a church already using that.

Separately the Committee will be meeting with Eco Congregation Scotland to see what assistance they can provide including details of any available grant assistance.

This is an ambitious project which will give rise to a great deal of work! it will warrant the formation of a dedicated sub-group.

The Committee have also spoken to 121 who advised that as the Presbytery Plan has been approved there is no embargo on expenditure on the elements covered in the outlined proposal.

We will require obtain written approval in the first instance from Presbytery or 121 at the appropriate time, and clearly we would wish to ensure that Currie Kirk are aware of our thinking as we move towards Union.

## Presbytery Plan

The Christmas and New Year break provides an opportunity to relax and recharge batteries, and it does take a little time and discipline to get back into the frame of mind to address thorny issues such as the impending union between Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church.

The Presbytery Plan assumed a different profile so far as we were concerned when, in the early autumn of 2023, Rev Easter Smart announced her decision to demit from Currie and relocate back to the United States. At the end of September, Currie and Balerno effectively moved from being a deferred union to one which was to be implemented by the end of 2024. On any analysis that would be a tight timetable, although discussions were ongoing about convergence on finance.

Some progress was made in later autumn with a conference of the two Kirk Sessions at Heriot Watt Chaplaincy on 18 November. The purpose was to have preliminary discussions on the Basis of Union document, and it also looked at development of a mission narrative for the new united charge. In December Currie Kirk received permission to sell their manse, the intention being that Balerno manse would be the manse in the new united charge.

In January Bill Black who had been convening both the Currie/Balerno working group and the related Balerno Committee announced he would be standing down from both groups. Bill will be an immensely hard act to follow; we are all indebted to him for all he has done.

The working group will meet on 30 January to consider options in the new situation. In turn the outcomes of that meeting are likely to be discussed at the Balerno Kirk Session at its next meeting, on 28 February.

# Marion Milne

Marion Milne was amongst the most warm hearted and generous people one could ever hope to have met. Her death is a tragedy not simply for her family but for our entire community, both within the church and more widely.

She was essentially a very modest lady who would never wish to push herself to the front of any queue. As one of Balerno Parish Church's three recently installed Joint Session Clerks, she had quite simply responded to a call to serve in what is always a difficult and pressured appointment; and she was already making a difference after less than a month in post. Her death suddenly and without warning on Saturday 16th December shocked and saddened the entire community in which she played such a huge part.

Marion had been an Elder of Balerno Parish Church for many years, and she was a mainstay of many aspects of both church and community life. Her work for many years has had a youth orientation both in the 'day job' and also in the community. For some years the latter had included looking after the increasingly important and highly regulated area of safeguarding the interests both of children and of vulnerable adults.

This area of responsibility calls not only for maintenance of detailed records and of ensuring training and awareness. It calls also for the pastoral skills looking after people who may be the subject of concerns. The Safeguarding Officer is a key link in one of the most sensitive areas in which church members are called to serve; Marion was a perfect fit for that role; efficient, discreet, pastorally gifted, sympathetic and empathetic.

For many years Marion had run the Girls Brigade company in Balerno; youth work is rewarding but involves a huge commitment of time and energy which Marion gave willingly, as she did also as a member of the Parent Council of Balerno High School most recently on a co-opted basis but first of all

as a parent member.

Marion had also been prominent in running the Parish Church Sunday School.

Parent Council work led to membership of the Balerno Community Council nominated by the former. She was widely loved within the Council and by those with whom she

came into contact through her work with it. That work for BCC went far beyond the dry exchanges of debate about potholes and planning, and even into the more relaxed areas of decorating the Council's tree at Balerno's annual Christmas Tree Festival. In her day job at Nether Currie Primary School, where for many years she was Administrator, Marion was involved significantly in the successful running of the school, ensuring that it was a happy and efficiently managed place.

