

balerno



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

Blether

FREE



What makes a community?

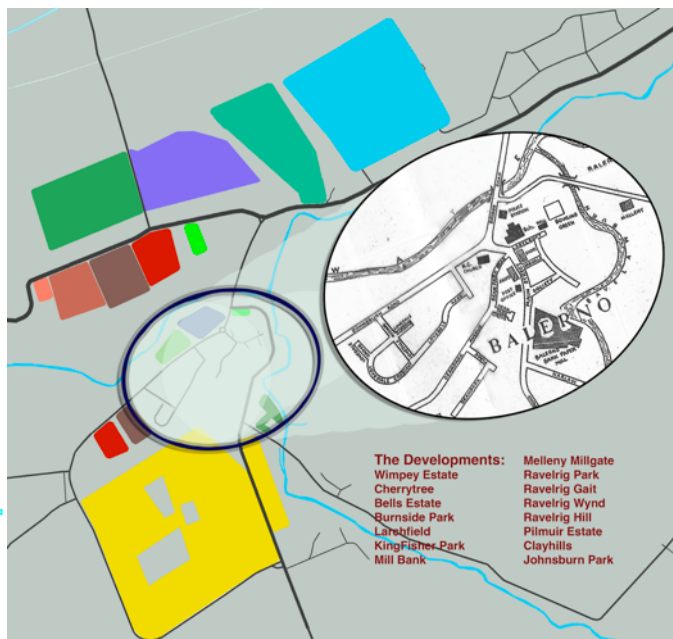
In 1964, the Balerno Resident's Association produced a map of our community, recognising that it was starting to grow. At that time the population numbered around 1640 souls in a village which had grown around the paper mills powered by the streams running off the Pentland Hills. Life revolved around the mills, the farms, the school and the church and while everybody might not have known everybody else, few people did not participate in community activity.

That map is reproduced in the inset of this diagram which illustrates only some of the housing developments which have taken place since the 1960's and which have contributed to the growth of the population of Balerno by approximately 500% to exceed 8,000. The complete list of developments is much longer, as planners allow smaller sites to be repurposed and 'brown' sites to be redeveloped.

Did anyone really plan that Balerno should evolve from the village of the 1960's to become the larger community which it is now, running the risk of becoming a dormitory area?

The developers constructed houses, but – with the commendable exception of Marchbank Park – their contribution to the construction of the community has been negligible.

None the less, it is probably fair to say that most of the residents of Balerno feel that it still retains the identity of the village which it once was. There are a wide variety of components of our community life in terms of the arts and sport which bring people together, and the Parish Church campus has proved to be a significant asset in providing accommodation for a range of activities as well as providing the community café in the Mill. The recent acquisition of the former Police Station through the perseverance of the Village Trust should be a positive gain when it is repurposed for community use. The resources provided by the Trust, the Parish Church, Bowling Club and a few others are at the physical heart of our community, bringing people together for the Farmer's Market, Sunday worship or just a coffee and a chat at the Mill. There are various social media forums which



Company. Youth organisations continue to flourish in the village.

Over the years, many in the community volunteered financial support for the various projects that led to the development of the Parish Church Campus to make it the hub of activity that it is today. Although it has been there for nearly 200 years its long-term future, like that of many other churches, is uncertain. One way or another, it is to be hoped that, for a long time yet, this key component of our community will continue to provide not just the space for people to come together, but a hub that creates and sustains community itself.

In large part the outcome will be for the people of Balerno to determine.

Housing developments in Balerno since the 1960's

Bavelaw	Malleny Millgate
Cherrytree (Estate)	Newmills / Curriehill Castle
Bells (Estate)	Orrvale
Burnside Park	Pilmuir (estate)
Clayhills	Ravelrig Park
Harlaw Gait	Ravelrig Gait
Harlaw March	Ravelrig Wynd
Johnsburn Park	Ravelrig Hill
Johnsburn Green	Ravelrig Heights (estate)
Larchfield	Pilmuir
Kingfisher Park (estate)	Slaeside
Millbank	Waulkmill Loan (part)

Mr James Melrose and Mr William Stevenson met at Clayhills in July 1826;

The rest may be history; but are there lessons for the future?

