

# balerno



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

**FREE**

# Blether



Issue no 45

October 2025

## Approaching a bi-centenary

It's not everyday you mark a centenary or for that matter a bi-centenary. 200 years is a long time!

Balerno Parish Church was founded in July 1826, with the church, now St Joseph's being opened in 1828. Next year therefore Balerno Parish Church will celebrate its bi-centenary.

Establishment of a new church in Balerno followed a meeting at the home of James Melrose at Clayhills. We do not have any pictures of the house although we can guess what it may been like from the cottage at 14 Ladycroft which dates from the early 19thC and which was for many years a small farm. We can visualise where it was by looking at Greenwood's 1828 map of Edinburgh which shows three buildings half away along the now Johnsburn Road.

Balerno might have had a population of 500 or so in 1826, but no more. There was some quarrying, and farming in the area. Some

### New Guild National Convener takes up office



The Annual Gathering of the Church of Scotland Guild was held on Saturday the 13th of September in the North Church, Perth. It was attended by around 600 members and friends who gathered to hear from the out going National Convener, Christina Patterson, and also from the Moderator of the Church of Scotland the Right Rev Rosie Frew (pictured above with Kay), Lynsey Brown from TASH, a charity supporting Ukraine and from Phill Mellstrom, the Church of Scotland's Worship leader, who helped develop the new CH4 supplement: God Wellcomess all.

Kay Coull described the event as an 'inspiring, uplifting day which concluded with the installation of the new National Convener, which was me !! An enormous privilege.'

Rev Dr Andre Groenewald officiated as Kay took the oath of office before Christina Patterson transferred the badge of office.

Kay described it all as 'A wonderful day of fellowship' and the Blether adds its congratulations on this signal honour conferred on her. Well done Kay !

mills were in existence by then on the Bavelaw Burn and the Water of Leith. For example Byrnie's Mill was built on the Bavelaw Burn in 1799 close to the site of the old Green Bridge.. This was a 'one vat mill', built for a Helen Logan to make coarse paper from rags. It later became a saw mill and a water powered furniture workshop called Smith's Sawmill and Joinery, which was still using the water wheel in the 1940's.

Improvements in farming were coming in by 1826. The 1828 map shows the shelter belt field pattern of the Cockburn and Dean Park area, and that extended down to Clayhills.

James Melrose and William Stevenson who were at the meeting would also recognise Malleny House (1637) and Bridge (18thC) as well as the Ravelrig Walled Garden which was laid down in the late 18thC.

They might have known of the Balerno Distillery Co, which was apparently established also in 1826, with a distillery thought to have been located just off Harlaw Road.

A James Waterson, along with John Wilson, is credited with having started distilling in 1825, following the 1823 Excise Act which made legal distilling profitable for the first time, such that many modern distilleries were founded in the following decade.

Balerno Distillery was said to have produced a short lived single malt. Sadly, the Balerno Distillery Company which became known as John Fullerton and Co was dissolved in 1830 and the Balerno Distillery, if it ever existed, was closed.

All the while Balerno folk went to Currie for worship. Currie had had a kirk with the Kirk of Kinleith having been built in about 1296. Currie Kirk as it now is, was built in 1784 with later extensions in 1791, the steeple and vane being added in 1818.

Maybe Melrose and Stevenson thought, 'we'd like one like that', or maybe they were getting a little frustrated with the church generally which had apparently stopped recognising new parishes, just at the time when the industrial revolution was taking hold and church building was preparing to take off. The Free Church built nearly 500 by 1844.

More from the Blether next month as preparations for Balerno's bi-centenary celebrations take shape.

# A Journey of Remembrance - June 2025 - pt 2

Bill Brown

The first part of this article was published in the September Balerno Blether.

Readers will recall that Bill and Diane Brown visited the battlefields of Northern France this Spring with a view to building up pen pictures of the casualties to supplement Memorial Books containing all relevant and available information for each casualty. Those are now available in the Link Building of Currie Kirk.

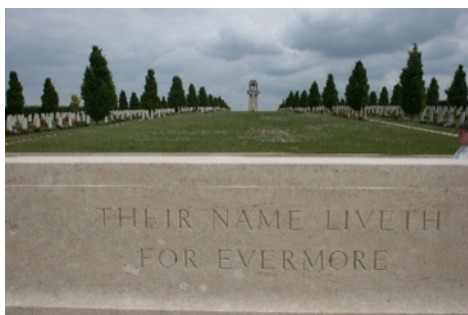


On the first three days of their trip Bill and Diane had visited the Thiepval Memorial. They identified each name on the respective panels of the huge Memorial and stood in silent contemplation. John Cassidy; George Downie; Joseph Godley; Frederick Lewis; Frank McCue; Robert Murray; Thomas Shankie; Alexander Smart; Peter Swan. From Thiepval we travelled to Warlincourt Halte Cemetery and stood at the grave of Andrew Fraser. At Doullens Communal Cemetery, they saw the memorial to Frank Byrne, and at their final stop on day 1, the Arras Memorial, they paid tribute to Robert Davidson; Arthur McGuigan; Peter M. Stuart; Robert Traill; John Williamson. On day 2 they went to Bray Military Cemetery where Kenneth D. Thompson is buried and then to Danzig Alley British Cemetery, Mametz for the grave of John Steuart grave of John Stewart, Royal Engineers.

On day 3 they visited Tincourt New British Cemetery and Vaulx Hill Cemetery. Tincourt is the resting place of Archibald Moffat, and Vaulx Hill is where William Knox is buried. Knox was a member of the Tank Corps. Interestingly he is buried next to Lieutenant Sewel VC also of the Tank Corps. We rejoin Bill and Diane on Day 4 -



We were quickly back on the trail and visited the French National Memorial at Notre Dame de Lorette. It is the final resting place of over 40,000 WW1 French casualties from the fighting in Northern France. Beside the Memorial is the Ring of Remembrance which commemorates almost 580,000 casualties from all sides killed on the Western Front. The Memorial is made up of 500 plates of bronzed stainless steel in a huge elliptical circle like an open book. We identified the names from our boards killed in that area. The names are recorded in alphabetical order. The first name is that of a Nepalese sailor serving with the British Merchant Navy and the last is the name of a German serviceman.



Day 6 saw us at the wonderful Australian site at Villers Bretonneux where the names of William Butler and Thomas Urquhart are commemorated. If you ever visit this Memorial make sure you have plenty of time. The cemetery is fairly vast with an accessible tower where you can look over the battlefield. Parts of the site sustained WW2 damage from German troops which is still visible. The site also contains the Sir John Monash museum. I



don't have enough superlatives to describe this museum.