Add to all of this her work with the Pentlands Gymnastics Club and one is left with the impression of someone who was always willing to help wherever she was and with whatever was asked of her, discharging posts of great responsibility which are all vital to the functioning of our modern society, and she did that with good humour, tremendous energy and great commitment. She was a pleasure to know and to work with, and we all appreciate not only the tremendous benefit her presence brought to whatever she did but also the huge loss her premature passing means for us all.



## Allan Laing

Allan Laing died peacefully on 3rd December 2023 at Braid Hills Nursing Home in Edinburgh after a long illness.

Allan was well known to Balerno folk both as a member of Balerno Parish Church and also as a former City Councillor representing this area. Being a City Councillor was not perhaps Allan's first aim in life; at school he had always wanted to be the Hibs goalkeeper, and if he couldn't be that he was certainly amongst the club's greatest supporters.

He was also keen golfer and amongst his pet hates however was getting phone calls at the top of his back swing. When asked what his bad habits were his answer was invariably that one should ask Isobel.

The notice of his death which appeared in the Scotsman recorded that he was 'the beloved husband of Isobel, much loved Dad to Gillian, David and Josephine and proud Papa to his six grandchildren.' All this is true. But he was also hugely respected and loved by those he served and all who knew him.



## Kay Latimer

Kay died peacefully in her sleep, aged 80 on 18th November 2023 with her family by her side after a long struggle with cancer. Her funeral was conducted by Marion Wallace at Balerno Parish Church on 2 December.

Born in Hamilton, Kay had trained as a nurse at Glasgow Royal, working latterly as Sister Latimer at Marie Curie Hospice. An active member of the Balerno Parish Church and across the whole village community. Kay was a longstanding member of the Pastoral Care team and had also been the driving force in helping to develop care for people with dementia and their carers. She established the Palm Cafe and thereafter Dementia Friendly Pentlands.

An elder of the Church, Kay was a long standing member of the Choir and had also served as a Sunday School leader.



## Ann Robertson

Ann died peacefully at Western General Hospital on 30 December and her funeral was at Balerno on 19 January.

For many years Ann had not enjoyed good health and until very recently she had been cared for by Mac at home.

Ann was a keen member of the Guild and also an enthusiastic quilter as well as having served as a Sunday School teacher. In addition she was involved in the production of the Church's magazine, 'The Bridge'. And as a maker of shortbread she was legendary!



# Picture of the month

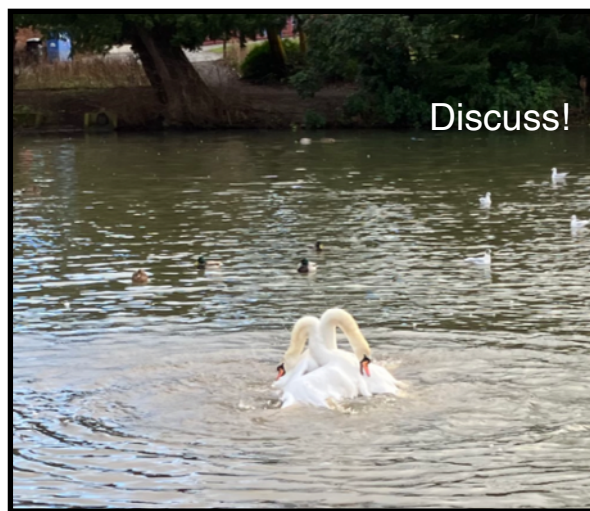
A new venture for 2024, picture of the month invites you to submit photos, with captions, which the Blether may publish as part of an occasional competition.

This month's entry is opposite.

For January's picture of the month The Blether invites readers both to respond to the invitation and also to answer the question; where was this picture taken?

The Blether will buy a coffee at the Mill for the first correct answer received by the Editor on Friday 2 February 2024. Should the answer also give the date when the picture was taken - to the nearest day - we will exceptionally award a second coffee absolutely free.

Please note - we know the identity of the photographer, and both he/she and those known to have accompanied him or her at this shoot are unfortunately ineligible to enter.