OK folks, so it's July 1826 and I'm writing to you from John Melrose's house at Clayhills in Balerno. With me are Mr Melrose and William Stevenson who has just been elected preses, (that's Chaiman to you and me) of a meeting which is about to make a momentous decision to form a Secession Church in Balerno. The Secession Church, which by then numbered some 200 congregations was particularly strong in Edinburgh. Nothing strange there; lots of communities are doing it and as far as we know the Church of Scotland isn't unhappy because they are having difficulties coping at present. Mind you the United secession wasn't necessarily all that happy either, and Dr Belfrage of Slateford spoke for two and half hours in the Synod against allowing Balerno to call a minister.

It may not have been unusual but it was still quite a courageous decision taken 200 years ago, with Balerno then only just beginning to develop as a community in its own right. Balerno's population in 1826 would only have been a small fraction of the c.1715 souls accounted for in 1821 in Currie Parish of which Balerno was then part. The 1841 census gives the Balerno population as 303, and even by 1861 there were only 510 people in Balerno. By 1871 even that had reduced to 490. So what were Melrose, Stevenson and company thinking of? Who else was involved?

The first elders of the new church were appointed in 1827 and included George Laing, part owner of the Balerno Mill, and a John Garner. They were likely involved at the Clayhills meeting. The call to Rev John Young was signed by 85 members and 35 'ordinary hearers'; not bad numbers given that the membership when Rev Andrew Tod was called in 1829 is estimated at only 100, or 150 including children. Could they see into the future and envision that Balerno, at that time developing as a centre of quarrying and mills - Bavelaw Quarry from 1757, and Malleny Mill from 1805 - would within two hundred years effectively be a small town of 8000 plus?

Balerno Parish Church will likely lose its identity in 2027 on its union with Currie Kirk, and that, a rejoining in one sense, strikes something of a Back to the Future note. But what does 1826 tell us about our future? Indeed as Balerno Parish Church



part of 1865 map of Balerno with Clayhills marked approximately

prepares for union perhaps we need to look more urgently at what might be best for all of us. We would not want to disappoint Messrs Melrose and Stevenson.

Just as we have an interest in the future of our church in a renewed union so we might also think that a church in the community has an interest in what that community might look like in the future. That in turn might encourage us to look at the

moves for creation of a Local Place Plan for Balerno. You can see more about what involves on p7. But in the briefest of brief terms the preparation of a Local Place Plan gives the community a say in the development of plans by, in our case, the City of Edinburgh Council and, by necessary implication, by the Scottish Government.

The local community would be surprised if the Parish Church were not to be involved in formulating a Local Place Plan. Involvement will enable the Church to influence the future. To be involved however means that the Church in Balerno must have its own vision as to where it wants to be in the future.

Far be it for the Blether to suggest that we entrust the future to Artificial Intelligence; although AI can provide interesting perspectives. Thus we asked AI what advice Messrs Melrose and Stevenson might offer to Balerno Parish Church today as we face the task of progressing the Union. The response?

- Stay rooted in local heritage while embracing change.
- Focus on serving the evolving community's spiritual and social needs.
- Understand that the church's strength comes from its past and local connections.
- Be a vibrant hub for all residents, offering support, fellowship, and practical help, adapting to new challenges.
- Foster unity within the congregation and reach out to other local groups, reflecting the collaborative spirit often seen in historical church records.

And

- invest in people.

So what's happened to *your* New Year Resolution(s)?

Every year lots of people make their New Year resolutions, and we wrote a little about it in February 2023. Some may genuinely hope to keep to them. Making a New Year's resolution is a tradition; but why do we do it and how is everybody getting on?

To start with, only 9% of Britons said they intended to make New Year's resolutions for 2026. So don't worry too much if you didn't. But if you did and if your commitment has already failed, don't worry; around 80% of New year Resolutions are abandoned by the end of January. Young people are the most likely to have made resolutions, with 37% of 18-24 year olds saying they would do so; apparently only 11% of 65+ age group said they would. Against that 38% of those who say they made

New Year's resolutions for 2025 say they have kept to all of them. Really? We don't believe them either. Only 7% of interviewees declined to say what they intended; we're surprised they even answered.

