

# balerno **FREE** *Blether*



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



Issue no 45

Sunrise over the Water of Leith  
November 2025

From This



To This

**FreshStart**  
helping people make a home for themselves

It is not generally appreciated that it is 35 years since the people of Balerno got themselves organised to give meaningful support to members of society who were finding it difficult to make their way in life. We are all familiar with Fresh Start but we tend to forget the forerunner, Balerno Outreach to Homeless Youth which was the first to focus the attention of our suburban community with the problems of deprivation which can be experienced in the inner city.

BOTHY was inaugurated in 1990 at a meeting attended by 13 people, prompted by changes in benefit regulations and increasing awareness of the effects of poverty and an acute shortage of places to stay. It started with a fund-raising lunch and a street collection. Presently, the name, Balerno Outreach to Homeless Youth was adopted and a logo designed. Charitable status was granted the following year and by 1992 there were 37 active members involved in fund-raising activities. In 1997 the churches in Currie and Juniper Green added their support to the annual street collection.

While the initiative for BOTHY came principally from members of Balerno Parish Church, it was an organisation with members from all parts of the community. A need had been identified and support came from local organisations, pubs and schools as well as local businesses. Meetings were held in both the Parish Church and St Mungo's and it was a significant initiative in bringing people together to help address issues of deprivation. Support was given to a variety of local charities such as the Rock Trust, Bethany Christian Trust, The Bridges Project, Homeless Outreach, the Cyrenians, and the Edinburgh Furniture Initiative.

It was at the Annual General meeting of BOTHY in May 2001, that Rev Russell Barr gave a talk about the work of a new organisation called Fresh Start which had been established in 1999 when a group of church members in another part of the city had decided that they wanted to do something to help and support their local community. Like BOTHY, they noted that homelessness, deprivation and poverty were real issues for many Edinburgh people and there was a feeling that although homelessness can be lonely, isolating and challenging, there was a mistaken assumption that once someone gets a tenancy, all is well. They identified that getting a house is only the first step; where do you get all the essentials to make that house a home? Starting operating from one of the group's garage, Fresh Start began putting together packs of essential household items from donations they had received locally, which would later become known as Starter Packs.

Russell Barr must have given a motivating address on that evening

as the efforts of the supporters of BOTHY became focussed on support for Fresh Start and that support has continued for the last 25 years with the people of Balerno contributing hugely appreciated household goods to contribute to the 14,000 Starter Packs which Fresh Start manage to put together every year to help to make a house a home. While BOTHY collected money to be forwarded to organisations, Fresh Start was in the business of making the most of household goods that still had practical use although they were no longer wanted and the amount of goods contributed by the people of Balerno has been astounding.

The 'usual suspects,' many of who were associated with BOTHY all these years ago and have continued to organise the collections, are now well past retiral age. It was some time ago that Sandra Lyall became the coordinator of the Fresh Start collections and she has now reluctantly come to the conclusion that it is time to stand down. She is a hard act to follow but is relieved to know that the biennial collections will be able to continue thanks to the willingness of Malcolm and Susan Ogilvie to take over her coordinating role. The storage space in the parish church will remain the focal point for the collection of goods, but you don't need to be church members if you want to be involved with helping. It would be fair to say that those who have supported the collections in the past have had a lot of fun doing it as well as having the satisfaction that they have been contributing to something which has made all the difference to some people so watch these columns for future developments.



20 May 2024

## Balerno's Tradition of Giving Continues

Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of Balerno Parish Church  
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# So what happened after you'd been on the Grand Tour?

a 2025 follow up to Jim and Moira Todd's visit to Venice in 2024

Cast your mind back to the November 2024 Blether and a chance meeting Moira and Jim Todd had with fellow guests on while on holiday that summer. That holiday was a 21st C edition of the Grand Tour taking in Rome, Florence (including a few days in a former monastery in the Tuscan Hills) and concluding with (where else?) Venice. The chance meeting was on the balcony overlooking the Grand Canal; are you picturing the scene? The encounter with Canadians, Marc-Andre and Norma, unlocked the past for Jim as Marc-Andre's passion



is Ancestry and following on from that holiday he was able to provide Jim with a great deal of information regarding the Todd side of Jim's family.

Jim takes up the tale; 'To give some background to the story, my Grandfather Samuel Todd was Honourably Discharged from the Royal Scots Regiment on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1918 having been disabled in the Great War through the loss of an arm. He returned to Scotland and married my Grandmother. In due course they had two sons, Jim (who I am named after) born in 1924 and my father Frank born in 1925. Tragically my Grandmother died a year after giving birth to my father. Samuel Todd was then left on his own to look after the two children and found with his disability he could not cope. In the circumstances he decided to emigrate to Canada where his sister was already living taking Jim with him, leaving Frank to be brought up by his Aunt on his mother's side. Frank grew up considering his Aunt as his Mother and it was only when he was well into his teens that he was told the whole story.

During the Second World War Jim voluntarily joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and was appointed a Pilot Officer in February 1944. In January 1945 he was posted to England as part of 419 (Moose) Sqdn, and started active service flying missions as a Lancaster Bomber Navigator. During Jim's time in England, he and my father were reunited. However, this was only for a brief spell as Jim died on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1945, only 6 days after his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, when his plane was shot down.

My father never spoke about his past but I was able to find out through Marc-Andre that my Great Grandparents had also gone to Canada and that my Grandfather had in fact passed away in 1944 and was buried in Mount Royal Cemetery in Montreal. He was also able to contact, through Ancestry, second cousins who I had never met. I had also inherited various items of memorabilia from Uncle Jim's time in the Air Force including his parchment Certificate of Appointment as an Officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force, his Medals, his Flying Log Book written up until 30<sup>th</sup> March 1945, the day before he was shot down, and his Wings together with various pieces of Royal Canadian Air Force correspondence.

Given all of the foregoing Moira and I decided that a trip to Canada was the only way forward. We contacted the second cousins, two brothers and a sister, who indicated they would be delighted to meet up with us and I also contacted the Royal

Canadian Air Force Museum and offered them the various pieces of memorabilia I had which they were more than happy to accept.