## MEMORIAL TROPHY

# Congratulations Ian!

**Congratulations to Balerno Parish Church's very own human dynamo and all round local hero, Ian Gidney whose sterling efforts for our local rugby club have been recognised by Currie Chieftains with the award in December of the Memorial Trophy.**

It's not every year that the trophy is actually awarded so it's quite something when it is. It can be awarded annually to any Club member for Service to the Club, defined as either outstanding service to the Club in the current season. or service to the Club over a number of years.

In Ian's case the Club was recognising Ian's overall commitment to the Club as Club photographer over many

years. Visitors to Malleny Park on home match days will testify to Ian's following the run of play up and down the touch-line, camera at the ready for the action shots which appeared shortly afterwards on the website and social media pages. Ian has been club photographer almost for decades and he decided to hang up his camera (and boots) for this season, An outstanding effort. Ian has virtually not missed a game home or away this century which is some achievement and the Blether agrees that he's a worthy winner of this year's Memorial Trophy. Maybe now he'll be able to watch matches from the (relative comfort) of the stand.



You can see from the photo that Ian is pretty chuffed as he holds the Memorial Trophy high after being presented with it at the Club's Christmas dinner on 16 December.

*The Memorial Trophy was instituted by the Club many years ago almost at the same time as the club was launched, to remember four young players who lost their lives in a tragic motor accident.*





## Musings on a Union

or exchanges at the kitchen sink

**My cousin's church have got their union all organised, they're joining with 2 others**

So 3 together? How's that working?

**It's not too bad – they're selling all the manses, and buying a house in the middle. One church is being sold, one is going to be a community centre, and they're keeping the biggest one.**

Can't have been easy, though?

**No, one of the congregations was very upset – understandable, but they've only got 67 members.**

67? How did they manage to keep going so long?

**With great difficulty! They just couldn't survive so a union was inevitable. It'll make a lovely community centre though.**

And the other one?

**It's going to be converted into a house.**

Oh, I wouldn't like to see that happening here!

**It's ok, it won't! I know what you mean, but really we can only use one church effectively.**

But... But... we're *part* of the church, it's part of *us* -we're 'hefted' to it, as farmers say...

**And that's very true ... hefted, thirled... old, old words ... we'd probably say 'bonded' now, although that's got the same roots, of course ...**

Aye, well, I suppose so... *bonded*. Making one church out of two, or three – or even more – I guess it will even make us stronger in the long run, better able to serve the Lord...

## The Treasurer's Thumb

Now where was I?

First things first: Although it is now some time ago, and it is also now only about 320 days 'til Christmas, may I please still wish everyone (including himself) a joyous and prosperous New Year! (I've found it always pays to be on the right side of the Treasurer).

So that's that done. But... and yes there's always a but .... I do also have to observe that my 2023 letter to Father Christmas sadly remains unanswered. No, I don't think it was personal, and this isn't a complaint; it's just an observation. And no, I am not a king, nor is my name John, and nor did I ask for a Big Red India Rubber Ball. All that I asked for was a glove; singular.

Yes. I do know that gloves more usually come in pairs, but my requirement is for one only, since I am but one digit amongst five. Right hand, extra large size, please. Why a glove? Well, in the words of the song 'It's cold outside!'. I know that my friend Pinky (not Pinkie, that's where the battle was), who lives further down the hand from me feels it badly; the cold that is. 1547 was a long time ago and it's much too long to bear a grudge for that particular defeat. But enough of history; back to the present.

Sometimes Pinky turns quite white, and tells me later that he couldn't feel anything. Then we both look down the page and see that chap WOOF with his coat on! Us lot, meanwhile are expected to hold on to the lead, shivering away together. It's not right, I tell you, and it's not as if I haven't told Marmaduke – whoops, shouldn't have disclosed his nibs full name, but it's out there now, sorry! Because I have; told him, that is.

Anyway back to the cold; it makes me shiver just to think of it. It's all this white paper I think; reminds me of snow, and my friend the printer (human) tells me we mustn't have too many pictures because the printer (machine) can go into a sulk. Sometimes the printed edition is different to the on-line one; Don't believe me? Go and look! p4. Go on!

