



A tale of two cities

Once again Balerno is out in the cold in January



Balerno awoke on 1 January to a landscape transformed into, depending on your point of view, a Winter Wonderland, a daunting travel prospect, or a reason to pull the downie over the head and pretend that it was all a bit much really.

Had you done the latter then you might have remained blissfully unaware that another dump of snow had been approaching and duly arrived on the following Sunday 5th January. You would of course have been in excellent company; City of Edinburgh Council for starters - who might seem to have woken up in a world where the City Bypass marked the end of the known world, beyond which lay the frozen waste of, what was its name again? Ah yes, the lost land of Midlothian. Last seen in 1975 at the great reorganisation when the Regions and Districts swept down upon us. And there are still remnants of that golden age; like the sign for Lothian Regional Car Park on the wall at the Scotmid carpark.

But, if we may be serious for a moment, the most commonly heard words in the first complete week of January 2025 in the Mill or elsewhere in Balerno, were 'disgrace', 'shocking', 'absolutely disgusting', 'shameful' etc etc, mostly in the same

sentence as comments on comparative ability to run a raffle or an event in a brewery.

We do not blame those hardy souls who man the gritters and snow-ploughs, especially as there are apparently only 50 on whom CEC can call to undertake the all-weather maintenance of our roads and pavements. They can only go where they are directed, and they only have the resources they are assigned. No, it's a question of whether Edinburgh Council, first, actually understands that, in 2025, it is in fact responsible for that lost land, and second, whether it has any semblance of a plan as to how it might safeguard the welfare of its citizens destined to live beyond the Pale.

There is another message in there however, and it's not buried too far below the surface.

2025 is an important year for Balerno Parish Church. It will be the year in which we have to start looking seriously at who we are, how we organise ourselves, our Linkage, and the Union.

We cannot simply pull the downie over the head, whether there's a Winter Wonderland out there, or whether there's a snow-field. The future will be for us to make.

from the Blether Team



It's not often that the Blether carries what is effectively an editorial on the front page, and even less often that our front page quite intentionally reflects adversely on the performance of our City Council. However the apparent failure of Edinburgh Council in early January to clear snow and ice from our roads and pavements meant that the people of our community were not simply inconvenienced but put at real risk of injury, and some were indeed injured.

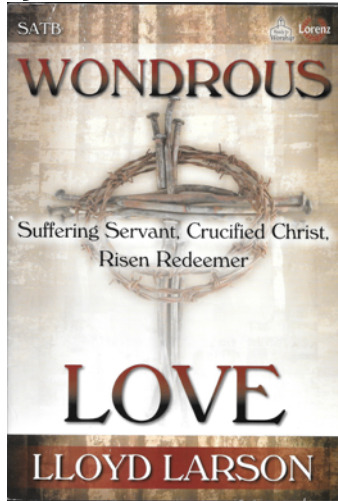
That failure was compounded by the continuing absence of any effective gritting for the first complete week of the New Year. In consequence shoppers were deterred from using local outlets. The Mill Cafe certainly noticed that familiar faces from amongst

their more elderly clientele were missing; clearly because of conditions on the streets. Businesses in the village will have suffered, and, more importantly vulnerable people were trapped in their homes. The irony is that east of Kingsknowe Park there was little if any lying snow, and therefore there should not be the same imperative for deployment of gritting teams across Edinburgh. Balerno is owed an explanation

Ours is probably the highest residential area of Edinburgh. Experience shows that bad snow affects Balerno more than the City Centre. It is time Edinburgh Council woke up and acknowledged that fact, and organised its affairs to protect lives and businesses in Balerno.

Come and join us!!

Palm Sunday will be even more special this year! 2025 will see the church resounding to Lloyd Larson's Cantata, Wondrous Love. With rich piano lines and a new melody, Lloyd Larson completely recasts the early American hymn to give it a warmth and a sense of awe during the Lenten season. Hints of the familiar tune are woven into the score and the piano accompaniment is expressive without overshadowing the beauty of the melody.



Wondrous Love will be sung as the core of the Palm Sunday joint service in Balerno, and you are invited to be at the heart of it by joining with and being part of the choir for this event.

The Choir practices in St Joseph's Hall in Balerno each Thursday 7.30 - 9.30. In the run up to Easter the Choir will devote the first hour of each practice to the Cantata enabling those who are only singing the cantata to leave if they wish, the second part of the practice will be used for the routine preparations for Sunday worship.