So, of we set to Canada on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 3 days late and via Boston due to a strike by Air Canada air crew and, after visiting Ottawa and Quebec City ended up in Montreal where we were joined by Marc-Andre and Norma. They took us to visit my Grandfather's grave where he is buried with his sister and her family although strangely enough, he is not mentioned on the gravestone. We can only

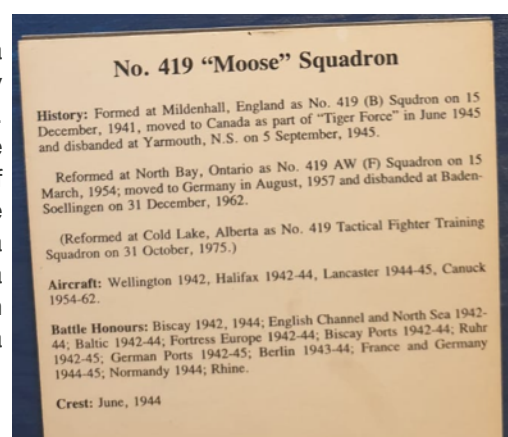
speculate that in 1944 they could only afford to purchase the plot although why his name was not added in 1965 when his sister was buried will remain a mystery. They also took us to visit the house where my Great Grandparents, my Grandfather and Uncle Jim lived in 1931 according to the census that year.

We then moved on to Sutton, a ski resort near the Canada/USA border, where we met up with the second cousins and their partners. This went very well and we were able to exchange some information that neither of us were aware of and they gave us photos of my Great Grandparents I had never seen before.

Finally, we visited the Air Force Museum to hand over the various pieces of memorabilia and they were able to provide more information as to what had happened to Uncle Jim. His plane had been shot down by a German ME-262 jet fighter during a daylight operation to Hamburg with all 7 crew members killed and no bodies recovered. All their names are Remembered with Honour at the Runnymede Memorial in Surrey, sometimes known as the Air Forces Memorial. The Memorial commemorates more than 20,000 airmen and women who were lost in the Second World War during operations from bases in the United Kingdom and North and Western Europe who have no known grave.

Altogether a wonderful and very emotional trip. Who would have thought that all of this could have come about as a result of sharing a glass of wine on the balcony of a hotel in Venice.

Jim Todd



# Towards the Union

As we move into 2026 we can expect progress towards the Union with Currie Kirk to develop fairly quickly. In fact this next step in the journey starts on 1st November with the Partnership Support Group meeting at Gibson Craig Hall on Saturday 1st November.

There are understandably questions in people's minds about what the planned union will involve, and it is hoped that there will be a chance at that meeting to explore some of the issues. The meeting will take the form of a facilitated conversation where some at least of the development of that will depend on questions and points from the floor.

Needless to say, curiosity spurred one of our editorial team to seek guidance from Chat GPT (otherwise known as **Artificial Intelligence**) which gave the following advice on headings which might be expected to arise in consideration of the issues involved in the development of the Union.

We hope that the list below may be useful; computers may indeed have their uses..... **AI** informs us that:

Preparing for a union between two church congregations can be a significant and impactful process. Here's a structured approach to addressing key issues, along with a suggested order for consideration.

## 1. Spiritual Vision and Mission Alignment

- Discussion: Assess the core beliefs, values, and mission statements of both congregations to identify common ground and differences.

- Action: Facilitate joint prayer and discussions to create a unified vision that reflects both congregations' identities.

## 2. Leadership Structure

- Discussion: Evaluate the leadership styles of both churches, including clergy and lay leaders.

- Action: Decide on a new leadership structure and how roles will be filled, ensuring representation from both congregations.

## 3. Congregational Communication

- Discussion: Establish clear, transparent communication strategies to keep all members informed throughout the process.

- Action: Use newsletters, meetings, and social platforms for updates, feedback, and questions.

## 4. Cultural Integration

- Discussion: Identify cultural differences, worship styles, and traditions between the congregations.

- Action: Plan for blended worship experiences to create a sense of belonging for all members.

## 5. Financial Considerations

- Discussion: Review the financial health of both congregations, including assets, debts, budgets, and giving patterns.

- Action: Develop a unified budget and explore shared resources, such as facilities and programs.

## 6. Property and Assets

- Discussion: Address ownership and use of church properties and assets.

- Action: Determine how properties will be used or shared, and handle legal considerations regarding assets.

## 7. Membership Engagement

- Discussion: Engage members from both congregations to gauge their feelings and concerns about the union.

- Action: Offer forums for dialogue, and potentially



surveys to capture feedback.

## 8. Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

- Discussion: Anticipate areas of potential conflict and establish methods for resolving disputes.

- Action: Create a conflict resolution plan that emphasizes open communication and mutual respect.

## 9. Integration of Ministries

- Discussion: Evaluate existing ministries and programs in both churches to identify overlaps and gaps.

- Action: Decide which ministries will continue, merge, or be newly formed to serve the combined congregation.

## 10. Legal and Governance Issues

- Discussion: Clarify any legal requirements for the union, including permits, bylaws, and denominational oversight.

- Action: Consult with legal advisors and denominational representatives to ensure compliance with all regulations.

## 11. Celebration and Transition Planning

- Discussion: Consider how to officially celebrate the union and provide a smooth transition for all members.

- Action: Organize services and events that mark the new beginning, fostering community cohesion.

## 12. Ongoing Evaluation and Feedback

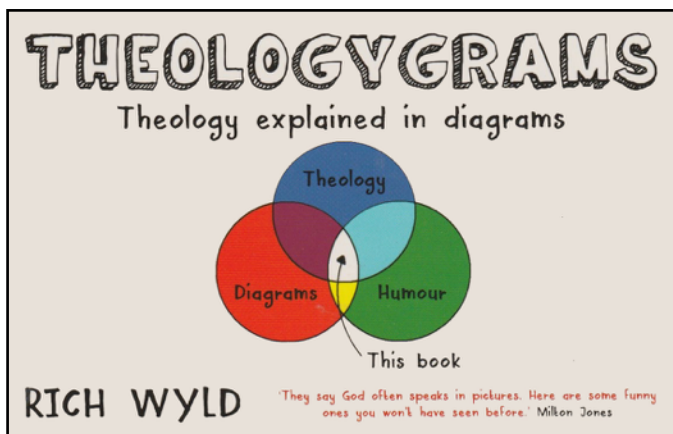
- Discussion: Recognize that the union process is ongoing, and it will require adjustment and reevaluation over time.

- Action: Establish a system for continuous feedback and regular assessments of how the union is progressing.

## Conclusion

Addressing these issues in a thoughtful, systematic way will help ensure a successful union between congregations. Each step involves careful consideration, open dialogue, and mutual respect, setting a strong foundation for a new, unified church community.