Bouchoir New British Cemetery has the grave of James Cassidy of the Royal Scots. The cemetery has a large number of Royal Scots within it including many killed on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1918, the same day as Cassidy. They will have been part of the Allied Offensive which was the Battle of Amiens.

Our final visit was to the Canadian Memorial at Vimy Ridge. I have visited many WW1 memorials in France and Flanders. They all have different attributes but Vimy is simply stunning. It never fails to impress and along with Tyne Cot Cemetery, Passchendaele has the ability to bring tears to my eyes at every visit. The Memorial bears the name of William Young. He originated from Glenbrook, Balerno but emigrated to British Columbia only join the 7<sup>th</sup> BC Regiment to help in the war.



Our week on the Somme ended with a quite spectacular electric storm before we headed west into Brittany for a well deserved gastronomic break. We will return to France and Flanders for further research in the future.



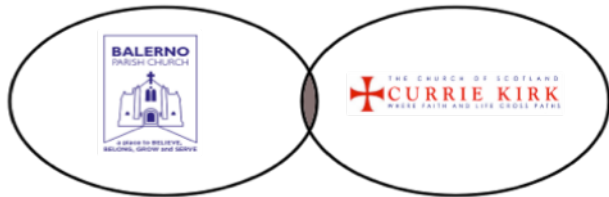
If anyone is thinking of doing a bit of historical research themselves, either for interest or perhaps researching a family member then I'm happy to give advice and assistance if required. If going to the Somme then you will find the accommodation at Gites de Nobescourt very hard to beat.

Finally, as mentioned above, it is unlikely that we will be able to visit all the sites, particularly those further afield. If you happen to be near any of the sites and have the time please visit and stand for a moment to remember those parishioners who gave their lives for us. Take a photograph and pass it to Diane or John and they will include your visit in the Books of Remembrance at C

# Sustainability and Balerno linked with Currie

Sustainability is a well-used word these days which has been commandeered by pressure groups and politicians who are seeking to preserve our planet from the asphyxiation of our own pollution. Our congregation has taken steps to reduce energy consumption on our campus and is seeking to do so further in the hope that we will not only contribute less to pollution, but will have lower energy bills as well.

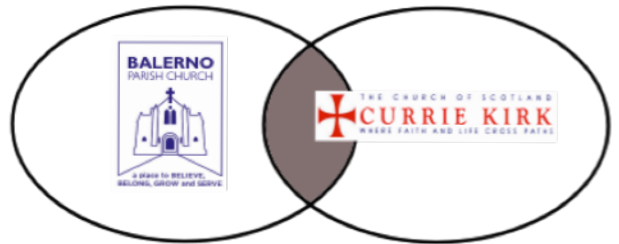
But that's not all that sustainability is about; when you take the word out of the context of environmental issues, sustainability is about the retention of the necessary energy to maintain a certain level of performance and effectiveness. While the church is able to find strategies to make more effective use of the physical energy consumed in its buildings, it is currently finding it much more challenging to sustain its mission and service in the community. However, to be fair, this is not just a local problem and it is one that has been developing for some time.



As many readers are aware, the process from linkage towards the anticipated union of Currie Kirk with Balerno Parish Church is not moving quickly – but that was probably never likely to be the case. To the outside observer, it would appear that there is little evidence of progress towards this union as both congregations continue with worship in their own buildings in much the same manner as they have done for some decades. It is quite understandable for there to be suspicion about change –

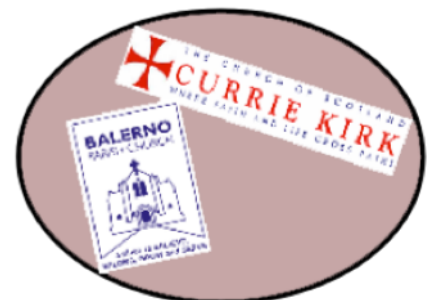
especially in the absence of clear guidelines about the direction of travel and the timetable.

'If I can't draw it, I don't understand it,' is one of those quotations which is attributed to Albert Einstein, but it is probably a thought which has resonated in many minds when in the process of trying to work out exactly what they are trying to do. Could illustration be helpful in summarising the possible anticipated outcomes which may be in the minds of the various shareholders in coming discussions between the two congregations? There is perhaps a significant debate to be held over the subject of which of these models presents the closest representation of the anticipated future for the organisation and activities of the two congregations.



It is a debate which has the potential to be both time consuming and energy sapping, but it would be a mistake to allow ourselves to be distracted by arguments about structures when the sad reality is that the two organisations are coming together because it is anticipated by the presbytery that they will not be able to sustain their current performance into the future. The presbytery may not be wrong in that perception, but it may be a bit optimistic to anticipate that the discussion of an amalgamation of two congregations which is focussed on the preservation of old hierarchical structures has the potential to reverse the decline in church membership.

It would be fair to say that there is some bewilderment in the church as to why it is criticised for being 'out of touch' with communities. It would be a step forward if we were to remember that all the people of the parish are shareholders in the church – whether they are members or not. Many of them may not cross the threshold, but there are few who have no interest in the continued presence of the church. The future sustainability of parish ministry in Currie and Balerno is not just dependent upon the outcome of discussions between their Kirk Sessions and the presbytery – the people on the inside; it is dependent upon the willingness of those on the inside to promote the greater involvement of the people who are currently on the outside and for whom the traditional processes of the church have become a deterrent to active involvement even although they are supportive of its purpose.



**Remember that all the people of the parish are shareholders in the future of the church, whether they are members or not.**

# A tribute to Sandra Innes

Sandra Mary Innes was born on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1946 and sadly died on 14 August 2025. Sandra and Ross were married on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1970 at St James Parish Church in Portobello where Sandra had grown up. She was a pupil at Cranley School for Girls where her forte was sport becoming over time a skilled badminton player, competing in the Heather League. Outside of school and home she had a passion for horses. Sandra was also an enthusiastic Brownie leader having been an equally enthusiastic Guide and a Brownie before that.

Sandra met Ross at a church dance, where, this being the early sixties, 'the girls were at one end of the room while the boys were at the other. That soon changed however and Ross ended up walking Sandra home, discovering only at the last minute that her younger brother was part of the deal. Ross and Sandra became, as would be said now, an 'item' going out together to supper dances and to hear live bands across the City, to which they could go courtesy of her dad's generosity in lending his butcher's van. They married on 29 August 1970 at St James Parish Church – complete with Brownie Guard of Honour, before starting married life at 4 Fountainhall Road, where Scott was born in 1974, and then moving to Balerno in 1980 where Tricia was born in 1977.

