



Christmas is Coming!

There were 23 people making Christmas Wreaths in St Joseph's Hall on Saturday 29th November, with April Davidson and Angela McCormack from the British Heart Foundation there to lead the day. This was the fifth annual Wreath making event organised by Bill and Margaret Black, and this year there was also a lunch prepared by Lynsey and Kathryn from the Mill.

Happy Christmas Balerno!

some point. By New Year of course, even before the Magi arrive on the scene, attention has all but turned away from Christmas and by Hogmanay all that remains may be the prospect of seven swans a-swimming. Swans were of course a prized item on royal menus at Christmas tide and Henry III almost did away with the species when he ordered forty swans for his Christmas celebrations. King Edward VII served "Cygne à la Windsor" at a Christmastide dinner in the 1890s and also for his Christmas dinner in 1908. After Christmas however it would be a little difficult for the Blether to serve up Christmas celebrations in the February Blether; so here is the Christmas Special, which is always a challenge to the reprographics department because it is always colourful and with BIG DARK pictures!

Santa Claus is coming to town!

Oh, no he isn't! Oh yes he is!

Santa did indeed come to town with sightings in at least two locations on Saturday 13th, at the Christmas Tree Festival and then at the Brass Band Concert. But a week before that on Thursday 4th December the man in the red suit had been observed at the lighting of the Church Christmas Tree and then again in Main Street when the Christmas Lights were switched on by senior pupils from Dean Park Primary School. So Santa is definitely around!

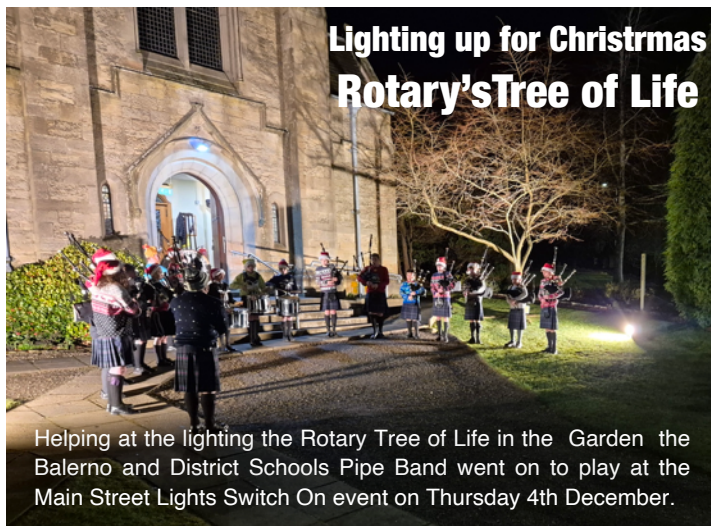


Market carolling!

There were 1840 people at the Christmas Farmers Market in Main Street between 9.00am and 1.00pm on Saturday 13th December, and a fair number of them were around to hear and to join in with the traditional Christmas Carols interlude led by Martin Petty and Balerno Church Choir. The choir was augmented by market-goers including members of the Parish Church congregation who may well now be in Martin's sights as potential apprentices for the art of Choral singing.

Most of the carols were traditional and well known and the fact that the weather was relatively kind meant that some people were actually able to sit around the Market Square in Main Street enjoying a coffee from the mobile snacks van, before moving on to get those vital last minute gifts and other essentials.

Happy Christmas to all when it comes!



Lighting up for Christmas Rotary's Tree of Life

Helping at the lighting the Rotary Tree of Life in the Garden the Balerno and District Schools Pipe Band went on to play at the Main Street Lights Switch On event on Thursday 4th December.



Pentland Singers at Christmas

There were high points but absolutely no low points in the Pentland Singers Christmas Concert 2025 on 9 December at Balerno Parish Church. This was the second performance of the group's 2025 Concert the first having been at the Hibson Craig hall on 4 December. Children's voices singing carols is always a high point and Pentland Junior Singers were a credit to the genre. Amongst the highest of the other high points, and this reviewer's Best of the Best, was Ian Munro's arrangement of the Carol of the King, a French processional carol with a strong rhythmic line emphasised by the guest percussion section which provided an urgent and insistent background to an almost half speed and slightly muted greeting to Majesty.

This was an exquisitely crafted and sensitively presented salute to Advent, and my only regret would be that the entire concert was not recorded. Brilliant concert! Thank you!

Coming up in 2026 !

Balerno Parish Church's Bi-Centenary!

So here's a picture from the archives. Looks genuine enough. Or does it? Santa Claus must have been doing a recce. Strange because while the first recorded sighting of the man in the red suit was in about 1840 the Church building only arrived in 1888. Now about AI.....



picture courtesy of Don MacLeod

Gift Service - Sunday 6th December

Roy welcomed a large congregation to the Annual Advent Gift Service which this year was held on Sunday 7th December, and especially the three children who were there and who



assisted Elaine in lighting the second Advent Candle. This year's gifts were of foodstuffs destined to go to Community For Food (CFF) and to the Holy Trinity Wester Hailes Foodbank.