But, the cold; I have asked himself frequently to stuff me, not literally obviously, along with Pinky and fingers 2 (which is fore), 3 (which is middle) and 4 (which is ring) - all very confusing - in his pocket just for a moment since it is usually marginally warmer and drier in there, and when it's wet outside one can get quite bedraggled; you know what it's like. If one had hair then it would be all over the place. And since one is inevitably most of the time hanging upside down at the end of Arm - more about him another time - one can't get a hat to keep the rain off; and with no chin, a chinstrap is out of the question. And anyway I'm not a penguin.

Now, where was I? Ah yes, all this white paper... Oh dear, I seem to be rapidly running out of it and I knowhimeslf is against extra expense..

**Woof, woof.**.....Hello to all my followers – but I'm afraid it's a case of 'Woe is me'. After all my efforts before Christmas, with the odds looking so much in my favour, I must once more throw myself on your mercy and plead for your sympathy. How could she – I mean 'how could she' go to the butchers and return with a huge beef fillet for them but just a few scrawny sausages for me?

Whatever happened to the 'prodigal dog' idea?

Now I'm supposed to wish you all a 'Happy New Year', I understand – well, I mean that most sincerely my friends, its just that it doesn't feel like Happy!

Don't know what the problem is – perhaps they think I'm past my use-by date?, but thinking back to last month's subterfuge, why would I have gone to all that trouble for a few measly sausages? No, it's time to don thinking caps once more – I suppose I could meet up with the lads and ask for some ideas – that may work, although I'd rather keep the lack of success to myself. Perhaps a period of 'doing nothing calm' is required?

I think that first I'll venture to a few neighbouring patches and spy out the land – stay in the shadows and watch what goes on. If I can find satisfaction elsewhere and then use home just for relaxing and sleeping I can eat what miserable pittance I'm offered – probably biscuits and gravy as usual – and feign happiness?

Watch this space !!!!!





## A plea for help!

Hi Lesley,

Happy New Year.

If I'm not too late please could you put the following plea in the next Blether?

On Friday December 1st a white mini rose plant was left for me when I was out. I don't know who left it, but if the kind person who did reads this, please will you let me know who you are so that I can thank you?

Many thanks,

Maureen Woodburn.

Isobel Laing

Currie

12 January 2024

Dear Lesley

I would like to thank all the Balerno people for their care and support during the last four year's of Allan's illness.

The cards, letters and flowers and the little acts of kindness that were shown to me at the time of his death meant so much and made the awful business of losing him that little bit easier .

A special thank you as well for Martin and our wonderful choir for singing for him. He really would have loved it.

Thank you to all of you.

Isobel

## Do You have a minute Lord?



It must feel very lonely when you are a victim of injustice. The number of cases of wrongful prosecution and conviction which have been in the news recently is not just shocking in itself, but also because of the fact that opportunities to correct these wrongs have not been taken. It is difficult to imagine the sense of frustration and futility felt by those innocent people when they had been declared 'guilty' but somehow some of them found the patience and resolve to keep maintaining their innocence and ultimately confound their accusers.

Then there are people in the Middle East and Eastern Europe who are displaced by conflicts which they did not start. These people must feel lonely and abandoned as well – but there is the danger that we become desensitised to what we see on the television news because we have become so used to destruction, suffering and death.

We are repeatedly being told that there are possibly more elections scheduled in the world this year than has ever previously been the case. In the past, without global internet coverage, we could not have been quite so well aware of what might be an approaching crossroads. We are told by the politicians that they are simply doing what the people want, so please help us to see through the canvassing and make the choices that will bring people together to increase peace and promote justice for all.

Contributed



**Come visit The Mill Café at  
the St Joseph's Centre.  
Open Tuesday to Friday,  
9.00am to 2.00pm.**

**(and the second Saturday of  
every month when Farmers'  
Market is on)**

A bowl of piping hot, home-made soup on a freezing cold winter's day with some bread and butter, or maybe a sandwich. Sounds good, doesn't it? Or maybe you would prefer a scone, freshly-made that day, and a warming cup of tea or coffee to go with it. (Incidentally, we don't charge extra for butter or jam.)