Sandra was absorbed in family life and had not thought about returning to work. Then her boss at that time got back in touch with her and in Sandra's own words to Ross at the time, 'he asked me to come back to work for him as he couldn't get on with anyone else!' So she returned to work as a Medical Secretary, based at the Asley Ainslie, after a 15 year hiatus. She also reignited her love of Girl Guiding, as Tawny Owl, and became involved in Keep Fit, including competitions, and Rambling and then also volunteering at The Mill café.

A full life indeed. Well lived and well loved.



## Balerno Fairtrade Village Group Update September 2025

BFTVG's last update mentioned the Church of Scotland's changes to the leasing arrangements for their tenant Hadeel, the Palestinian Craft/Food/Fair Trade (FT) shop in George Street which helps fund Palcraft's much-needed work to alleviate hardship in Palestine. Since then, BFTVG have written urging the C of S to show all possible generosity, even in the Church's own current difficult times, in their handling of Hadeel's situation. The shop apparently now has a year's lease, it is hoped allowing time to find other premises. The Church answered us promptly and sympathetically: committed to supporting Palcraft/Hadeel's work, but clear that indefinite non-commercial leasing rates were not an option. BFTVG have in turn thanked the Church, and hoped they would still keep Hadeel's situation under urgent review. Meanwhile, great news of some recent Palcraft/Hadeel work with barely imaginable impact: they've managed to get hearing aids and some food into Gaza.

Nearer home, at Saturday October 11's Balerno Farmers' Market please support a partly tea-themed FT stall with lovely foods, crafts and maybe even a competition! This is our nearest Farmers' Market to this year's FT Fortnight, 22 September – 5 October. Let's all mark 'the Fortnight' itself as we buy FT whenever we can, and visit the mighty Mill Cafe, using FT goods whenever it can. Everyone's spotted changes in our village Main Street, recent and to come; let's all keep asking our traders old and new to use and sell FT too, helping us live year-round as a real FT community.

Yes, these do sound like two different worlds. But in the words of a visiting speaker to Edinburgh's inspiring International Fair Trade Towns Conference in late August, attended by some Balerno Fairtraders along with hundreds from around the world, we should 'never underestimate the power of local action.' Thank you, 'Balerno Blether' readers, for everything you do to help this community keep on backing Fair Trade/Fairtrade.

Balerno Fairtrade Village Group



## FreshStart

There will be NO FreshStart Collection at Balerno Parish Church this October.

Please do not hand in to the office, or leave anything in the Old Hall, in the expectation that a future collection will take place.

Currie Kirk takes in certain items by arrangement but donations can also be taken directly to FreshStart's warehouse, 22-24 Ferry Road Drive, Mon-Thurs (Fri) 9am-4pm (1pm). Check before you go,

[www.freshstartweb.org.uk/donate/goods](http://www.freshstartweb.org.uk/donate/goods)

### FRESHSTART CO-ORDINATOR (BALERNO CHURCH) :

A co-ordinator is sought for the collection on the Balerno Church campus of household goods for FreshStart – please speak to Pam or Sandra Lyall or Rowena Stewart.

## Supper & Song

Following the popularity of previous evenings with Supper and Song, the vocal groups of the congregation are combining again to provide a programme of entertainment in **St Joseph's** on **1<sup>st</sup> November at 7.30pm.**

In line with a time-tested formula, the singing will follow on after a meal provided by Mackenzies, and we anticipate that there will be a variety of music provided by the Church Choir, One Bar Rest and Quintingle, all linked around the theme of

'Changing popular music in the mid-twentieth century'.

Tickets, price £25 are available from the church office and early booking is recommended as previous events have all sold out!

**One Bar Rest**  
**ChurChoir**      **Quintingle**

# do you have a minute, Lord?



I hate to say this, but it has crossed my mind that, in some senses, you are a habit that I have got into. My parents went to church on a Sunday – probably more religiously than I do, if you know what I mean. There was no question about the idea that that was what our family did on a Sunday morning. When I left home, I found that there was something missing when I avoided church for a few weeks. It seemed that my batteries felt recharged after I had been back to church; and so, I still attend regularly – if not always religiously.

So that's what is making me wonder. What if I had not been brought up in the habit of going to church? What if I had been born into a family for whom Christianity was regarded as mumbo-jumbo and little different from superstition? Would I have found a way into church by myself? I cannot answer that question, because I have only the experience of my life – I don't know what it is like to be somebody else.

Please don't get me wrong - I'm not complaining – I don't feel angry that I was perhaps conditioned to be a 'Christian' because I'm sometimes uncertain that I really am a 'Christian.' I go to church, but that's not quite the same thing, is it? But yet, here I am, having a conversation with you when I am not very sure if I really believe or if this is just a reassuring habit that I have got into because I find it therapeutic.

Having said all that, I'm not sure if all my questioning really matters. I hope that I am right in my assumption that the detail of my belief or understanding is of secondary importance to following Jesus' instruction to love my fellow beings. I don't have a problem understanding that bit so I am not going anywhere else!

Contributed

**Congratulations to Kay Coull as she starts on her year in office as Guild National Convener. Kay took up office at the Guild Annual Gathering 2025 held on September 13th at Perth North Church.**

Kay is of course a Joint Session Clerk at Balerno Parish Church along with Elaine McCullough, who is also a Guild member.



The Guild Annual Gathering, at which Kay took up the position of National Convener is the biggest event of the Guild year. On this occasion some 600 Guild members and friends met together for a day of worship, celebration and fellowship. As reported on p1, this year the gathering was joined by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland who shared her thoughts on the Guild's new theme 'Living Stones'.



The Guild is one of Scotland's largest voluntary organisation. The Guild itself reports that it has 11,000 members but that is seen by some as a considerable underestimate, and figures of 30,000 are reported.

Although women make up the bulk of the membership of the Guild, increasingly, men are becoming members and taking active roles at local and national levels.

Both Balerno and Currie have active Guilds. Balerno's meets on the first and third Wednesdays of the month from October, with an Annual outing in May and a Fundraising event in June.

You can contact Balerno's Guild via

[bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk](mailto:bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk)

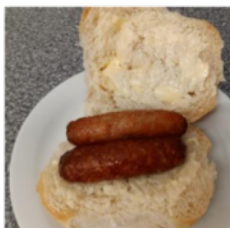
Details of Guild activities are available on the website and on the back page of the Blether



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

**(and the 2nd Saturday of the month  
when the Farmers' Market is on)**

There is something for everyone at the Mill Café. A warm welcome awaits families, walkers, locals – in other words, the whole community. It is bright and spacious and the food is fantastic. You will find good quality coffee, freshly-baked scones, cakes and much more besides. Try it once and we guarantee you'll be back.