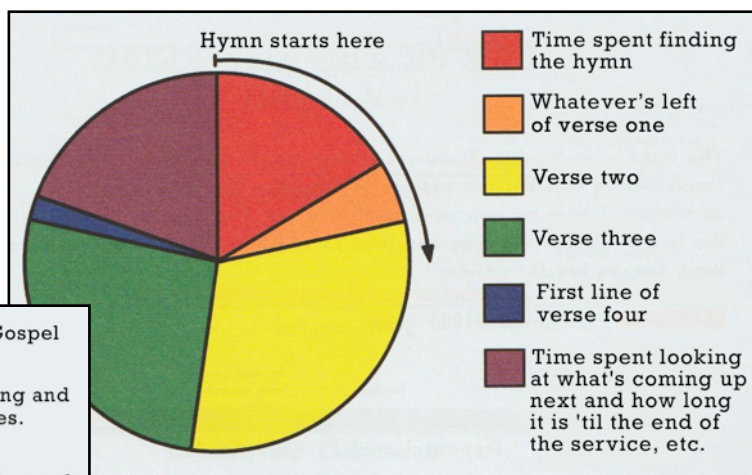
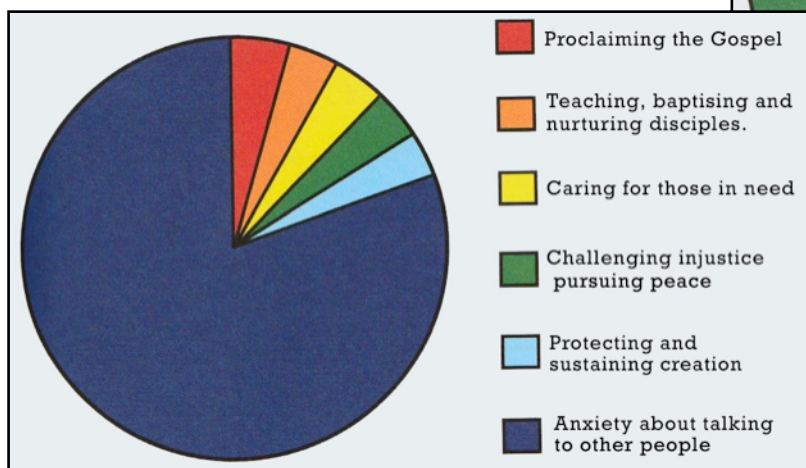


## Theologygrams?

If the name *Cuddesdon* sounds familiar it is probably because it is the name of the modern tune which was written to accompany the hymn, 'In the name of Jesus.' The name of the tune comes from the Church of England theological college at Cuddesdon in the vicinity of Oxford. That sounds very dry, but one of its tutors is the Rev Richard Wyld who, 'enjoys finding ways to make scripture and theology as accessible as possible to all, and believes that everyone has a voice in the enterprise.'

It was in the course of some tedious periods of study that Richard started a blog called 'Theologygrams' some of which was subsequently selected for inclusion in this book. Here is a man with a fertile imagination who shares the view that being able to draw something can perhaps help one's understanding. *Theologygrams* is probably not a definitive publication, but if certainly provides some food for thought with a refreshing humour about the modern church as well as attempting to summarise some fairly abstruse biblical content – without using words like *abstruse*.

Here is someone who has a realistic appraisal - although perhaps not original - of what goes on through the minds of some members of the congregation in the course of morning worship:



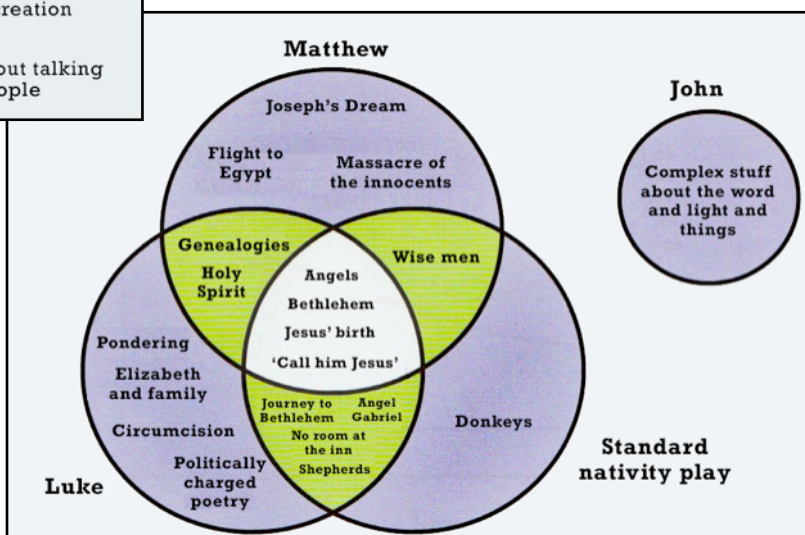
His identification of the most significant challenge placed by the 5 marks of mission is perhaps particularly relevant at this time.

But to be more serious, he makes some of the detail of the interlocking narratives of various books of the bible fairly easy to grasp.

You could buy the book which is published by Darton-Longman-Todd for the princely sum of £9.99 or you could explore Richard's insights into the Bible and the modern church online at:

<https://theologygrams.wordpress.com>

where it won't cost you a penny!



## Remembrance Sunday - 9th November - Help please.

The annual display of poppies for Remembrance Day will be laid out in the church grounds on the morning of Friday 7th November from 10am. Anyone who is willing and able to assist in 'planting' the poppies will be most welcome. Further information will be available from the church office or from Janet McCracken.



## do you have a minute, Lord?

Do you want us to be happy, Lord? I'm just thinking and taking stock. Perhaps it is human nature to become a bit reflective in autumn. As the leaves fall from the trees, another cycle of seasons has gone and I am more aware of the passage of another year. Reflection on the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness can be two sided. On the one hand, there is the positive achievement of reaping of the bounty of spring and summer, but on the other there is always scope for an element of chagrin at the loss of an opportunity and a chance not taken.

As you know, I was one of the many pupils whose school report advised, "Could do better if he tried," a phrase which perhaps left some of us scarred for life. There are people who seem to go through life with the constant feeling that their lives are the unsatisfactory half-empty glasses of the well-known metaphor. Then there are the rest of us who are quite grateful that our glasses are half-full. That might be OK if it weren't for the fact that those of us who feel relatively content with our half-full glasses can have that sense of comfort undermined by the nagging doubt that probably we, 'could do better.'