That's not all, of course. There are bacon rolls, baked potatoes, toasted sandwiches, paninis and many other snacks too. And the cakes, lovingly baked by our volunteers, are delicious! So, come on in - we'd love to see you!

A member of Edinburgh Community Cafés, The Mill Café uses Fairtrade products wherever possible.

**The Mill Café, St Joseph's Centre, 2 Main Street, Balerno**

## Fairtrade Morning, 2 March 2024



Fairtrade/Fair Trade (FT) in Balerno goes back a long time, and so does Balerno Parish Church (BPC)'s adoption of the FT Group as a church group. This has proved a win-win all round, with vital practical and moral support both from the church, knowing FT to be right, and from lots of other local community Fairtraders too. It works, and so do we: together.

And with Spring 2024 nearly here, here's everyone's big chance to bring real support to a great Fairtrade Morning in both BPC Halls on Saturday 2 March. From 10 am to 12 noon, please back stalls selling FT foods and crafts; try FT free samples; pedal a Scotmid-sponsored FT banana drink on the famous smoothie bike; try the scavenger hunt; win a FT hamper, or a tasty cake from BPC's very own FT Mill Cafe; learn how Transform Trade works; enjoy the Guild's famous refreshments and baking, with children's activities close by.

At 11 am, let's all pause to see the Lord Provost of Edinburgh presenting awards to Balerno Schools Fairtrade Art Competition 2024 prizewinners, with big thanks to both Scotmid and all three Schools' staff for all their support. Let's give our warmest BPC welcome to the children and their grown-ups, and admire the display of their artwork, all showing us how to 'Be fair to the world – choose Fairtrade!'

Thank you so much, in advance. See you later!

Lesley Henderson

on behalf of Balerno Fairtrade Village Group

# No More Work?

There can be little doubt that the attention of the nation has been gripped following the recent ITV drama series, Mr Bates vs The Post Office.

Nobody could watch it without feeling a sense of something between mild concern and outright fury that such injustice should be taking so long to acknowledge. It would appear that it has required the public exposure of a TV drama to focus the minds of politicians and managers who could have stopped this injustice 20 years ago.



The problem arose from faulty computer programming, but the injustice came from the actions of people. It is a salutary thought to remember that as Christmas approached and 2023 drew to a close the subject of Artificial Intelligence seemed to be a recurring feature in the news. Elon Musk shared his view that the Artificial

Intelligence will have the capacity to leave humanity in the position where people will no longer need to work. On the face of it, it seemed like an attractive idea, but after some reflection it can seem more like a cynical inducement to encourage the gullible to go along with something which has the potential to be a fundamentally dangerous deal – and the Horizon problems only illustrate part of the issue.

There can be no doubt that there is huge potential for AI to improve the quality of life through research and its ability to process myriads of calculations and possibilities from a vast array of databanks. However, a computer only does what it is told and its functions are all ultimately based on the instruction set with which it is programmed. The knowledge of a super computer is limited by the databanks to which it is connected. More importantly, a computer algorithm is only deemed to be effective if it achieves the result and meets the performance criteria desired by its creator at the time of writing.



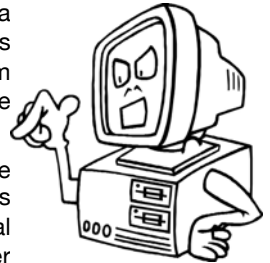
We are told that Artificial Intelligence is more than just a computer; AI goes beyond robotics and is about the creation / manufacture of a machine that has the ability to ask questions and learn for itself. So where does it learn and how does it know what are good questions? This is where the problems seem to start appearing. The

## AI and the Moral Maze

assumption in the past has been that we ask the computers the questions; what happens if the computers start asking us the questions and what questions might the computer put? What would we answer?