Interestingly - but possibly unsurprisingly - going to church did not feature in the reported resolutions options; but the resolution to 'be happier' did not carry any further explanation as to what that might involve or how it might be achieved.



Balerno Parish Church is updating its Communications systems!

And we need your help, please!

BPC has recently circulated all members via the Website and e mail informing them of an important update regarding how it plans to keep in touch with the membership in the future, as it prepares and looks forward to Union with Currie Kirk. In the letter it writes,

'We are evolving our pastoral care to ensure every member receives the most effective and timely support possible. Presently our Elders conduct routine district visits with Communion invitations prior to the Communion services in March, June and November each year. We now have a reduced number of visiting Elders and can no longer sustain this way of connecting with the membership.

Moving forward, we are shifting to a model of purposeful, needs-based visits and communication. This change allows us to be more responsive to specific pastoral, emotional, and spiritual needs as they arise, rather than a fixed schedule.

There are some members who have been receiving home visits from the Minister, an Elder or Pastoral Visitor, alongside the routine district visits with Communion invitations. Let us assure you that these home visits will continue.

Our aim is to provide the best possible pastoral care support and to do this effectively we need to ensure our communication channels are current and that we are keeping in touch with you in a way that works best for you.

We kindly ask for your help in two ways:

Preferred Method of Contact: Please let us know the best way to keep in touch with you (e.g., email, phone call, text message, post/delivery, home visit).

Contact Information Permission: We request your permission to use your contact details, especially your email address, to send a regular pastoral message and relevant Church information. We can assure you that your information will be kept secure and used solely for church-related communication.



Balerno Parish Church
Church Office
St Joseph's Centre
2 Main Street,
Balerno
EH14 7EH

Office Telephone No. 0131 449 7245
Office e-mail bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk

Contact Information Update & Communication Consent Form

Name:

Address:

Phone/Mobile Number:

Email Address:

Please tick all that apply:

I would like to receive communications by:

☐ Email. ☐ Telephone (call/text). ☐ Post/Delivery. ☐ Home Visit.

I give consent for my email address to be used for general church communications (newsletters, event updates, etc.):

☐ Yes, I consent.

☐ No, I do not consent.

You can ask for your details to be removed or amended at any time by contacting the church office. More details about our data privacy policy can be found on our website.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

If you or your family have any immediate pastoral needs or would like a home visit from an Elder or our Minister, please do not hesitate to reach out to the church office at 0131 449 7245 or bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk and you will be referred to the appropriate person.

Thank you for your understanding.



Edinburgh Balerno Church of Scotland Scottish Charity Number SC 018012
Fair Trade Church and Eco Congregation

Session Clerks.
Kay Coull and Elaine McCullough
balernosessionclerk@gmail.com



Have you noticed?

from this to this!

The radiators in St Joseph's were looking dirty and unattractive. As well as rust there was unsightly staining which did not wash off. However, over the Christmas holidays a couple of Santa's Elves (Ishbel and Lynsey) were hard at work. The radiators have been rubbed down, the years of dust, crumbs and general muck removed from the inside, and the radiators have been painted with White Hammerite radiator paint.

Thank you, Lynsey and Ishbel!



Enabling our future!

Balerno Parish Church sits right at the junction of Bridge Road, Johnsburn Road and Main Street and is therefore a hub in the physical sense, as well as being a hub for the community in the facilities and services it offers.

In the presbytery plan church buildings are designated using categories 'A' (retain and resource) or 'B' (review for potential release/repurposing). That is to align physical assets with missional goals. In turn that designation should influence decisions on location, maintenance, and community relevance, focusing on future community needs rather than historical listing alone. All of Balerno Parish Church's buildings are designated 'A'. are being retained and therefore must be resourced. The burden does fall on Balerno but the Presbytery supports individual congregations through a system of grants and loans. Balerno benefited greatly from such grants and loans over the past fifty years or so enabling it to undertake large scale schemes right back to the 1970's with the huge decision to build what is now the Ogston Hall and kitchen. Shepherd Room, and associated kitchen and office. To that was added the purchase of St Josephs and the subsequent redevelopment as the St Joseph Centre, kitchen and toilets. Those were only two of the major developments since 1970; others include the refitting of the church itself and the building of the new manse.