Why not try the new items on the menu, a scrumptious roll and sausage and/or a delicious fruit scone with jam and clotted cream?

Every day we have two varieties soup, lovingly made by our Mill volunteers and staff. Or try our baked potatoes, toasted sandwiches or paninis, with a variety of tasty fillings to choose from.

*We use Fairtrade products wherever possible.*

**The Mill Café, St Joseph's Centre, 2 Main Street, Balerno EH14 9EH**



**OK  
yous lot, listen up!  
Ken, ah dinnae  
ordinarily dae  
commercial.**

But the Mill's such a great wee place ah'm makin an exception the day, ken whit ah mean.

Best Latte I've had since leaving the galleys. An' they scones? Ah wul tell yous this, they're tae die fer!. Honest!

So come away in folks; ye'll nae be wantin' a wee sermon instead....?

Ah've got want here, jist the joab.

# So what's going on elsewhere in Balerno?

## News in brief from Balerno Community Council

Balerno Community Council met on Thursday 4th September for what one observer described afterwards as a 'lively' meeting.



The business covered related in large part to parking, with debates in relation both to Main Street and, separately, to Harlaw and Threipmuir car

parks for which, along with Bonaly, CEC propose introduction of charges.

On the first item the Council heard from Main Street residents who outlined a difficult situation in which the current near blanket prohibition on parking is largely ignored. Blue badge parking is permitted as is loading and



unloading, but often the street is choked with illegally parked cars. While the Parking Wardens do monitor, they appear to have set routines and therefore they are not seen as effective. The Community Council discussed a variety of possible options including narrowing the throat into Main Street, and road markings to emphasise the change in permissions at the Ladycroft junction. Balerno's local City Councillors were in

attendance at the meeting and they will be investigating options with city officers.

Parking at Harlaw (and Threipmuir) has been improved with the creation of further spaces, along with introduction of spartan toilet facilities. A parking meter has been installed although at this stage any payments are purely voluntary. The Community Council heard at its September meeting that the City will be seeking powers as a next step to introduce mandatory charging along with restrictions on parking on approach roads. The proposals have been met with opposition from walkers, in particular dog walkers, and from fishermen, all of whose views were put forcefully at the meeting. The scale of charges is likely to be as in a published draft table. City Councillors in attendance were left in no doubt at the disappointment of members of the Council, with the process engaged by the City; in particular there has been no consultation with communities since 2020, and no consultation about charges. Members of the public who were present at the meeting emphasised that they had not been aware of 2020 survey, which the City say gave a mandate for introduction of charges.

The issue of parking charges was listed on the agenda for the City's Transport and Environment Committee on 11

September but it is understood that the item was withdrawn before being debated. It or some alternative proposal will probably be listed on a future agenda in the not too distant future, and we hope that the City will consult appropriately in advance.

Moving on from parking the Community Council considered the status of a wall apparently blocking a lane which runs from Ladycroft to Orrvale between St Mungo's Church and Ladycroft Cottage. The lane was revealed when a local volunteer was clearing shrubbery and undergrowth from the path. The wall appeared to have been built in order to block off the lane and has only become overgrown over the past few years since Ladycroft Cottage became vacant. The Community Council will seek to pursue the opening up of the lane as part of the historic paths and lanes arrangements in the centre of the Village conservation area.

Outside of the September meeting our readers may be interested to hear of the current situation of the proposed Fireworks Control Zone. The City's Culture and Communities committee agreed the proposals for FCZ across Edinburgh at its meeting on 21st August. Subsequently, on 8th September, the Leader of the City Council in response to press questions described the scheme as arbitrary. It is unlikely that the City will modify its FCZ scheme, although it is unusual for a public authority to make a statement which undermines any of its decisions.

Separately and looking to the future the community Council is starting work on preparation of a



Local Place Plan (LPP). LPPs are a new type of plan introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Producing a Local Place Plan gives a community a chance to shape the future of your local area by creating a plan that addresses local needs or concerns. The City Council would be bound to have regard to a Balerno LPP in for example determining the content of CityPlan2040 or considering planning decisions affecting Balerno. The Community Council would anticipate that Balerno Parish Church might have an interest in the preparation of an LPP for our community, and will be in contact soon on that.

And, moving into areas which were not in front of BCC's September meeting we can say that BCC is now looking at the removal of public access from most of what remained of Edinburgh Leisure's offering at Balerno High School.

Edinburgh Leisure have moved all public swimming from Balerno to Currie. Why? Watch this space.



**Where are we walking today then?**

Well ... have you been over the New Bridge yet?

**Where? Oh, you mean the Green Bridge?**

But it isn't green?

**No, but the old one was. So it's the Green Bridge, in perpetuity.**

Actually, it's called the Bavelaw Green Footbridge.

**Maybe it is, but it'll always be the Green Bridge. Like the Green Gate.**

The Green Gate? Where's that?

**It doesn't exist.**

????????????????

**Well, not any more. But it was on Bridge Road, leading up to Ravelrig. And it was green.**

You mean those steps across from the High School? There was a gate there?

**A long time ago. But the name stuck.**

Seems there's a tradition of keeping old names for things in Balerno! So what are we going to do about a new name for the church, after our Union with Currie?

**What indeed! Any ideas...? Have you finished your coffee? We can chat about it while we walk along Lymphoy Road!**

## The Treasurer's Thumb

*Maxima culpa iterum*

'Now where was I, Thumb?'

Is this, I wonder, a serious question - does he really not know where he is? Or is he really looking for help in resolving a tricky question? Oh no, please not accounting again. not the complexities of derivatives accounting; the treatment of deferred taxes and hybrid securities? I really don't want to go anywhere like that; not now, not ever..... ever again.

'Now I've explained the distinction between net income and cash flow under accrual accounting several times,...sir. Do you want me to go through that again?' Yes, I know, that was a trifle abrupt; even if I thought I was being charmingly sychophantic. The trouble is, ordinarily, I can do unctuous really quite well, I think.

'Wazzat? No, no,... Thumb, ugh' - this while pressing his other hand to his brow in the manner of a perplexed parent - 'what I was musing on just now was how I might effectively translate abstract musical ideas into a concrete form that communicates something extraordinary to both the musician and the audience. As you will know, my dear good friend, Thumb.'

I myself am now more than a little confused; outside of my comfort zone, who is this addressing me as 'my dear good friend'? Never came reformation in such a flood as this, to quote from my old chum, Bill the Bard - (Henry V Act 1 Sc 1 for any who might be struggling...), 'I was thinking especially of Kaikhosru Sorabi's Opus Clavicembalisticum' he continues. And then again 'What do you think, Thumb?'