We can be certain that any Artificial Intelligence will reflect priorities or limits which exemplify the thought processes of its creator(s). There will be good and positive attributes, but there will also be flaws – because it will be much more complex than Horizon, and with the best will in the world, there will be oversights in the design of a machine which is specifically designed to replace a human being. The machine's idea of what is optimal will be based on the creator's evaluation of what is good. That, in turn, means that Artificial Intelligence is unlikely to be practically or morally any better than its creator; it will just be faster.

The fundamental debate about Artificial intelligence seems to revolve around doubt as to whether these computers and their AI can be trusted for the future; that doubt is founded upon the uncertainty as to what AI will be like and what controls might be placed on it. We know that people who are super-efficient are always a bit intimidating. Who is to say that a super-efficient computer might also be intimidating when it has access to so much information? We know that information is not the same as knowledge and that all knowledge needs to be tempered with wisdom. It is easy to imagine how a computer could acquire boundless amounts of information – but where does the wisdom come from that is necessary to use the information prudently?



Since humanity has failed to spread peace and goodwill throughout the world, it is difficult to be confident that any Artificial Intelligence that mortals might engineer could do anything other than increase risk for unintended harm. Suddenly, we perhaps have a new perspective on the concept of original sin. It is difficult to see how any AI can be created without it reflecting the flaws in the thinking or reasoning of its human creators. Any assertion that AI will be superior to human intelligence seems to be a rather arrogant assumption that we not only know, but can master our own human flaws.

History suggests that we can't and so the AI salesmen like Elon Musk need to be given some clear ground rules if future technology is to be moderated by a moral compass.

balerno  
blether

## Church? A place for yoga, coffee and community?

The Blether was launched in February 2021. Since then we've tried to inform you about the present and speculate about the future.

For February 2024? Well, Balerno's finances could be a lot better, and whatever happens Currie/Balerno church will have to plan for making more effective use of resources. Meanwhile our Finance and Fabric teams are working on ways in which we can cut our costs and make our enterprise more sustainable financially and more broadly. We have to look at how we can reduce our carbon footprint and live up to our badging as an Eco-congregation.

But prudent housekeeping and developing sustainable practices are the basics and little more than treading water. What will make the difference is longer term thinking, and there's the problem; what are we planning for?

The Times headlined 4th September 2023 'Flock to Church for Yoga and coffee!'. 'Churches should boost their efforts to double up as community hubs by boosting more playgroups, yoga classes, concerts, exhibitions and cafes, according to more than 70% of Church of England priests.', said the Times.

Much of our current income comes from the Mill and Hall lets. So let's be honest; take that away and we're in trouble. In the future our Balerno church buildings might be closed. What effect would that have? Remove the Parish Church's existing facilities from the village – and that could be a consequence of closure - and what does that do to our community?

We do have to start planning now to ensure that our campus assets can be available in future for the community of Balerno.

We will have to think about such issues along with Currie Kirk as our two churches become one. Currie is in a slightly different position of course since Gibson Craig is held on a different title we understand. But our two communities will continue with their own separate and distinct identities. A union of churches will not mean a union of our two villages. But, let's be clear again, our individual communities will continue to look to their church for help.

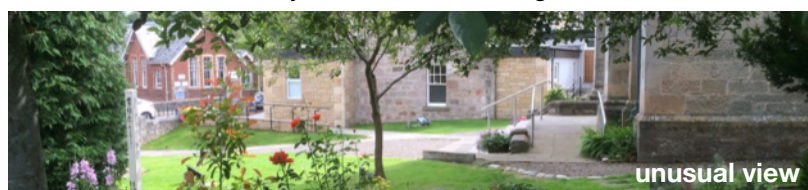
It is part of the Church's job to foster and encourage the communities where it finds itself. The Church has to ask itself what continuing obligations it has to those communities. But it is our job to start planning now for such scenarios.