I suppose I have to confess to a degree of complacency – but then you did give me free will and the choice to do things, to postpone them to a later date or not to do them at all. So, I suppose my point is this, that I appear to have a choice between trying to work my way through everything that I am presented with and feeling exhausted as a result, or alternatively trying to ration my efforts but feeling guilty about the jobs which remain incomplete. So, I return to my original question; do you want us to be happy, Lord? Perhaps I should just sit here and continue to enjoy the autumn colours; it might be recharging my batteries.

Contributed

## Come and join the wonderful Mill Cafe team!



*The Mill Cafe*

Whether you fancy a pancake, scone, cake, bacon roll or a bowl of soup (they are all delicious and there is more on the menu too) The Mill is the place to be. A great place to meet friends and have a cuppa while you chat and a great team to be part of.

The café serves good quality home-baking, light lunches, snacks, coffees and teas, all within a warm and welcoming environment. It uses Fair-Trade products and recyclable consumables wherever possible.

The Mill is run by volunteers, supported by 4 excellent paid staff, and we'd be delighted if you would like to join our team of volunteers. If you or anyone that you know would like to volunteer to help at the Mill or if you have any questions, ask our Manager, Lynsey Inglis, or email [Themillatstjosephs@gmail.com](mailto:Themillatstjosephs@gmail.com). Lynsey will be delighted to hear from you. There is a wide range of ways that you can help such as clearing tables, washing dishes, making soup, taking orders, washing aprons and tea towels, making coffee etc. There is something for everyone.



## RELEASE INTERNATIONAL voice of Persecuted Christians

Founded in 1968, Release International is a UK-based Christian ministry, supporting believers around the world who are persecuted for Christ and the gospel. They were inspired by the life and witness of Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, who spent 14 years in communist prisons. His remarkable story was captured in his book, *Tortured for Christ*. The organisation is currently active in around 30 countries where, 'prayerfully, pastorally and practically, they seek to love and serve persecuted Christians.'

Their Development manager for Scotland, James Fraser, will be the speaker at the Guild meeting on Wednesday 5th November at 7.30. in the Ogston Hall.

### (Not exactly) Picture of the month

The Police Station was sold to Balerno Village Trust in September 2025 but the Police left the sign behind; it's part of Balerno's history



## Apple Day 2025

'It's a tough gig but someone's got to do it.' might have been the caption for this picture of the judging panel tasked with assessing the entries in the Balerno Farmers Market Apple Pie/Cake/Tart competition on Saturday 11th at the Apple Day Market.

However the smiles on their faces might suggest that, while selecting the winners from amongst the fantastic entries was indeed an invidious task, Rev Roy Henderson and Rev Ollie Clegg, rather enjoyed the occasion, and they might well have been heard to utter the time honoured question, 'Please, can I have some more?!'

Thank you, Roy and Ollie, and all the growers, apple-press turners, bakers and others for once again making Apple Day such a success!







## Harvest 2025

### Harvest gifts

Although rooted in Pagan ritual, Harvest Festival and Harvest Thanksgiving developed especially in the 19thC to become a formalised service much as we know it today.

The service itself involves decorating the church and holding services promoting gratitude for and awareness about food



### Flower fairies have been here!

Balerno Parish Church's Harvest Service 2025 was held on Sunday 5th October, as storm Amy was making its way into the North Sea having marched across the country over Saturday 4th.

All donations at the service were delivered to the Wester Hailes Foodbank.

Thanks to all who attended the service, who organised and delivered the service and who donated so generously.

## 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**

## Your photos on page 1?

Each month we try to feature a picture of somewhere around Balerno on page 1.

They're mostly from south Balerno.

This month we've got a picture from Rivermill and we hope you like it.

We'd love to feature your photos on page 1.

Why not send some in?

## Don't look down! Ken Wallace follows zip-wiring with abseiling!

Fast rewind, back just over a year or so, back to the September 2024 issue of the Blether and there on page 3 you will find a picture (left) of a person in goggles with his hands apparently clasped in prayer as well he might, but he also has a seraphic grin. Many of us might have found it hard to grin as we hurtled at speeds of up to 100mph strapped, well strapped to thin air really, and flying down the 1.55 km zip wire at Zipworld, Penrhyn Quarry in North Wales. It only takes a minute, but for most of us that might seem like a lifetime.

Ken Wallace is the bloke in the goggles, was doing it all for charity, and obviously loved it so much that this year he thought rather than doing it all again he'd take a little longer to savour the scenery, and yes for you and me anyway, another stomach churning experience of another open air descent without the aid of lift, escalator, stairs or indeed parachute. No.

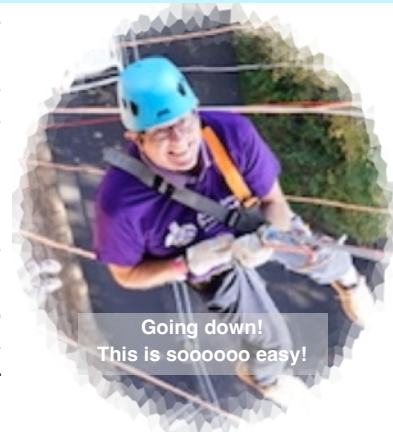
This year it was abseiling down from the Forth Bridge into Queensferry; opposite the Hawes Inn to be precise; a mere 165 feet with the experience lasting just five to ten minutes. It's not quite a 'blink and you've missed it' experience, but time enough to review your life. How long it takes to go down is up to you since you control the rate of descent. But five minutes is for the experts we gather. Oh and it was for charity again. So in picture above left we have Ken 2024 and above right we have Ken 2025.

And for the record Ken had raised over £2.5K (incl gift aid) by the middle of October, and there's still time for you to be able to support Ken's fund raising for Alzheimer's Scotland.

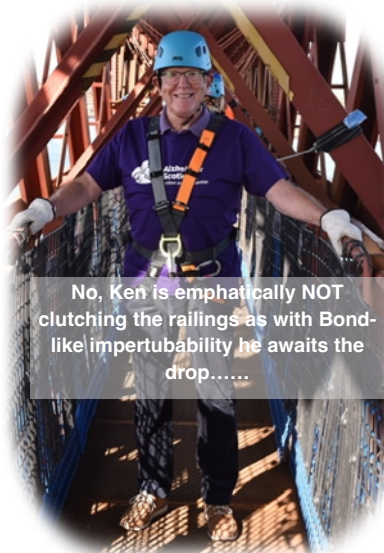
Well done Ken!