If you enjoy singing please come and join us. This is a great way of telling the Easter story. Lloyd Larson's setting is not difficult, in modern parlance you would describe it as 'accessible'. If you are apprehensive, come and give it a try, it's quite painless and tea, coffee and biscuits are included.

Any questions please contact Martin Petty (mpetty712@gmail.com - 449 4175) or Irene Rogerson (irenerogerson@btinternet.com - 449 4044).

thoughts from our Minister



Well, here we are in February already! The shops have swiftly moved from Christmas to St Valentine's Day. I had a work colleague who on the 13th February would announce they would be late in the next morning as they would be negotiating and opening the large pile of Valentine's cards which were going to plop through the letterbox on the 14th! Did any of you who are parents send your children a Valentine's card, just so they didn't miss out? I often marvel at the number of red roses that are grown and distributed to shops for this one day of the year - fields and fields (or probably poly-tunnels) of red roses!

Other than it being another opportunity to sell stuff, why do we celebrate St Valentine's day - and who was he? The origins are a bit vague, but it's believed Saint Valentine was a priest or a bishop in the Roman Empire who worked with persecuted Christians. Claudius was emperor at the time and he believed that Roman soldiers should be totally devoted to Rome and because of this he passed a law preventing them from marrying. However, St Valentine began to marry these soldiers in secret, thus beginning Valentine's reputation for believing in the importance of love. He was martyred on February 14, and remembered on the Feast of Saint Valentine (Saint Valentine's Day) since around about the eighth century.

I think it's important to be reminded of the power of love at this time of year. Jesus taught the centrality of love to the Christian message. The greatest of the commandments is to love God and love others. He said we are to 'Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind' and to 'Love your neighbour as yourself', 'Love your enemies' and 'Love each other as Jesus has loved you'. The bible is choc-full of love. This Valentine's Day, you might not have to struggle to open the door because of the pile of cards waiting for you, but you can certainly demonstrate love - a kind word to those you meet, a message you meant to send to an old friend, a phone call - little acts of love are just as meaningful as an enormous bunch of red roses and definitely longer lasting! *Derek*

KIRK SESSION NOTES

The January Kirk Session scheduled for 8 January had to be postponed because of the lying snow and the consequent difficulties for those in attending, It was therefore rescheduled for the 22nd with a fairly crowded agenda which required the meeting to continue from 7.30pm to after 9.30pm.

The agenda included an update on the process towards appointment of an Interim Minister. The post has now been advertised and a further update will be made at the next Session Meeting, or before, depending on the progress of the selection process.

There was considerable debate on the proposal from the Energy Group that a survey be instructed to determine whether solar panels might be installed on the roof of the church or St Joseph's. Further work was instructed on assessment of the possible gains and the matter would be brought back to the next Session Meeting.

Fabric Committee's report also led to extended discussion on the seemingly rapidly expanding list of issues which require attention in the maintenance of the building and general facilities. Finance Committee reported a significant and welcome improvement in income over the past year further details of which will be provided in the Annual Accounts for 2024, final preparation of which was underway. A further report would be made to the Kirk Session on 16 February.

In an update on the current situation of the Manse the Interim

Moderator, Rev Douglas Nicoll, indicated that while it had been expected that the Rev Groenewald and the Manse family might have vacated the property by end January, further difficulties at their new home in West Calder meant that had been delayed until end March. The implications of that were being investigated.

Session also discussed the current arrangements which govern the operation of the Mill Cafe, which provides not only a significant income for the Church but also a very significant aspect of the Church's mission in the community. Session applauded the contribution of all of those who work in the Mill

In the October 2024 issue of the Blether we reported on the situation of 23 year old Layan Nasir, a Palestinian Anglican Christian, was violently arrested and taken at gunpoint by Israeli security forces, from her parents' home in the West Bank in the town of Birzeit on Sunday 7 April 2024. This was the second time Layan Nasir had been arrested. Four years ago on 7 July 2021, she was detained at her house over her participation in student union activities at Birzeit University. Layan's family had not by October, been permitted to visit her. The Session were advised that Layan had been released on 7 December after having been held without charges for 8 months.

Session hope to meet on 16 February to consider the Annual Accounts and then on 2 April for its next business meeting.

Just in case you missed these ones!