# February Calendar

Unless otherwise notified Sunday worship is at 10.00am every Sunday, at Balerno Parish Church

## Dates in February/March

- 7 February - The Guild - Ogston Hall** - 7.30pm  
Scottish Prison Service with Rev Sheena Orr.
- 16 February - Edinburgh Guild at Carrick Knowe** - 2.00pm
- 20 February - The Guild - Ogston Hall** - 7.30pm  
Caring for Plants  
Euan Patterson from The Plant Shop
- 28 February - Kirk Session -St Joseph's Hall** - 7.30pm
- 2 March - Fairtrade Event - St Joseph's Hall** - 10.00am  
Stalls, information and childrens events ...  
& Smoothie Bike
- 6 March - The Guild - Ogston Hall** - 7.30pm  
History of Balerno with Douglas Lowe



unusual view

Bonus  
picture of the  
month



We found this a slightly  
unnecessary admonition.  
Were we unreasonable?

## Scottish Haiku

A bonny Ayrshire  
chews the cud on Ben Nevis –  
noo that's a high cool!

John Rice

from a year of Scottish Poems  
chosen by Gaby Morgan is  
published by Pan Macmillan,  
priced £12.99

## Useful Numbers

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## December 2023 solution



Copy and publication dates  
for March 2024 issue

## THE COPY DATE

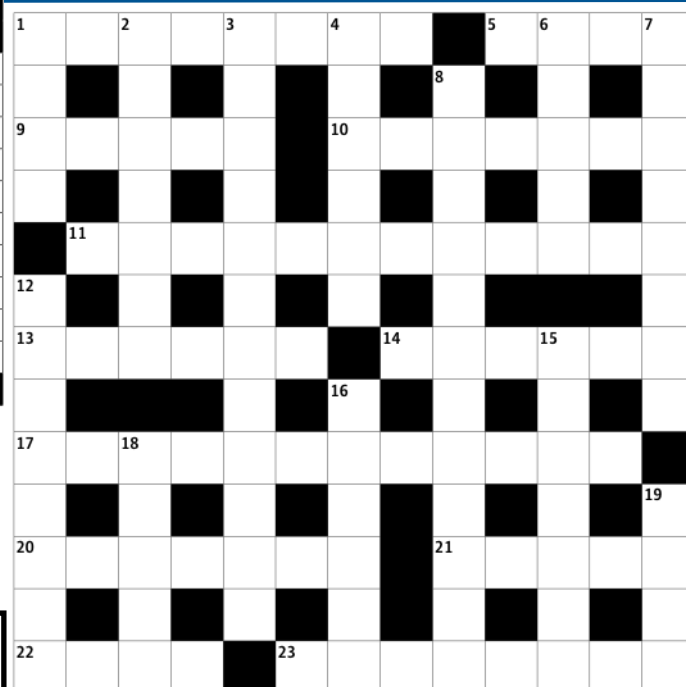
for the March 2024 issue of the  
Blether is

**Friday 16th February .**

Publication date for March issue is  
Friday 2nd March.

**Copy must be in by the Copy Date**

## February 2024 Crossword



### Across

- 1 Thought out strategy (4,4)
- 5 Member of a people of eastern Europe and Asian Russia (4)
- 9 Garfunkel's partner (5)
- 10 Settle a score (3,4)
- 11 Eventually (2,3,4,3)
- 13 Old English coins worth five shillings (6)
- 14 Material for starting a fire (6)
- 17 The Nine Days' Queen England in July 1553 (4,4,4)
- 20 Nonsense (7)
- 21 World's second most populous country (5)
- 22 Vocal composition (4)
- 23 Pink wading bird (8)

### Down

- 1 Deep open cut (4)
- 2 Keepsake (7)
- 3 Traditional puppet show (5,3,4)
- 4 Cherubim, seraphim etc (6)
- 6 Bile-secreting organ (5)
- 7 Wine merchants (8)
- 8 Holding one's ground (8,4)
- 12 Cosy tale (anag) – followers (8)
- 15 Fine German porcelain (7)
- 16 Out of sorts (6)
- 18 Attracted (to) (5)
- 19 A sign of saintliness? (4)