Next year's daredevil excursion by Ken? Well as he says, 'I've done the zipwire and I've done the abseil; so I don't need to do those again. And no, I don't think I'm into sky diving.....Swimming with sharks? Not too sure about that either.'

All the Blether would say is watch this space!



Going down!  
This is soooooo easy!



No, Ken is emphatically NOT clutching the railings as with Bond-like imperturbability he awaits the drop.....



Still no sign of nerves. Is this man utterly without fear?!!



Next stop ground floor!



# WELCOMING ROY!



**Destination X - Where are we?**  
The winning team summed it all up completely!



**The organisers table**  
**Temporary head quarters of the Inquisition**  
(Balerno Branch)

How best to describe the 'welcome' evening for Roy on 26 September? Let's start with 'madcap' and see where that leads us.

When the prize for Team with the best name went to 'Destination X Where are we?' the applause

clearly reflected something, although we cannot say whether that was appreciation of the ingenuity of the name, or appreciation of the overall programme which was at one and the same time highly enjoyable and also quite unworldly. Or it may simply have been a cry for help, which, if it were, at least was successful, since they won, best name anyway

Malcolm Ogilvie and his organising team had put together an absolutely first-rate evening which started with a fairly gentle although probing Q&A with Roy, the questions being posed by Currie Kirk's very own Tomás de Torquemada aka Bill Brown, formerly of Edinburgh CID. Roy remarked on his way to the mike that he hadn't been cautioned, so none of this would be admissible evidence; you could tell he's from the west.

Malcolm returned to the podium after a decent interval to allow for clearing up the blood and to announce what we might expect next in a programme which did not let up. First there was a more than simply devilish cheese and wine dingbats session. 'Second there was a quiz, but not your normal quiz, oh no, no no no. This

quiz was designed to remind each of us of how important it is to know where you are at all times, because you never know when you're going to be put on the spot, do you? Destination X indeed; very appropriate.

For these events the company divided itself into teams which later usefully produced post competition reflective comments in response to the question, 'how would you describe your team's performance?' Responses ranged from

'surpassed ourselves' - from a non-winning team - to a disarmingly candid 'rubbish' to 'could have done better'; how true. The winning team - '3 B's and C' - gave themselves an 'outstanding' in assessing their own performance, which was probably fair, but then there were eight in their team where the others only had six with one numbering only five participants. We're not saying 'it wasnae fair'; no no, and well done to them. But.....

And after the dust has sttled, one guest admitting to having attended many, many church socials, addied that 'this one was certainly up there with the best'. The call to the organisers from across the room was 'when's the next one then.' So, Malcolm, there you are, once you've taken the cork out of the bottle it's difficut to put it back. Well done to you and your entire team! And Roy we hope you now feel welcome despite the Inquisition!





## Notes from Roy

Last month I wrote of Creation and Harvest leading into Remembrance. Now November begins with a shared Balerno and Currie Communion service at Balerno on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Remembrance Sunday falls on November 9<sup>th</sup> with services in each church and on November 23<sup>rd</sup> each congregation will celebrate the Reign of Christ. The first Sunday of Advent falls on November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Many churches are physical embodiments of remembering. They house war memorials naming the fallen. This has been so in every place of worship I have served. The human cost to villages such as Balerno and Currie must have been colossal.

Remembering such loss defies words. It challenges us if we speak at all, not to do so hastily or casually. For me, the act of leading worship in this season grows more challenging with each passing year. The realities of war and conflict become ever more real and the potential for new conflicts can seem closer than ever.

As the weeks go by, it may be tempting to think of Advent as a time where we might escape such stark realities and look towards Christmas. It helps me to think of Advent as a season of hope and personal preparation. It gives me a sense of 'grounded hope.'

Advent points to the annual celebration of the birth of Jesus and expresses the "thy Kingdom come" hope of the Lord's prayer. The hope that God "will wipe every tear from their

eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Rev 21.4) Here and now, it directs us to Jesus who "did not remain at the base headquarters in heaven, receiving reports of the world's suffering from below and shouting a few encouraging words to us from a safe distance. No, he left the headquarters and came down to us in the front-line trenches ..." \*

As we look forwards through our season of Remembrance towards Advent, Janet Morley offers this prayer:

God our deliverer,  
whose approaching birth  
still shakes the foundations of our world:  
may we so wait for your coming  
with eagerness and hope  
that we embrace without terror  
the labour pangs of the new age,  
through Jesus Christ, Amen.\*\*

\* (Helmut Thielicke, Christ and the Meaning of Life, New York, Harper)

\*\* (Janet Morley, All Desires Known, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Morehouse Publishing)

Roy Henderson – October 2025



## Balerno Fairtrade Village Group Update November 2025

Many thanks to all who answered Karen (Downard)'s 'Currie and Balerno News' appeal to support the partly Tea-themed Fair Trade/Fairtrade (FT) stall at October's Balerno Farmers' Market. It brought generous customers, healthy takings and a bright local reminder that FT needs all our support year-round.



In 2026, we'll apply to the Fairtrade Foundation to renew formal recognition of Balerno's commitment as a Fairtrade Community, a village also part of a FT City, in a FT Nation. This isn't trumpet-blowing: why does it matter? Right here, it helps the young people in our great Balerno schools to grow up really aware that we should treat each other fairly wherever we are. It can also help us adults deliberately strengthen Balerno as a caring community, choosing FT goods for our homes **and – please – our organisations, including our churches**, whenever we possibly can: goods produced by workers around the world who, unlike so many others who help keep us fed and clothed, are via FT properly paid, treated and enabled to fund crucial work they identify in their own communities. The Mill's FT support sets us all a real example.

Plans are already afoot for Spring 2026's local FT events: the school painting competition, FT Morning in March, and more. Meanwhile, new FT group members and supporters are always needed and most welcome: why not help with the FT Tea-themed tree at this year's Christmas Tree Festival? And let's all build lovely FT foods and crafts from The One World Shop, Hadeel and Transform Trade firmly into our Christmas shopping!

Thank you again for everyone's support,  
Balerno Fairtrade Village Group



from the Blether team



This is the forty fifth issue of the Balerno Blether; somewhere along the line our numbering may have gone awry but broadly there have been something like that number of editions so far.

The Blether Team on the other hand numbers 5 and has done from the start. The Minister is *ex officio* a sixth. But none of that is written down anywhere, and there are plusses and minuses on the question whether it should be, or indeed whether we've got editorial policy anywhere near right.