CFF provides support for families in the Currie and Balerno area, and currently has 30 families on its books, while Wester Hailes Foodbank supports between 50 and 60 households on an average week. The Foodbank is operated by Holy Trinity Church and they direct people to other support services within and outwith Holy Trinity rather than leaning on the Holy Trinity Foodbank in the medium to long term.



Donations in kind for Wester Hailes Foodbank can be made at St Joseph's, and you can make a financial donation if you want through Holy Trinity's website, or you can use the QR code above to access the site.

CFF are always in need of hygiene products and non-perishable food – tins and jars of vegetables, fruit, pulses, fish and meat and larger staples of pasta, rice, noodles, dried pulses, breakfast locations along the Upper Water of Leith Valley including Scotmid stores in Balerno. CFF t-shirts proclaim 'no local child goes hungry'; that's a message and half for Christmas.

Contact hello@communityforfood.com

Help make Christmas a happier time by supporting these charities!



Lessons and carols 2025

Balerno's Lessons and Carols Service is usually held on the last Sunday before Christmas but this year circumstances required that it be held a week earlier, on Sunday 14th December.

The service included traditional carols from the Church Choir including the possibly new to most people 'Citizens of Chartres' and 'One Little Angel' plus two pieces from Balerno's a capella male voice ensemble, One Bar Rest.

The Church had been prepared by the Flower Fairies with the sanctuary and the Christmas Tree fully lit, looking very welcoming and celebratory for the near capacity congregation.



*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year
to all our readers*

Broxburn and Livingston Brass Band



Fantastic Concert for Christmas on Saturday 13th December by the Broxburn and Livingston Brass Band making their 2025 visit to Balerno Parish Church.

The Christmas concert series started in 2010 and the band have been here every year since then, barring the years of Covid.

The 2025 Concert had a varied programme with Christmas music throughout. The last item before the interval rung the changes however, being made up of snippets from at least 26 carols and provided the basis for a devilish quiz; the winner managed to identify something like sixteen, on the basis of no more than a couple of seconds on each tune. Pretty good eh?

The Band will be back in December 2026, same time on the 12th. Put it in the diary now!

Christmas Tree Festival 2025

Balerno's Christmas Tree Festival 2025 was the 16th of that name, and the 14th to have been held in Ogston Hall. During the Covid years of 20 and 21 the Festival went out doors, and it was cold, so it was; so we're all glad to be back in doors.

This year the Gala had once again kindly taken on the organisation and each year they have done it it gets more colourful, efficient and fun. This year they had a streamlined voting system in which voters with placed yellow tokens in a bucket at the tree of their choice. And at £1 per token a marvellous £800 or so was raised to ensure that the Gala can go on for another year.

There must have been twenty plus trees on show and Ogston Hall was going like a fair for the Saturday morning between 9.00 and 1.00.

The Winner



Voting took place throughout the morning and the announcement came out late on Sunday afternoon. Whether the delay was occasioned by a demand for recounts we can't say, but the worthy winners were 51st Scouts with their Beaver themed tree, with Currie Primary decorating the C&B Tree in second place and Grey Horse

coming in 3rd with the - well what else could it be - Grey Horse themed tree. You can see lots more pictures of the Christmas Tree Festival on the Facebook page.

In the mean time here's a couple of Photos of BPC linked entries



Balerno Parish Church Tree



Fairtrade Group Tree

The Mill Christmas Party

The must have ticket of the Balerno Christmas Season

The Mill Volunteers Party was held on Monday 1st December in - where else? - the Mill, of course. The Balloon Arch was a work of art and the Christmas Tree was stunning, and still is today 21st December, the day the Mill closes for a well earned rest over the Festive Season. In fact we know of course that real reason for the winter closedown - that's Washington speak - was that many people needed a bit of time for recovery; no names, no pack drill the Party. Here's a picture taken from a distance to protect identities.

The Volunteers Party is of course really a huge thank you to the volunteers, for everything they do throughout the year, for the Church and above all for the community. And by the way there are no press passes for this event; we know, we asked.

Thank you to Lynsey and the staff and volunteers!
(You're still not getting a press pass, OK! - Ed)



Christmas Carols at the Grey Horse

On the evening of Tuesday, 16th December, One Bar Rest and Friends took over the function room at the Grey Horse to sing Pub Carols with the community and help to raise money for CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young). CRY helps to support medical research into sudden heart failure in young people as well as funding heart screening programmes which, to date, have screened over 343,000 young people in

the UK. We don't know yet how much was raised on the evening, but we'll let you know.