Well what's a chap to do? Suddenly being addressed as an equal. My goodness me. There I am all of a doo-dah, (and I don't know where that comes from I'm afraid).

There's always a choice about how to respond; why did I get it wrong? I walked into the trap. Took the bait. Hook, line and sinker. Unctuous? I was in there.

'Well sir, I imagine you might be thinking of Vandevall's recording, and for me, I would have to say that if lofty rigour prevails throughout Part 1, the Theme and 49 Variations that open Part 2, you remember, the 'Interludium primum', well they reveal more of Sorabi's heart, allowing for Vandewalle's expressive and colouristic resources to come into their own.....' Oh dear; I suddenly become aware that I have lost my audience, and that himself is staring at me, with an expression beyond the simply perplexed and entering an altogether more frosty zone. Perhaps I was over-egging a little? But a drowning thumb can't save itself as they say. Ah well, in for a penny... 'As you will know, Sir, the thumb is critically important for pianists, providing essential mobility and control for techniques like rapid passage.....'

'Thank you ... ,Thumb' he interjects, '.....That will do extremely well, Thumb. You have delighted us long enough.' (Now where have I read that before). And before you can say Jack Robinson, I disappear into pocket again.

A wasted opportunity caused by rushing in. And as an angel one should, of course have known better. *Mea Culpa; Maxima Culpa, iterum.*

## WOOF

**And once again a very good day to all of you, my ever faithful followers !**

Phew, am I glad to be back on home territory! As you may guess, I imagined someone else having taken over my 'butcher's doggie security' role, but amazingly no-one had, and the butcher welcomed me home with open paws (and a dish of choice tit-bits).

Elsewhere, signs of late autumn and winter are beginning to show. The bushes which encircle the park have been given a most severe haircut and one can no longer hide in them (for whatever purpose). Council workmen are dredging the lake - goodness only knows what interesting little items they found - I'd lost several bones in there. But then, bones are for the poorer doggies of the neighbourhood whilst I dine at the Kings (butcher's) table!

A I was returning home for a little snooze, (holidays are very tiring) I noticed a van with a sign painted on the side advertising 'Dog Walking and trimming', and getting out of it was a fancy sort of dog who had been clipped in such ridiculous shapes that it looked like it was made of bottle brushes! - certainly don't want to be seen as being friendly there - could do my prestige hereabouts untold damage.

Passing by the local sports ground I spotted a large pile of tree branches and scrap timber on the cinder area. Then I realised, in early November the timber is set alight (a bonfire I think) along with noisy crackerjacks and other fireworks(?) giving out fancy-coloured balls of fire - pretty but equally noisy.

So, there's a taste of things to come for next month. I wonder what else they found in the lake?



# Meanwhile; in the community!

It wouldn't be autumn if we weren't able to report on the Annual Show of the Currie Horticultural Society - the Currie Show - the 145th version of which took place on Saturday 30th August at Balerno High School. And while Balerno Parish Church stalwart George Harrison, may not have attended all of the previous 144 he has been on the Committee for over thirty years, and his vegetables continue year on year to represent what the show is all about!



Judging horticultural shows is a 'tough gig' as some might say. It's all about 'assessing overall quality as a reflection of the exhibitor's skill in cultivation and presentation' (thank you Mr Google). So for those who weren't able to attend the show here's a couple of photos of George's quite clear skills in this area



There are of course many others associated with both Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church who are exhibitors, entrants, helpers or otherwise involved with putting on this annual extravaganza of skill, expertise and talent, and the Blether salutes and thanks them all.



And there are many different crafts and skills on display at the Show. From Potplants (15 categories), Flowers (35 categories) and Vegetables and Fruit etc (another 35 categories) through Floral Art (5), Handcrafts and Home Skills, including Home Baking (another 35), the list goes on until reaching the 26 categories of the Junior Section. And there you will find, before you reach the intriguing competition for Grow and Show 1 Pygmy Sunflower Plant, the daunting 'Handwriting - No Artwork' categories of which there are 6. There is relief in realising that entries are restricted to P2 to P7 students. For some of us exposure of one's handwriting to public scrutiny might be just too much.

But to return to George, it would be unfair to conclude without congratulating him on, once again, winning the Sinclair Cup (best exhibition of veg), the Fleming Cup (potatoes) and the Sinclair Cup (Highest aggregate score - ie most prizes in categories). So. well done to George and equally well done to everyone who was involved in putting on the show, and to those also who supported its 145th iteration.

And by the bye, it seems that numbers of visitors were up this year, and there were a fair few young people there. It looks like next year's show will be on Saturday 26th September 2026; so there's plenty of time to get yourself ready for that, and to borrow from another medium 'g..e..t planting!'

## Don't look down



If you are in any way queasy with heights then don't look at the picture on the left. One of those people dangling from ropes on the Forth Bridge is Ken Wallace. Many of us will remember that Ken took to the skies last autumn to complete a sponsored Zip wire crossing in Wales in order to raise money for charity.

It would appear that Ken was in need of another adrenaline fix however and, seeing an opportunity to support another charity he abseiled down from the Forth Rail Bridge on the 28th of September with the proceeds of his enterprise going to Alzheimer Scotland.

In what seems to have become an annual event, Scotrail and Balfour Beatty facilitate the access to the iconic rail bridge for individuals and teams to raise money for their chosen charities. It is not for the faint hearted as there are a lot of stairs to climb from the Hawes Inn

to the top of the Bridge in order to complete the 165 foot drop – in a controlled manner.

Needless to say, Ken will appreciate any support the we care to give him. Donating through JustGiving is simple, fast and totally secure. Once you donate, they send your givings directly to Alzheimer Scotland, so it's the most efficient way to give - saving time and cutting costs for the charity.

You can donate to Ken's JustGiving page by clicking here: [https://www.justgiving.com/page/ken-wallace-3?utm\\_medium=FR&utm\\_source=EM](https://www.justgiving.com/page/ken-wallace-3?utm_medium=FR&utm_source=EM) or you can Google, 'Ken's fundraiser for Alzheimer Scotland'

The Blether apologises for not having carried this story in the September issue. Ken handed it to us in plenty of time. We just couldn't really believe it..... 165ft drop, controlled or otherwise. Even looking at the photos is difficult enough! But we will carry photos of Ken before, during and after in the November issue! We wonder what he's thinking of for next year?