There are two major questions on our collective mind at present. The first is whether we have in fact been getting things right so far, and we are very serious when we say that that views and comments are always welcome. If you like the Blether then please tell us, and equally if you don't then also tell us. Remember that the Blether sets out both to inform and to entertain, to raise and discuss difficult issues and, yes, to provoke debate.

The second question on our minds is more difficult. What should the Blether's contribution be to the debate on the future? It will not surprise you if the Blether Team say that communication is central to the success of most human undertakings. The better informed that people across the Church and in the community are, then the more likely they are to be able to contribute to our common future. That, if true is all the more so when, as now, we are dealing with the development of the union between Balerno Parish Church and Currie Kirk. The union is not an easy subject, but it is not one from which we should shie away.

On 1st November, it is to be hoped that Balerno Parish Church may take a significant step forward towards the union, with a joint meeting with Currie Kirk in the Gibson Craig Hall under the title 'Partnership Support Group Gathering'. You can see elsewhere in this issue what that's all about. But in general it's about how we get, from where we are, to that union.

We believe that communication is a vital ingredient in the success of the transition to a Union and will be critical to the ensuing success of that Union.

The Blether Team formed during Covid. There is probably some reference to its formation in Kirk Session minutes of the time. But as in everything there is a time to look in the mirror and ask whether we're getting it right. We may not be; you, our readers, are the best judges, and probably the only ones who can tell us.

There will be talent in our congregation possibly waiting to be involved in the future of the Blether, to ensure that our communications as a church are better able to respond to the challenge as we move into the union.

If you would like to write for the Blether, or if you would like to be involved in production of the Blether then please say so, and let's have a chat.

One Bar Rest

**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**

**Balerno Christmas Lights**

*Dean Park Primary School Choir*  
*Balerno and District School Pipe Band*

**Balerno Main Street**  
**Christmas Lights**  
**2025**  
**switch on**  
**4th December at 6.45pm**

**The Mill Cafe**  
**...Brrrrrrr...**

**Autumn's here!**  
**It's definitely time for**  
**that wee treat**  
**at the Mill Cafe!**

## 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'*

**the Broxburn & Livingston Brass Band**

**the Concert for Christmas**

**Saturday 13 December 2025**  
**at 7.30pm**  
**at Balerno Parish Church**  
**tickets £10 (u-16 £5)**  
**on sale via Church Office**



# So what's going on elsewhere in Balerno?

## News in brief from Balerno Community Council

Those of you who do FaceBook will have noticed that the Community Council had posted 8 items in the first fortnight of October, indicating that a lot has been and is happening at present.

Amongst the hot topics at the Council's meeting on 2 October were the possible introduction of car parking charges at Harlaw and Threipmuir Reservoirs and the imposition of a Fireworks Control Zone on part of Balerno along with seven other areas across the city, and the resurfacing of Riccarton Mains Road leading to the closure of that road for eight weeks from 6th October.

Car Parking charges are likely to be introduced by CEC on the three car parks they operate in the regional park, at Bonaly, Harlaw and Threipmuir. The decision to impose charges followed a public consultation in 2020, conducted mainly in the context of increased usage during COVID and the impact of 'dirty' camping at the reservoirs. Midlothian CC operate the Flotterstone Car park and fix charges there.

Debate at the BCC meeting on 2 Oct was followed by the withdrawal by CEC from the agenda of the Transport and Environment Committee on 11 September of a proposal to move to implementation of the charges. Amongst the points made by BCC to CEC were (1) the absence of public transport accessing Harlaw and Threipmuir, (2) absence of consultation with the community and (3) the impact of charges on users including fishing interests. We expect the matter to resurface within the next six or seven months.

BCC have written to CEC about the imposition of a Fireworks Control Zone on part of Balerno, breach of which could include imprisonment up to six months, or a fine up to £5,000. The zone would include most property south of Johnsburn Road. The scheme has been described by the leader of Edinburgh Council as 'arbitrary'. The restrictions are in place between 31 October and 9 November.

The Community Council met with officers from CEC on Friday 17 October to emphasise the Council's concerns about what the Leader of the City Council had herself labelled an 'arbitrary' scheme. The Community Council made clear that in their view the City Council ought properly to have consulted the community

both about opportunities for an agreed scheme in Balerno to protect animal welfare, and also about the effect on the community at large of in effect being labelled as a potentially criminal neighbourhood.

Riccarton Mains Road is currently being resurfaced and will be closed until around the end of November. BCC wrote urgently to CEC on Friday 3 October demanding that temporary traffic lights be installed in the junction of Curriehill Road and the A71, the former being the recommended alternative access. BCC were advised on the 3 Oct that CEC had agreed to install temporary lights.

BCC also congratulated Balerno Village Trust for their successful campaign to acquire the former Police Station on Bridge Road for community purposes. BVT anticipate opening at least part of the building in mid 2026. They will be consulting the community on their plans which will include significant child care related provision.



Balerno Community Council will once again be organising the Main Street Christmas Tree and Lights, with a Switch On scheduled for Thursday 4th December, accompanied by the Balerno and District Schools Pipe Band and the Dean Park Primary School Choir. Finally BCC are happy to confirm that following discussions with CEC and RBS CEC have confirmed to RBS that the Mobile Bank could be stationed in Main Street during its weekly visits.

## Kirk Session Miscellany

The Kirk Session meeting on 22 October had before it a large number of reports from BPC Committees ranging from Finance to Fellowship.

The main business of the meeting was related to the approach to be taken to and preparations for the upcoming union with Currie Kirk.

There was consideration and discussions of the location and timing of services as a way of introducing the Session to the complexities and recognition of the need to work in partnership and also with a view to what was practicable. Session also noted the need to ensure that we were properly resourced to address the variety of tasks which would arise. Resourcing would not simply be financial but also in terms of personnel and skills. There was also reference

to the extent to which decisions might require to be deferred pending further progress on establishing the union itself.

It was clear that the Session was fully engaged with the need to start making progress, and Session heard further details of the Partnership Support Group-led meeting at Gibson Craig Hall arranged for 1st November. The meeting would take the form of a facilitated discussion led by Rev Dr Louise McClements and Rev Sandra Black from the Interim CofS Transition Ministry Team along with Rev Moira McDonald of the Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian. The discussion would aim to take stock of the past, appraise the present and look towards the future.

The Session will next meet formally on 10 December.





**I hear that the congregation is going to get a consolation.**

I'm not sure that I follow you.

**You know, when people get asked what they think about something and they have meetings and surveys and all that sort of thing – you know like the council say that they have done about charging for parking in the Pentlands.**

I think that you mean a consultation.