Over 70 people joined OBR and Friends in singing unaccompanied Carols with most of the words and notes in the right order! The singing of 'Pub Carols' is not just a Yorkshire and Derbyshire tradition, but that is where it is perhaps strongest. In many cases, carols are geographically limited so that villages may have their own variants on same carol. OBR's version of the Barwell Old Hark is based on one of those variants which was made famous when featured on Classic FM some 10 years ago.

The combination of familiar with less familiar carols contributed to a leisurely evening with time for chat. It was probably one of the highlights of Balerno's Christmas season and, judging by the positive response of all who were there, it could well become an annual event. The only blemish in the evening was the fact that the mince pies were all finished too soon!



WOOF

Hello my friends, a quick photo of two friends Keeley and Lottie, who popped in to see the Christmas tree. I only just managed to squeeze into the pic, thanks to the wonders of self timers, Maybe the boss'll get me an SLR for Christmas 'dear Santa

Have a lovely Christmas. everybody!
Woof, woof woof!



December 2025 Services

December services

- 21st December - **NO SERVICE IN BALERNO**
11.15am - Joint service in Currie (Nativity Service)
- 24th December - **6.00pm - Christmas Eve Family Service Balerno**
6.30pm - Christmas Eve Family Service, Gibson Craig Hall
11.30pm - Watchnight Service Balerno
11.30pm - Watchnight Service Currie
- 25th December - Christmas day
11.15am - Joint Service Currie (No service in Balerno)
- 28th December - 9.30am - Service in Balerno
11.15am - Service in Currie

January services

During January Sunday morning services will be at **9.30am at Balerno Parish Church**, and at Currie at 11.15am

NB - Mil Cafe is closed for Christmas after Friday 19 December, but will reopen on Tuesday January 6th

Useful Numbers

Interim Minister Rev Roy Henderson
0131 449 3830

rhenderson@churchofscotland.org.uk

Church administrator (Curch office)

Pam McKeon 0131 449 7245

bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk

Session Clerks

Kay Coull 0131 449 6151
07415506947

Elaine McCulloch 0131 449 5876
balerno.sessionclerks@gmail.com

Treasurer

David Booth 0131 449 3516
bpc-treasurer@balernochurch.org.uk

Roll Keeper

Pam McKeon 0131 449 2541
pammckeon@bt.com

Fabric Committee

Dilys Conway 0131 449 7245
dilysconway@blueyonder.co.uk

Pastoral Care Co-ordinator

Kay Coull 0131 449 6151
coullkay@hotmail.com

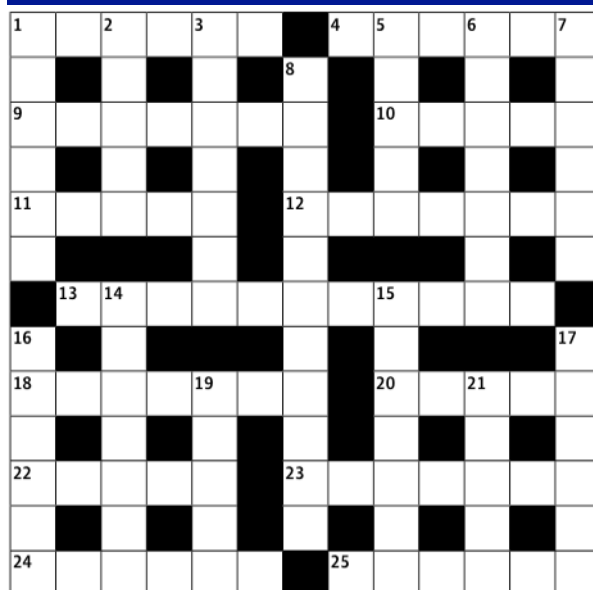
Mil Cafe

Lynsey Inglis 0131 449 7245
themillatstjosephs@gmail.com

Balerno Blether

Lesley Burt 0131 449 4314
lesley.burt70@gmail.com

Crossword Corner Christmas 2025



Across

- 1 Harry's fiancée (6)
- 4 ie (4,2)
- 9 Item of clothing (7)
- 10 Basic monetary unit of several North African and Middle East countries (5)
- 11 Procreate (5)
- 12 Conceded (7)
- 13 I don't know what to say! (5,4,2)
- 18 The Barber of Seville composer (7)
- 20 Satellite alternative? (5)
- 22 Foam on top of espresso coffee (5)
- 23 Cry of praise to God (7)
- 24 Spoken communication (6)
- 25 The Road to Wigan Pier author (6)

Down

- 1 Mnangagwa's predecessor (6)
- 2 Eat gluttonously (5)
- 3 Rectified (7)
- 5 Mythical many-headed snake (5)
- 6 A Christmas Carol character (4,3)
- 7 Walk with long steps (6)
- 8 Performer's nervousness (5,6)
- 14 Lewd (7)
- 15 Type of tooth (7)
- 16 Summary (6)
- 17 Remember (6)
- 19 Biblical father of twins (5)
- 21 Noddle (slang) (5)