## The Art Trail



Those who were out and about over the last weekend of August will also have been able, apart from catching the Currie Show, to follow The Art Trail along the Water of Leith from Colinton up to Balerno. This was as the programme said 'a unique opportunity to visit the studios of artists and makers within the Balerno Currie and Juniper Green and Colinton Districts.

With ten locations on the route each offering works in different disciplines from oils through watercolour through textiles, sculpture and jewellery this was an eye opener on the wealth of talent and initiative in our communities. And the icing on the cake was sparkling weather throughout. This will be back in 2026 one is sure.

# The Future in our hands ?

Martin Petty

## Where are we now?

For a variety of reasons Balerno Parish Church has made little if any progress in the last ten years. The Sunday School has stopped due to a lack of children as well as people to organise it. Certain annual activities such as the Music Festival and the Christmas Market have ground to a halt principally because of a lack of people to organise them. The Kirk Session is almost entirely aged over 70 and while it contains many who have given much to the congregation over many years it is tired and largely made up of people that feel they have done their fair share and it's time for someone else to take over. We have not appointed any new elders for over ten years and many who were appointed in 2010s, during Louise Duncan's time, have resigned or simply voted with their feet.

On the plus side despite all of the above the congregation is still very much alive and serving Christ and the community in a number of ways. The Mill Café is an outstanding success as is the monthly production of the Balerno Blether, The Palm Café continues to provide for those living with dementia, The Guild is still active, Christian Aid is still supported, regular Fresh Start collections are still organised, there is an active pastoral care team and church attendances have increased over the last year to a relatively healthy regular attendance of around 80. While church finances could always be better the congregation is still more than paying its way – which is more than can be said of most Church of Scotland congregations. The congregation is one of few congregations with a regular church choir. The church also still attempts to have regular elders visits to their districts although the reduced number of active elders is putting this at risk. The congregation has a good suite of halls which is well used by church and community organisations, and it has a sanctuary which is not too big but is not used much outside Sundays.

As a result of the Church of Scotland's Radical Action Plan Balerno Parish Church and Currie Kirk are linked with a view to being united in less than two years. Historically such unions have frequently led to the closure of a church however, 121 and Edinburgh and West Lothian Presbytery have both made it abundantly clear that they want and expect the Currie and

Balerno congregations to continue to serve their respective communities for the foreseeable future; neither campus is expected to close. Given that both congregations are net contributors to the national church finances I'm sure the General Trustees (who own almost all the property) would be happy for them to continue to do so too.

## Where are we going?

The future of the congregations of Currie and Balerno is very much in our hands. The presbytery plan has left the option of continuing to serve our communities wide open to us. However, action and direction are needed to make that a reality. The alternative is to continue as we are and in effect manage a steady decline in effectiveness and witness to our communities.

Worship and the churches' relevance to the communities of Currie and Balerno will only continue if the congregations continue to make it relevant and affordable. In short, whether the congregations of Currie and Balerno are separate, linked or united is a secondary concern. The primary concern is the sustainable future of the congregations. The future is in our hands.

In the Church of Scotland, the Kirk Session is the body responsible for everything a congregation does, apart from the conduct of worship which is the responsibility of an ordained minister. A strong active Kirk Session can provide a solid base to sustain and develop the work of Christ in the community.

If the work of Christ and its relevance to the community is to continue and to develop it needs an active refreshed Kirk Session at its core and to this end an action to add new elders to our Kirk Session, agreed as necessary several times by the Kirk Session in the last 5 or 6 years, needs to happen. This will not magically sort everything, but it is a necessary step and one which is achievable. There is the suggestion that the church hierarchy would like to see the size of Kirk Sessions reduced, why and how this helps hasn't been articulated but over the last decade Balerno Kirk Session has reduced from over 50 members to just over 30 members with no sign that this has improved its effectiveness.

The priority for both congregations should be to maintain and develop what they currently do well and to expand the offering e.g. more work with young families, new forms of worship, lay leadership of services etc. Secure the present and build for the future work of Christ serving both communities.

## 10 Second Sermons

Milton Jones is a familiar name to listeners of comedy programmes on Radio and TV with a style, according to Wikipedia based on one-liners involving puns delivered in a deadpan and slightly neurotic style. He is also listed as a 'practising Christian' a phrase which always seems to imply that the person concerned is in need of some coaching in order to up their game.

In this slim volume, Jones brings together his faith and his comedic style to present a collection of, sometimes provocative and sometimes perceptive, one-liners which can elicit laughter and provide food for thought. Anyone who can write,

'Sometimes people think of church as being like a giant helicopter. They don't want to get too close in case they get sucked into the rotas.'

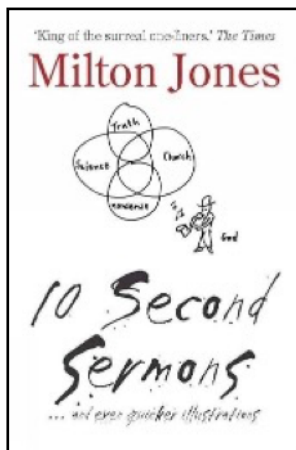
has obviously had some experience of congregational life, but in another reflection he quips that,

'Hearing God's voice is often like trying to hear a satnav that you've locked in the boot of your car because you thought you wouldn't need it.'

This is the sort of imagery most people can relate to! Jones's book is neither weighty in terms of grams nor theology, but it has merit in the simple fact that it can make you stop, smile and think for a moment.

*Ten Second Sermons*

Milton Jones [DLT Books: 2011]



## Navigation by clue

Don't read this piece as an answer to the question at the top of the page. But some people will get around by using a compass, and some people may think that too uncertain and prefer to rely on the stars or by consulting a sextant or an astrolabe. Some individuals may even rely on road signs and street names.

So if you are an accomplished sign reader, where exactly are you now?



# Notes from Roy

Autumn is here once more, the time of year when our thoughts turn to Harvest Thanksgiving, gratitude for those who work the land and the well-being of creation. These are times of Harvest services, lunches and donations for food banks. November is soon around the corner too, with the annual season of Remembrance when many will come together to remember. Memorials in Currie, Balerno and across the country attest to the lives of those fallen in war and hold in stone the memories of the living. Autumn is here.

Since August, I've been hearing people say that the tell-tale signs of autumn came earlier than usual this year. Perhaps you too noticed how early the leaves turned from verdant summer greens to autumnal reds and browns? This struck me while looking out at the trees from my window and walking along the Water of Leith.