**Is that not what I said? A consolation.**

No, a consolation is when something brings comfort to someone who has been having a hard time – like when a child has had a bad illness or something like that and you get them some chocolate or a new toy.

**I thought that a consultation was the sort of thing that you have if you go to the doctor when you're not feeling well – and the doctor sorts out the problem.**

Well, there's another sort of consultation when people who are planning a change get together and ask the people who will be affected by the change what they think about their proposals in the hope that people will not be too upset by the changes.

**And what happens after that?**

Well, past experience shows that usually some people get upset by changes no matter what you do, but it is always debateable whether that is because there was nothing that could have been said to make them happy with the change or if no-one had really listened to them.

**It sounds to me like the upset people might then need some sort of consolation!**

## The Treasurer's Thumb on being happy with what one has

'Do you know about Contentibus, Sir?'

I venture this question not without some trepidation since himself has not been overly indulgent of late. 'Wazzat?..... No! Not personally. In fact never 'eard of .... what's his name again?'

'Not a *him* sir. It's a *place*.'

'Don't be ridiculous, Thumb. If it's not a person then it must be some kind of new-fangled kind of public transport. A place? Nobody would call a place Contentibus or whatever. Especially not if it's in fact a bus. So what about this happy 44 or 32? Unlikely I grant you. So what sort of new upmarket Lothian Bus is this then?'

'I'm afraid it isn't a person or indeed a public conveyance sir. It is, as I said, ..... ain place, a location, a destination. I saw it on Greenwood's Map of Edinburgh, 1828 ... Sir'

'What?, Greenwood's map you say? That's a grand Lancashire name that is. What's 'e doing up 'ere in Edinburgh, and what's 1828 got to do with it?'

'Well Sir,' I answer while engaging grovel tone (I do indeed know my place), 'The name Greenwood actually originated in Yorkshire.' ..... 'Harumpphhh!' '...but we won't dwell on that.' I realised that it was rather ill-judged to highlight the White Rose - 'Although the name does predominate in Lancashire.'

'Really' - himself interjects with a raised and bored eye brow. 'Anyway;1828? Thought the Romans had left by then, ha-ha? Joke, Thumb? Yes?'

'Oh yes, very good sir, it does sound Latin I suppose. But, although they left lots of stuff behind, we don't think they left this behind. All we really know is that Greenwood makes a map showing Contentibus. And it's likely to be Church latin. You know legal documents and all that medieval stuff'

'I am familiar with Church Latin' - again there's that tone of ice re-entering in his voice.

'Well, here we are anyway sir, hundreds of years later and we've still got the language! Isn't that great?! Contentibus! Marvellous! Pure Latin left over from the Monasteries and all that. ... I wonder what it might mean? Don't you wonder, sir?'

Ane there's that pained expression again, as he thinks 'Why am I surrounded by fools and idiots like this Thumb?.'

'Oh dear, oh dear ... Thumb! You don't know do you? But happily, I am here to help and I have to hand the Dictionaries of Old Scots. Are you perhaps familiar with this great work?'

'No Sir, but I am sure Sir that you and the Dictionaries are greatly suited to each other.'

'Thought not. If you had been you would know that Contentibus, while it may derive from Latin means 'to accept one's lot with a good grace, and 'to make the best of things'. Ring any bells, perhaps?'

'Well sir, as a matter of fact, There was a Contentibus Farm, just over there in West Lothian. Farmer by the name of James Lawrie and his wife Elizabeth Anthony lived there according to the 1861 census. Not there now; farm's gone. But....' 'Yes, Thumb?' 'Well we could go there. Not far away; it's a Railway Underline Bridge. There's two of them East and West.....terribly interesting dont you think?'

'Thumb; I have not the slightest intention of visiting a railway Under Line Bridge wherever it or it friends and relatives may be. Take a tip from the Dictionaries of Old Scots.'

## WOOF

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

Hello again my friends. After last month's letter it appears that someone at the Council now reads the Blether? – parts of the village have been declared a 'firework free zone'. Still, there are lots of puppies in the village and we wouldn't want them to be scared.

So, I'm sure you're itching to find out what was recovered from the lake? – sorry, curb your excitement – the best 'treasure' found was a supermarket shopping trolley containing a large black, plastic waste sack – and what did that contain? – would you believe 'waste'?

So, a very boring start and things could only get better. Whilst on duty at the butchers and eating the tasty morsel he'd thrown out to me, I needed to chase away a seagull which had swooped towards my meal, but fortunately, wasn't quick enough. I spied Charlie and Billy approaching – like me, they'd found the 'pong' from the drained lake rather overpowering and weren't wanting to hang around. It was the butcher's half day closing and so my duties that day were complete, and off the three of us went. We spotted the bus arriving – the one to the local shopping mall, (although local was being generous) and this always had a central exit door. Noting that passengers were alighting we quickly sneaked on and in 15 minutes were at our destination.

It was lunchtime and several workers from nearby offices were visiting the various cafes for lunch. We were quite adept at 'table-begging' and in no time at all were all replete. We wandered around in search of any attractive lady doggies but all the ones we saw were attached to short leads.

Ah well, time to go home, so out to the bus stop we ran. Sadly, this was to be a single-deck bus with no central door but Charlie simply managed to walk on – the driver believing him to be with another passenger. Two more 'no-good' busses came and went and when the rain began, Billy and I had decided to walk home by which time we were soaking wet and extremely annoyed! It had been Charlie's original idea, and he left us in the lurch.