All the right characters, although not necessarily in the right order

The three Kings travel hopefully on their way to the Manger, across the wall of the Ogston Hall, in Kids Insight's epic Christmas collage, While, at the Nativity Service, three crook-bedecked Shepherds - there may indeed have been more - look after a recalcitrant sheep - which bears a remarkable resemblance to Neil Johnstone - with lamb (in an albeit somewhat unconventional carrying posture!).

Question; What has the recalcitrant sheep just said?
And what happened next?

The Spirit of Christmas Past

The Blether doesn't usually feature Christmas in a February issue but these pictures were crying out for publication. And in any event we thought you'd also be interested in some stats, which showed that there were over 80 at the Nativity Service and over 100 at the Lessons and Carols Service, which at least one person described as the best ever.



Come along and join in the fun on **Saturday 8th February** 10am to 12noon at **Ogston Hall** for **Lego Church!**

Watch some videos of Bible stories animated in Lego and then build your own version.

There will be prizes and other craft activities available.

This family event will run from 10am until 12, and you are welcome to drop in at any time.

Look forward to seeing you there!





Vacancy

Café Supervisor required



Balerno Parish church's initiative -The Mill Café is a thriving community café for all in the centre of Balerno which is open 4 days-a-week and on the monthly Farmers' Market Saturdays. It is staffed mainly by volunteers working with a small staff team. The Mill Café is 12 years old. Staff Positions rarely come up making this a wonderful opportunity for someone to work locally.

Part time Café Supervisor – Wednesday & Friday 8am-3.30pm (15 hrs) & a share of Farmers markets Saturdays

We would be happy to consider splitting the days to create 2 Positions should we get interest.

Job description available upon request.

Send CV with appropriate qualifications and relevant experience to:-

The Mill Café manager:- Lynsey Inglis themillatstjosephs@gmail.com

Closing date for applications: - 28/02/25

We reserve the right to offer the position to the right person should they come along earlier.

- Balerno Parish Church has been accredited as a Real Living Wage Employer

Success at the Mill



The Mill Café

2024 was a very successful year for The Mill; providing good food and a friendly face is proving to be very popular with people of all ages in the community. Vital to the success are our staff and our volunteers, and in 2024 The Mill was pleased to welcome a number of new volunteers

including an excellent group of senior pupils from Balerno High School.

Change is always with us and readers will have seen the advertisement for part time staff. Two of our team have decided that it is time to retire but not until replacements have been found, a proper thank you will appear in a later Blether when they actually retire. In the meantime we are very pleased to report that a new member of staff, Jen Summers, has joined the team.

One of the commitments The Mill makes to its volunteers is that when there is an operating surplus donations will be made to local causes chosen by them as well as to the church's finances. Success with serving many coffees, snacks and lunches has led to a healthy bank balance so that this year The Mill is pleased to report that as well as donating a substantial amount to church funds which will help to cover the costs of heating and lighting it has also been able to make donations to -

- ★ The Louise Duncan Bursary
- ★ Balerno High School hardship fund for two pupils' Duke of Edinburgh Award fees.
- ★ The family in Deanpark Avenue whose house was burnt out on the 9th December.
- ★ SSPCA
- ★ Maggie's Centre
- ★ The Octagon Club
- ★ The Foodbank at Holy Trinity in Wester Hailes.

Why not come and enjoy a freshly baked scone and a cup of coffee or have a bite of lunch; better still why not come and join the team of volunteers, there are so many ways you can help and enjoy being part of the team. If you have any questions, ask our Manager, Lynsey Inglis, or email Themillatstjosephs@gmail.com

Do you have a minute, Lord?



It's about my age, Lord. The mirror tells me that I'm not as young as I used to be, but I don't feel like I think I look. Perhaps the most significant thing concession I will make is that I have to admit that I probably have less energy – but then I see the younger generation do something which I might describe as 'inadvisable' or possibly even 'indefensible' and then some of my energy seems to return! I fear that I am becoming a little like my parents and resistant to change.

I fear a little for the younger generation who spend so much time on screens – whether the screen is a tablet, a computer or a smartphone. They are not talking to each other face to face, but are glued to the screen and only in communication with a disembodied friend – which is not without serious risk when the 'friend' is unknown. They are indoors and neither taking advantage of the fresh air nor the healthy exercise which is provided by the outdoor environment.