According to the Met Office, we have been witnessing "what experts call a 'false autumn', a phenomenon where the stress of extreme summer conditions prompts trees and plants to behave as if the season has changed, even though it is still late August." (1) At the time of writing, numerous news sources say that 'Climate-fuelled heat has caused thousands of excess deaths over the past three summers, which were the three hottest on record'. (2)

Some of our hymns reflect a grateful sense of the orderly nature of creation and the rhythm of the seasons. These hymns express a confidence that everything is in its place. We might think of Cecil Frances Alexander's words in "All things bright and beautiful":

"The cold wind in the winter,  
the pleasant summer sun,  
the ripe fruits in the garden,  
He made them every one."

Or, as another hymn echoing scripture, puts it:

"While earth remains,  
there will be seed time and harvest,  
summer sun and winter moon,  
the dead of nights the bright of day."

On one hand we celebrate the order of nature. The good order that we depend upon for our life and well-being. The order of 'seed-time and harvest' and so on. On the other hand we observe that things are somehow 'out of order' – for example, an early or false autumn, and worse. On one hand we have the homeliness of 'All things bright and beautiful'. On the other hand, the uneasy sense that something is somehow disordered.

During the October-November season of Harvest Thanksgiving and Remembrance we can sense both the order and beauty of the world and its disordered tragedy as well. How might we make some sense of this? Another hymn, this time by the writer Brian Wren, says:

"Let all creation dance  
in energies sublime,  
as order turns with chance  
unfolding space and time;  
For nature's art  
in glory grows  
and newly shows  
God's mind and heart"

Wren imagines nature or creation as an unfolding dance, rather than fixing everything in its place. In an unfolding dance there may be missteps!

Be it climate change, war or conflict, we know that all is not bright and beautiful, yet as the Afro-American spiritual affirms, "he's got the whole world in his hands". The late Walter Brueggemann described the creator God of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 as 'a God whose hands are in the dirt'. A God who is deeply and personally involved in the messiness of creation and must work with human fallenness. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul paints a dynamic picture of creation crying out:

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." (Romans 8)

In other words, a creation that is straining on a leash, champing at the bit for healing at the hands of a redeemed humanity. We humans fall short of what we could be and the results are often tragic. Along with creation, we long to be the redeemed, we yearn for the 'freedom of the glory of the children of God'. In other words for 'Kingdom come' as we say in the Lord's prayer. More than escape from the world, Christian hope is for the redemption and healing of all things.

This may be a false autumn, but I trust ours is not a false hope.

Roy Henderson – September 2025

1 (<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/blog/2025/why-does-it-feel-like-autumn-already>).

2 (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/climate-change-fuels-record-summer-heat-killing-thousands/>)

## New Minister at Dunfermline St Columba's

Former minister of Balerno Parish Church Dr Andre Groenewald has been appointed as the new minister of Dunfermline St Columba's Church, previously St Andrew's Erskine Church and Townhill and Kingseat Church. He was inducted to his new charge in September 2025.

We wish him all success in his new responsibility.

## Want to contribute?

Would you like to be more involved in the weekly  
Church service?

Do a reading, write a prayer or help to welcome at  
the front door?

**Volunteers welcome!**

Simply let Pam in the office know, or e-mail [bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk](mailto:bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk)



## It really is time to smell the coffee

from the Blether team



The front page of the September Blether said that the next few months presented an opportunity to shape the future of the churches at Balerno and Currie. We are of course a month further on, and while the opportunity remains taking advantage of it becomes more challenging.

Planning is extremely important to the success of whatever one does. It provides a clear roadmap, helps set realistic goals, improves resource allocation, and reduces stress by clarifying the process, identifying potential obstacles, and fostering accountability, and so so and so on. Without a plan, goals remain wishes, and efforts become scattered, leading to inefficiency and a lower chance of achieving desired outcomes.

Desired outcomes? That's another way of saying 'where we want to be'. To plan for anything first define planning where we want to be. That is the union; but not just any union. We could wait and see what happens and then simply react. It depends what we collectively want it to be.

So finding out what we want to be - defining our vision for the future - is step one in getting there. So how do we find out where we want to be? We talk, we consult and we identify issues and options; then we consult, and we refine options and then we consult again.

Discussion encourages both trust in the future and clarity of purpose. Perhaps more importantly for us in preparing the union is its place in fostering buy-in, and facilitating successful implementation and better outcomes. Without it, even the best-laid plans gang aft agley and all that.

It really is time to smell the coffee.



**Autumn's  
coming on!**

**It's definitely  
time for  
a wee treat  
at the Mill Cafe!**



**Currie Kirk Guild**

**Coffee Morning**

**Saturday 25 October 2025**

**Gibson Craig Hall—**

**10 am—12 Noon**

**in aid of**

**CROSS REACH**

Care you can put your faith in



Edinburgh Currie Kirk (Church of Scotland)  
Scottish Charity Number SC081554

## Harvest Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> October

Harvest Sunday Service gifts will be donated to the  
**Holy Trinity Crisis Foodbank Westerhailes.**

*Suggestions for gifts are:*

|                              |                             |                                  |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Family size bags of porridge | Tins of fruit               | Basic toothpaste                 |
| Boxes of porridge sachets    | Packets of biscuits         | Basic shampoo                    |
| Cornflakes / Rice Crispies   | 500g bags dried pasta       | Multi packs of basic soap        |
| UHT orange juice /UHT milk   | 500g bags lentils           | Multipacks of toothbrushes       |
| Tins of soup                 | 500g bags yellow split peas | Deodorant                        |
| Jars of Pasta                | 500g bags white rice        | Tins of tuna /                   |
| Tea bags                     | Tins of Tuna                | Jars of peanut butter            |
|                              |                             | Jars of jam                      |
|                              |                             | Tins of chickpeas / other pulses |
|                              |                             | Tinned vegetables                |
|                              |                             | Tins of baked beans              |

**The 2025 Jazz Party**  
Sunday 12 October 2025  
7.30 - 10.30  
St Joseph Hall  
£20  
**the XVIth jazz party**  
Tickets from Balerno Parish Church office  
and online from [balernochurch.org.uk](http://balernochurch.org.uk)

**Supper 'n Songs**  
*from not so long ago*  
St Joseph's Centre  
November 1st 2025  
at 7 for 7.30pm  
ChurChoir  
Quintingle  
Tickets - price £25 -  
available from the Church Office

## Palm Cafe

last Tuesday of each month  
at  
St Joseph's

3.00 to 4.30pm

a space for people with  
dementia and their carers

**BARREFUSION**  
DEEPNE | TIGHTEN | TONE | ALIGN  
BARRE with a twist!  
Elements of Ballet & Yoga.  
Cardio Bursts! Strength Work  
Bring 1-2kg hand weights (if you prefer your own), a mat & water  
£7 per class  
First Class Free!  
Fridays @ 9:15am in the Ogston Hall, Balerno Parish Church  
Drop in or Pre-book your space at [www.bookwhen.com/heidimacdonaldfitness](http://www.bookwhen.com/heidimacdonaldfitness)  
Heidi: (m) 07982205111 (e) [heidil.instructor@gmail.com](mailto:heidil.instructor@gmail.com)

## Calendar announcements & chit chat

Unless otherwise notified Sunday worship is at 9.30am every Sunday at Balerno Parish Church

Unless otherwise notified below services are held on each Sunday of every month

### October 2025 Services

During October Sunday morning services at Balerno will be at 9.30am at Balerno Parish Church. Morning service at Currie is at 11.15am

#### October services

- 5th October** Harvest Service at 9.30am  
(see list on p11 for suggested gifts)
- 19th October** Joint Service in Currie at 11.15am
- 2nd November** Communion at 9.30am and 3.00pm.