We'll hope for better luck next time. Cheerio for now, woof, woof





# Calendar announcements & chit chat

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

## November 2025 Services

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

### November services

- 2nd November** Joint Communion at 9.30am and 3.00pm.  
**9th November** Remembrance Services Balerno 09.30 and Currie 10.30  
**16th November** Church services Balerno 09.30 and Currie 11.15 with a walk after the service in Currie  
**23rd November** Church services Balerno 09.30 and Currie 11.15  
**30th November** Joint Service in Balerno at 19.30am  
**30th November** **St Andrews Day**; Church services Balerno 09.30 and Currie 11.15

## Chat Room with the Minister

**Wednesdays 12:30-13:30** Opportunity to speak with Rev. Roy Henderson; *no need to book in advance!*

## November 2025 Events and beyond

- 1 Nov **IMPORTANT MEETING** Partnership Support Group meeting at the Gibson Craig Hall 10:00-12.30 For the congregations of Balerno Parish Church & Currie Kirk. To set goals for the union between Balerno and Currie churches
- 1 Nov **Supper & Songs** StJosephs 19:30 with One Bar rest, Quintingle, & Church Choir with drinks & supper Tickets £25 available from Church Office
- 4 Nov Currie Guild Gibson Craig Hall 10.00 Scots Women Who Chose to Challenge Speaker: Jackie Sangster
- 5 Nov Balerno Guild Ogston Hall 19.30 Guild project evening: Release International's Operation Hope. Speaker: James Fraser.
- 7 Nov BarreFusion exercise class Ogston Hall Balerno 09.15-10.15
- 13 Nov Soulmates – This is a monthly reflective Prayer Group that meets on the second Thursday of each month in the Lounge at the Gibson Craig Halls from 2.00-3.00pm.
- 14 Nov BarreFusion exercise class Ogston Hall Balerno 09.15-10.15
- 18 Nov Currie Guild Gibson Craig Hall 14:00 Nature Closely Observed Speaker: George Anderson
- 19 Nov Balerno Guild Ogston Hall 19.30 Conservation enhancement and protection with Andrew Marsden from the Friends of Pentlands.
- 21 Nov BarreFusion exercise class Ogston Hall Balerno 09.15-10.15
- 25 Nov Pentland Ladies Probus Club 10:00-12:00 Gibson Craig Hall Currie
- 28 Nov BarreFusion exercise class Ogston Hall Balerno 09.15-10.15
- 28 Nov Messy Church 14:00-16:00 Gibson Craig Hall
- 30 Nov St Andrews Day Church services Balerno 09.30 and Currie 11.15
- 30 Nov Bereavement service Balerno Church 15:00

## Useful Numbers

- |                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Interim Minister</b> Rev Roy Henderson<br>0131 449 3830<br><a href="mailto:rhenderson@churchofscotland.org.uk">rhenderson@churchofscotland.org.uk</a>                                  | <b>Roll Keeper</b><br>Pam McKeon 0131 449 2541<br><a href="mailto:pammckeon@bt.com">pammckeon@bt.com</a>                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Church administrator (Church office)</b><br>Pam McKeon 0131 449 7245<br><a href="mailto:bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk">bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk</a>                             | <b>Fabric Committee</b><br>Dilys Conway 0131 449 7245<br><a href="mailto:dilysconway@blueyonder.co.uk">dilysconway@blueyonder.co.uk</a>                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Session Clerks</b><br>Kay Coull 0131 449 6151<br>07415506947<br>Elaine McCullogh 0131 449 5876<br><a href="mailto:balerno.sessionclerks@gmail.com">balerno.sessionclerks@gmail.com</a> | <b>Pastoral Care Co-ordinator</b><br>Kay Coull 0131 449 6151<br><a href="mailto:coullkay@hotmail.com">coullkay@hotmail.com</a><br>Mill Cafe<br>Lynsey Inglis 0131 449 7245<br><a href="mailto:themillatstjosephs@gmail.com">themillatstjosephs@gmail.com</a> |
| <b>Treasurer</b><br>David Booth 0131 449 3516<br><a href="mailto:bpc-treasurer@balernochurch.org.uk">bpc-treasurer@balernochurch.org.uk</a>                                               | <b>Balerno Blether</b><br>Lesley Burt 0131 449 4314<br><a href="mailto:lesley.burt70@gmail.com">lesley.burt70@gmail.com</a>                                                                                                                                  |

copy date for  
**December**



is

**Friday 14th  
November**

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

**14th November**

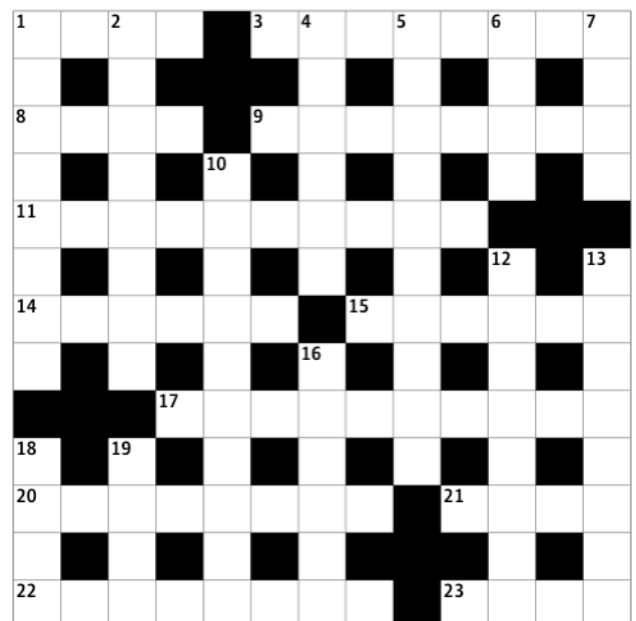
We're really sorry but we can't guarantee to look at copy received after that time.

**TOP PRIORITY!**

## Crossword corner October answer

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | O | G | R | E | A | T | S | H | A | K | E | S |
| N | E | U | L | L | B |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| V | E | R | B | T | E | A | R | A | W | A | Y |   |
| L | U | O | N | D | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| D | I | S | S | I | P | A | T | E | D |   |   |   |
| N |   | S |   |   | I | C |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| V | E | S | T | R |   | S |   | S | U | N | D | R |
| R |   | H |   |   | H |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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| R | I | O | B | R | A | V | O |   | P | A | N | G |
| V |   | L | S |   | F | E | A |   |   |   |   |   |
| M | A | K | E | T | H | E | F | U | R | F | L | Y |

## Crossword Corner November 2025



Across

- 1,3** Distinctive expression (4,2,6)  
**8** Expel (4)  
**9** Italian city – girl's name (8)  
**11** Jointly (4,2,4)  
**14** XC (6)  
**15** Contribute (to charity) (6)  
**17** Expurgation (10)  
**20** Food of the Greek gods (8)  
**21** Insinuation (4)  
**22,23** Current situation (3,2,3,4)

Down

- 1,18** With all possible vigour (5,3,4)  
**2** Not saner (anag) – ringing (8)  
**4** Obscene (6)  
**5** One's wife (informal) (3,7)  
**6** Skin disease (4)  
**7,13** Not easily annoyed (4-8)  
**10** Become furious (3,3,4)  
**12** Where the souls of slain heroes were received by Odin (8)  
**13** See 7  
**16** Biblical prophet (and his book) (6)  
**18** See 1  
**19** Competent (4)