Many children of my post-war generation were scarred by the experience of being compelled to read Oliver Twist at a tender age. It was feared that young people spent too much time watching the television and parents were concerned about the possible corrupting influence of 'pop' music: but the world had changed by the time these children had grown up and, one way or another, most of them had acquired the life-skills that they needed.

So, I am trying to persuade myself that the younger generation will be all right. In spite of my reservations about the recreation of modern youth, I am simply praying that the world of conflict, competition and destruction which seem to be the major components of computer games are not the most influential preparation for their future lives. We need more peacemakers – please.

Helen Bisset



Helen Bisset died on 11 December 2024, two weeks before her 81st Birthday. Born Helen Elizabeth Shedden on Christmas Day 1943 in Simpsons Maternity Hospital, she was the only child of Tom and Jean Shedden and grew up in Leith. Although she was an only child, Helen was close to her wider family and in particular spent a lot of time growing up with her cousin Maureen.

Helen went to school at Leith Academy, first to the primary and then the secondary, where she made lifelong friendships some of whom continued to visit her regularly right to the end of her life in St Margarets Care Home.

The church was also always part of her life and as well as Sundays. It was appropriate then that after leaving school, Helen got a job as a secretary/administrator with the Church of Scotland in 121 George Street.

Helen met Ken Bisset in 1971 and they married on 30 September 1972, Ken and Helen, living first in Greenfield Road in Balerno, where their first child Jennifer was born in 1974 followed by Scott in 1977. Shortly after they moved to Greenfield Crescent which became the family home.

As the family grew up, Helen was an Avon lady, a tradition carried on by Jennifer, before returning to her job at 121 where she worked until her retirement in 2003.

Helen and Ken welcomed Clara and Jamie to the family with their marriages to Scott & Jennifer, and they were delighted to welcome grandchildren - Scott and Clair had Mya and Louis, and Jennifer and Jamie, Ryan. All were a constant source of joy and pride.

Helen's love of singing and dancing was a lifelong passion. She was in both the Telephone Choir and the Southern Light Opera where she sang in the chorus and latterly also helped behind the scenes. She enjoyed Scottish Country Dancing and was a member of the Atholl Country dancing Club - even travelling abroad to do demonstrations. In church she was a pivotal member of the choir and was also an Elder, as well as being involved in various groups including the Young Wives Group.

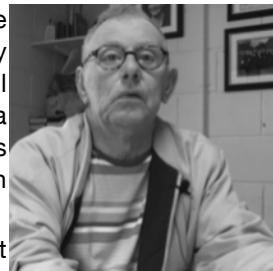
The church at Balerno was important to Helen and Ken - they appreciated the many friendships and support that continued to grow through the years. Helen was a long time member of the Church Choir which she enjoyed very much.

Helen had time for everyone - and everyone loved her. She never complained - even when very ill.

Helen and Ken celebrated their golden wedding in 2022, celebrating with family and friends. Sadly Ken died in June 2023 and as a result of Helen's health she moved to St Margaret's Care Home. To the very end she never complained and always had the sunniest outlook.

Helen is fondly remembered by all at Balerno Parish Church.

Dougie Mackay MBE



Douglas Scott McKay MBE, known to everyone as Dougie was born in Simpsons Maternity Hospital on 16 May 1946. His mum and dad Bill and Peggy had three children, Douglas, Roberta and Linda. Sadly, Roberta died aged just 7 years old. Dougie's younger sister Linda was born in 1962.

Initially the family lived in the prefabs at Craigmillar, before moving to Hutchison Avenue where Dougie went to school at Balgreen Primary and then to Tynecastle High. Bill and Peggy both came from large families and many of Peggy's family lived fairly locally in the Stenhouse and Broomhouse area, meaning Dougie played often with his cousins who were of similar ages. He spent a lot of time with his cousins Jeanette and John in particular. Linda can recall Dougie and Janette queuing up all night to get tickets to see the Beatles which he always listened to as a teenager. Linda also remembers many happy family days out when the aunts, uncles and cousins would go off for picnics together to such places as Peebles and West Linton. On Sunday mornings 14 of the family would go to the Commy pool and then back to Granny Scotts at Loganlea for dinner. A tradition that Lee and Heather also remember growing up when Dougie would take them and the neighbourhood kids to the Commy pool and spending Sundays and having dinner with the family at Hutchison.