### October 2025 Events and beyond

- 26 September - 'Soiree d'arrivee' to mark Roy's arrival in Balerno
- 1 Oct 7.30pm - Guild - Dedication/Communion service
- 5 Oct 12.30pm - Currie Kirk; Harvest Soup Lunch; £5  
in aid of Red Cross Gaza Crisis Appeal
- 7 Oct 10.00am - Currie Guild - talk - Holyrood Rangers Service  
at Gibson Craig Hall
- 11 Oct 11.00 - 3pm - Guild - Lothian Guilds together - Mini gathering at  
St Michael's, Slateford
- 12 October - Jazz Party - St Joseph's Hall - 7.30pm to  
10.30pm - tickets from Church Office or from  
website via eventbrite.
- 15 Oct 7.30pm - Guild - the Shetland Bus - with Kath Hay
- 21 Oct 2.00pm - Currie Guild - talk- Bridgend Farm Community  
Centre - at Gibson Craig Hall
- 25 Oct 10.00am - Currie Guild - Coffee morning at Gibson Craig Hall
- 1st Nov 7.30pm - Supper'n Song - St Joseph's Centre - £20 see p11
- 4th December - Main Street Christmas Lights and Tree of Life

### Picture of the month

an occasional series of pictures of local places which we invite you to identify,  
the incentive and reward being a wonderful cup of the  
Mill Cafe's finest beverage.



Now; is this a sign of the times?  
Whatever it is, apologies for it being a  
bit off centre.

Now, the question is where is it? And  
when?

Answers to Church office by 15th  
October.

Now, we are quite keen to see  
whether anyone looks at the back  
page of the Blether?

So this month the prize is TWO free  
cups of coffee for the first correct  
answer!

Simple!!!

### Useful Numbers

**Interim Minister** Rev Roy Henderson  
[rhenderson@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:rhenderson@churchofscotland.org.uk)  
0131 - 449 - 3830

**Church Administrator** (Church Office)  
Pam McKeon 449 7245  
[bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk](mailto:bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk)

**Session Clerks** -  
Kay Coull 449 6151 or 07415 506947  
Elaine McCulloch 449 5876  
[balerno.sessionclerk@gmail.com](mailto:balerno.sessionclerk@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:**  
David Booth 449 3516  
[bpc-treasurer@balernochurch.org.uk](mailto:bpc-treasurer@balernochurch.org.uk)

**Roll Keeper;**  
Pam McKeon 449 2541  
[pammckeeon@bt.com](mailto:pammckeeon@bt.com)

**Fabric Ctte:**  
Dilys Conway 449 7245  
[dilysconway@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:dilysconway@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Pastoral Care Co-ordinator:**  
Kay Coull 449 6151  
[coullkay@hotmail.com](mailto:coullkay@hotmail.com)

**Mill Café:**  
Lynsey Inglis  
[themillatstjosephs@gmail.com](mailto:themillatstjosephs@gmail.com)

**Balerno Blether:**  
Lesley Burt 449 4314  
[lesley.burt70@gmail.com](mailto:lesley.burt70@gmail.com)

copy date for  
**November**



is  
**Friday 17th  
October**

Please try to  
ensure that all  
copy is with the  
editors by **noon**  
on

12th September

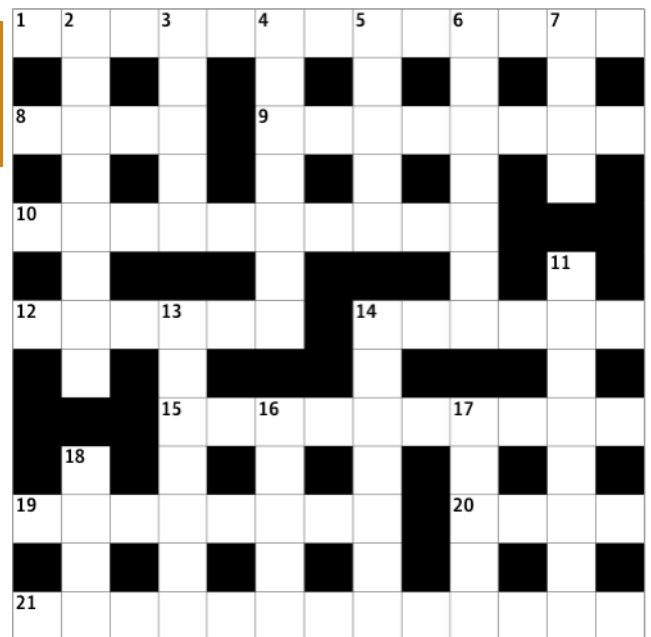
We're really sorry  
but we can't  
guarantee to look  
at copy received  
after that time.

**TOP PRIORITY!**

### Crossword corner September answer



### Crossword Corner October 2025 puzzle



Across

- 1 Of little account (2,5,6)
- 8 Part of speech (4)
- 9 Delinquent (8)
- 10 Debauched (10)
- 12 Storage and dressing room in a church (6)
- 14 Miscellaneous (6)
- 15 Without risk of being late (2,4,4)
- 19 Mexican name for North American river (3,5)
- 20 Painful emotion (4)
- 21 Create turmoil (4,3,3,3)

Down

- 2 Short witty remark (3-5)
- 3 Pictorial teaser (5)
- 4 Postmortem (7)
- 5 Slope - bias (5)
- 6 Widow Twankey's son (7)
- 7 Modern marketplace (4)
- 11 Offender (8)
- 13 Protective item for the tailor (7)
- 14 Act ostentatiously (4,3)
- 16 Grind (teeth) together (5)
- 17 Spill (5)
- 18 Prima dona (4)