Dougie became interested in motorbikes, and after leaving school he worked for a while in Uncle Hugh's workshop in Dalry before becoming a turner in Ferrantis in 1967. During this time Dougie met the love of his life, Anne, and they were married in 1968. Married life started in Yeaman Place but before long they moved to Calder Gardens and while living there Lee and then Heather were born in 1973 and 1975. In 1977 they moved to Marchbank Way, which became the family home. Dougie got a job with Edinburgh Instruments at Heriot Watt's Research Park as a laser technician - a job which took him all over the world to install these specialist instruments.

Dougie of course loved football; he was a great Livingston fan dating back to time at Ferranti, and when the team moved to Meadowbank, they became Meadowbank Thistle and eventually Livingston. In the early days both Dougie, Anne and Linda worked at Meadowbank Stadium. Dougie did the commentary at Meadowbank, played the music at half time and the announcements when the team scored. The family still have his record collection from those days. Dougie loved his music - and loved it loud! He loved Andre Rieu and the family took him to see him in concert for his 70th birthday which he enjoyed immensely.

Dougie was also a special constable from 1979; and there's a lot more about that in the February 2024 Blether!

Dougie never really gave up work. After he left Edinburgh Instruments he worked with the Police and Sxotmid and Sainsburys and at the Mill Cafe. As a testament to the kind of man he was, as recognition for his services to the community with the Specials, Dougie was awarded an MBE in 2000. He received this from the Queen at Holyrood Palace - he was so chuffed to receive this at the same time Sean Connery was given his Knighthood and they were able to chat!

After 25 years service Dougie retired from the specials in 2004. During his final duty at Tynecastle there was a tannoy call at halftime for 'Special Constable McKay to report to the centre circle'. So he marched on and was met by Wallace Mercer the then chairmen to make a presentation to him on behalf of Heart of Midlothian Football Club.

Dougie was a very special person, and the Church was always special to him. He never saw himself as old and always enjoyed life. He loved his cars and driving - particularly his Honda jazzes of which he owned three. He was a passionate supporter of Livingston football club and very vocal if he disagreed with the referee's decision when he attended their matches with the family. His death was very sudden and shocked everyone. We will all miss him.

Just Giving

The young minister was on holiday in the western highlands and had agreed that he would, as a favour for a friend lead the worship for a congregation in a remote parish which was vacant and had been unsuccessful in trying to recruit a new minister.

As he arrived at the front door of the kirk before the service with his family, he was confronted with the expectant offering plate which had been placed on its prominent stand at the entrance, waiting in patient expectation for the congregation. The young minister hesitated before putting his hand in his pocket and producing a £5 note which he hoped might help to act as bait to encourage giving.

The service was well attended and the minister was well received, and as the conversation with the departing congregation came to an end, an elder put his hand in the plate and gave the minister a £5 note which, he was told would cover his expenses. As he walked away, the minister's 10 year old daughter was heard to ask her father, "Maybe if you'd put more in you would have got more out?"

Now; what would you have done? On the way in? On the way out? And was his daughter right?



Louise Duncan Travel Bursary

Balerno Parish Church's congregation is seeking applications for the 2025 award of its Louise Duncan Bursary.

Commemorating the life and work of former minister, Louise Duncan, our eponymous bursary provides £500 to a young adult aged 17 to 25 (inclusive), living in or near Balerno, to help meet the cost of travelling out of Scotland to take part in voluntary work which has an aim of benefiting disadvantaged communities.

Once returned, the congregation would enjoy an account of the experience the travel bursary has helped provide. In previous years we have heard from successful applicants who travelled to teach young children in Cambodia for two months and who went to Bolivia for a year-long placement with a human rights NGO.

Closing Date: Applications should be received on or before midnight of Wednesday 26th February 2025.

Shortlisted applicants will be asked to interview in March 2025 with the successful applicant announced by the end of March 2025. Travel supported by the Louise Duncan Bursary must take place during the calendar year it is awarded.

Application forms are available from the church's website:

<https://tinyurl.com/k63dvh2m>

by contacting bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk or using the QR code.



Church of Scotland HIV (Aids) Programme

from a letter to congregations from CofS Faith Actions Programme 10 January 2025

On the 10th of January, congregations were informed that the decision had been taken by the Faith Action Leadership Team and the Assembly Trustees to close the Church of Scotland HIV Programme. The Programme began in 2002 as an all church project following a plea at the General Assembly from overseas partners who were struggling to cope with their situation. In July of that year, the Joint United Nations Programme on Aids reported that HIV/Aids had become the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa with life expectancy falling from 62 years to 47 years. Aids had emerged to be the fourth biggest global killer disease.

The Project was funded initially by an appeal to every single member of the Church of Scotland and has subsequently been funded through congregational and individual donation, legacies and over £40,000 from the Heart & Soul Swing Band who raised funds at every single one of their concerts. In 2010, the first *Souper Sunday* took place and this opportunity to have a dedicated Sunday Service, fully resourced, followed by a soup lunch was so successful that there has been a designated *Souper Sunday* every year which became a mainstay of the fundraising. Each December 1st, World AIDS Day was highlighted in some way, often with partners in Scotland and around the world, helping to keep members of the congregations up to date with the progress to achieving an AIDS free world.

We celebrated reaching £1,000,000 in 2008 and with that, and the money raised since then we have supported 86 different projects around the world, some in multiple years. The grants have been small but have made the difference to programmes who are not able to access funding from large funders. They



have also made a difference to the thousands of recipients of education, care and support both in Scotland and around the world.

The Programme was unique in that the Church of Scotland was the only denomination in the UK to have had a programme which was specifically dedicated to dealing with the impact of HIV. Over the years, the project had excellent working relationship with the World Council of Churches, Christian Aid and a number of Scottish and UK wide organisations.

The decision has been made to close the Church of Scotland HIV Programme at 31st December 2024 with the remaining funds being distributed to partners in the first quarter of 2025. The closure of the Programme does not mean that HIV and AIDS is no longer an issue. The situation is however different than the one partners faced in 2002 following the advent of antiretroviral drugs. However today there are new concerns, particularly with key groups of people, and especially young people. There is still no cure. Numbers infected continue to rise in some parts of the world. Our partners continue to support HIV and AIDS work. We will continue to support their work directly with any future donations received.

The Faith Action Programme Staff of the Church of Scotland are obviously working in a rapidly changing world where new problems are always emerging and the resources to meet them are having to be spread increasingly thinly. They are grateful to everyone who has supported the Church of Scotland HIV and AIDS Programme over the past 22 years and helped to make the difference between life and death for many people around the world.

izzarrafactorno?

So what's all this about Lego Church then?

Good morning girls and boys. Now are you all sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin. The Lego Group began manufacturing interlocking toy bricks as long ago as 1949, and

How come I didn't have any then?

Thank you George. Possibly because you were too young, and they didn't get any here until 1955. The first LEGO sets sold in Britain were sold in January 1960. They were imported from Denmark, and a lot of the very old UK sets have that printed on the sides of the boxes.

Now, pay attention, moulding the bricks is done in Denmark, Hungary, Mexico, and China. Brick decorations and packaging are done at plants in the former three countries and also in the Czech Republic.

You've just mentioned four countries.....

Thank you George; it's always good to know someone is awake. I said three because that's what Wikipedia said. Anyway, if I may continue. Annual production of the bricks averages approximately 36 billion, or about 1140 elements per second. One of Europe's biggest companies, Lego is the largest toy manufacturer in the world by sales. And as of July 2015, 600 billion Lego parts had been produced,

Could you not get us more up to date figures?

Thank you George; but Wikipedia is still counting them one by one I gather and if you laid them all end to end how far would that get you?

Here to the Kingston Bridge?

Thank you George. Were you thinking of going off in an easterly direction perhaps?

No, just along the M8

You could just keep on going, then, round the world five times before you ran out of bricks.

Is that further than the yellow brick road?

Thank you George. If you set off now you could find out and you might just be back for the next issue of the Blether.

But you've not told about us Lego church yet!

Thank you George. Saturday 8 February at the Ogston Hall.

I'll see you there then! Building! Building! Building!

Thank you, George; mind and bring your Brick Bible.

The Treasurer's Thumb

5:4 on

'How now, Thumb?' The strange New Year greeting from himself half wakes me from a deep slumber. 'What country, friends, is this?' I blurt out, 'Only it's half way through January, by my reckoning at least, so well past Twelfth Night'. 'Very funny. But today, Master Thumb,' he responds, a little portentously, 'Today,... is a good day; nay forsooth it is a great day!' Please, please don't let him announce he's just been sworn in as President.

The thought is so appalling that I am, at last, fast awakening. 'What are you on about? This isn't Illyria; it's Balerno and it's snowing! Cooee sir! time to remember where we are!' But no; today was to be his day. 'Tush and bah, sir!', and with that he sets to drumming his fingers on the table; so any lingering torpor is battered from me. Moreover the drumming is, interestingly, in 5/4 time - yes I know that isn't the least interesting for you, but it is for me. 5:4 time is particularly insensitive given that I am therefore bouncing off the table top, and much harder than any of my colleagues. I don't think they were overly chuffed either.

I know that himself likes Dave Brubeck and 'Take Five', and that once started he doesn't let up; so the drumming went on and on... and on. And then when it eventually stopped that was only so the vinyl could plop down on to the turntable, and away we went for another trip down memory lane.

I know because it's happened before at times of great euphoria, that himself moves from Dave Brubeck to Donna Summer and Hot Stuff - you know the one, the DHSS office and Tom Wilkinson doing his thing. C'mon now. You must know that one! You see the connection, don't you? No? Where were you in 1997? It's 5:4 again! From now everything will have to be 5:4 time. A long journey followed visiting Holst's Mars, Chopin Piano Sonata 1 in C minor, all Six Schubert songs (op18), Borodin's Symphony no3 (unfinished) - just as well really - and Glinka's 'Life for the Tsar' - mind you that one has its moments, like Suite III *Krakowiak*; try it sometime.

Anyway in thus wise the day did pass, and one did at times feel as though one had been storm tossed throughout.

'Today, Master Thumb.' (Eh up lad, here we go; and we've had this bit already) 'Today is a good day; nay forsooth it is a great day!' Right, OK so we've got that. No need to repeat yourself. Just tell us why is it so great? 'It's a great day' ... this better be good, 'because',... yes? ... 'because today the accounts were finished!'

Pardon? Is that it then? Have I had my brains bashed out 5:4 time because you'd done the adding up?

A hurt look comes over himself's still smiling vizog; I relent. 'I suppose that might just possibly be good news, ... all round', I mutter to myself.

WOOF

[by appointment]

Good day my friends, It is my sad duty to report that Her Majesty the Queen's dog - "Beth" - has died - a result of an untreatable tumour.

From the attached photograph it's plain to see that this privileged lady doggie must be a relative of mine, however distant, and this has started me thinking. I wonder if dogs have family trees or can tell their heritage from a DNA sample, and if so, is it totally beyond the bounds of possibility that we could have been related? All right, so it's a long shot but there have been cases where humans have discovered that they were near kin to someone very important. Could there have been a royal canine liaison many years ago? - and if so, who was the other party? Or perhaps I'm just being a little excitable or over-optimistic?

So then, down to 'brass tacks' - there must now be a vacancy in the Royal Household to take over Beth's duties. Must her replacement be female? - and will the position be advertised? They're bound to want a dog with a decent pedigree I suppose? But hang on, do the adults in my family know my pedigree?

Oh dear, the more I think about it the more uncertain I become - by the time I've checked my credentials the post will likely have been filled. And then of course, I'd have to move south to England - can't say I'm too 'chuffed' with that idea. On reflection, I'll give the idea a miss (no pun intended) wouldn't want to miss my monthly chat with you, my lovely friends.



Calendar announcements

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

February 2025 Calendar

February services

Sun 23rd Feb; 10.30am; service at Currie Kirk.
(NB - No service in Balerno)

February events

Wed 5th Feb; 7.30pm;
The History of Balerno, part 2,
with Douglas Lowe

Sat 8th Feb; morning; **LEGO CHURCH**

Wed 12th Feb; 7.30pm;
Balerno Parish Church
Work in Jerusalem
Rev Stuart Gillan,
Minister at St Andrews Jerusalem,
Balerno Mission Partner,
will speak on work in Jerusalem

Wed 19th Feb; 7.30pm
Flower arranging
with Shelagh Anderson

March (and beyond) events

Sun 9 Mar; provisional date for start of
Lent Study Group.

Sat 15 Mar; Fairtrade Morning;



Copy deadlines
Copy for the March issue
of the Blether must be submitted by
Friday 14 February

March 2025 (and beyond) Calendar

March Services

Sun 2 Mar -
Communion at 10.00am and 3.00pm

Tues 4 Mar- Shrove Tuesday
7.00pm service at Balerno Parish Church

Wed 5 Mar - Ash Wednesday
6.45pm service at Balerno Parish Church

Sun 13 Apr; 10.00am;
Palm Sunday; at Balerno Parish Church
Service of readings and songs led by the
Choir will include Palm Sunday Cantata

Thurs 17 Apr. 7.00pm
Maundy Thursday; services at
Balerno Parish Church.

Fri 18 Apr; Good Friday;
7.00pm at Currie Kirk

Sun 20 Apr; Easter Sunday Services
in both Currie Kirk and at
Balerno Parish Church

June Services;

Sun 22 June ; Summer picnic service
at 10.30am at Currie Kirk.



Fairtrade Morning

Don't forget to keep your morning free for the
Fairtrade (FT) Morning in Balerno Parish Church Halls
on Saturday March 15. We're celebrating, 20 years on from the first
similar Fairtrade Morning in 2005, so please do be part of 2025's,
helping FT continue to thrive, as you do so!

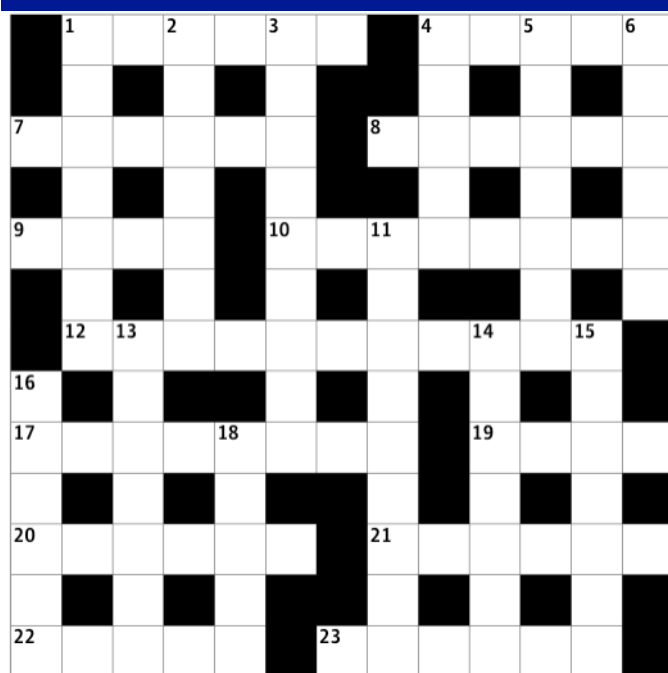
All welcome! Please see March's 'Blether' for details.



Crossword corner Christmas Special' answer

T	E	A	P	L	A	N	T	A	T	I	O	N
I	D	I	E	L	D	O						
P	Y	J	A	M	A	S	C	H	E	A	T	
			O	B	T		O	A	E			
F	L	U	X		F	L	I	P	F	L	O	P
A	R	B	E	O								A
C	O	N	G	E	R	O	P	E	N	U	P	
E		Q	J	S	O	E						
C	O	M	P	U	T	E	R	S	T	I	R	
R	E	E	S	Z	H							
E	X	T	R	A		T	E	A	C	A	K	E
A		E	T			E	N	L	E			
M	E	R	T	H	Y	R	T	Y	D	F	I	L

Crossword Corner February 2025 puzzle



Across

- 1 Watch the pennies (6)
- 4 Channels of mass communication (5)
- 7 Penniless person (6)
- 8 One from down under (6)
- 9 Metric unit of weight (4)
- 10 Unruly adolescent of the 1950s (5,3)
- 12 Begin! (3,8)
- 17 Bender (3,5)
- 19 Police — fluff (4)
- 20 Create (6)
- 21 Ultimate aim (3-3)
- 22 Monetary unit of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Yemen (5)
- 23 Hawker (6)

Down

- 1 Scanty — merciful (7)
- 2 Sympathetic relationship (7)
- 3 Legally authorised postponements of the fulfilment of obligations (9)
- 4 Earth bank (5)
- 5 Rubbish repository (7)
- 6 Yes, skipper! (3,3)
- 11 Low cut (9)
- 13 Ambassador's residence (7)
- 14 Unbeliever (7)
- 15 Greedy eater or drinker (7)
- 16 Miss Muffet frightener? (6)
- 18 Lager (anag) (5)

Useful Numbers

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