The Kirk Session has a continuing duty to ensure that the property is maintained and the Blether is pleased then to be able to report that a recent application to the Presbytery's Property Committee for a five figure sum is being progressed to the next stage. We understand that it has been passed by Presbytery itself and will now be passed on to the General Trustees.

Roof repairs

Balerno Parish Church has applied for funding to enable repairs to the church roof and to St Joseph's. In the case of the latter there is evidence of moisture and mould on the roof structure of this building; the work here involves installation of ventilation tiles. The work on the Church roof involves the east end and overhaul that section of the roof with new watergates and valley gutters fitted and pointing undertaken.

Plaster-work and re-decoration

The Church itself was last decorated in 2005 and is showing signs of neglect with, through age, numerous cracks in the original lath and plaster identified in the quinquennial review. This requires repair to preserve the fabric of the building, and redecoration is also required. Many of our readers will probably have noticed cracking in some of the plasterwork in the Church itself, and necessary work on the church also involves repair and redecoration.

St Joseph's Centre and Ogston Hall were last decorated in 2012. Both halls are used by the Church community in all the usual ways



including a busy church Café which operates 4 days per week, and is a real hub for the community. The halls are in demand in addition to church groups by many organisations and groups in the local community – over 25 on a recent count;. All of this contributes to Balerno Parish Church being “in the heart of the Community”. It is essential therefore that both halls, which provide our letting income, should continue to be attractive and presentable for all our users.

Energy efficiency improvements

Keeping the buildings wind and water tight could be the strapline for the spending requests listed above. Those are essential costs. The following ones are no less essential and in addition they help propel Balerno Parish Church to the next stage as at the forefront of ecological responsibility. While the existing hall and church wall thermostats can be programmed for regular usage it requires manual intervention with someone coming to the campus to switch heating on and off as required by other users of the church and two halls. The next stage involves smart boiler controls, and smart thermostats will enable the creation of virtual zones allowing heating of the halls and rooms as required. These thermostats would be controlled remotely through an app on the phone (any number of phones) and/or tablets. Installation will save time, and through more effective control of heating they will produce a reduction in costs.

Upgrade to lighting, and sound amplification in the Church

The re-decoration work in the church will provide the opportunity for installation of LED lights and also on essential work on sound amplification systems. The former of these will contribute to energy efficiency and therefore to costs, while the latter will provide assistance to users.



The Church has approached Presbytery for assistance simply because at present it does not have funds lodged with the General Trustees sufficient to cover these essential works. At present however the church is meeting all its financial obligations., and there is a level of confidence that the investment thought will assist Balerno Parish Church as it enters the next stage of its development in the Congregation's bi-centennial year.

The total costs of the work set out above is £39,508 and the Grant application as considered by Presbytery Property Committee as the first stage of the grant process is for £32,000. Balerno Parish Church will contribute £7508 - approximately an 80/20 split.

The Blether congratulates the Church's Fabric Committee not only on preparation of the grant application now progressing through the Church of Scotland processes, but also on the work it has done and continues to do to ensure that Balerno's buildings are wind and water tight and attractive and comfortable for all users, both church and community, for years to come.



A Roadmap Towards the Union?

It is not our habit to repeat articles, but on this occasion, we make an exception. Regular readers will recognise the 'roadmap' towards union which was provided by Chat GPT in response to an enquiry by a member of the editorial team.

A report on the meeting with the Partnership Support Group, which took place on the 1st of November, is on our front page and represents the first step towards union; but there is a long way to go. This guidance appeared very shortly before that meeting and so it is being republished because it reflects some of the points made at that meeting and was commented upon favourably by members of both congregations.

The problem with Artificial Intelligence like Chat GPT is that it can only regurgitate the information which other people put into it and it uses their vocabulary which means that a list like this can appear to be quite daunting. However, it represents the voice of lots of experience and should be a helpful checklist of things which need to be discussed and resolved in the coming months.

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

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.

'Chat Time' arrangements are changing!

Chat Time on a Tuesday and Wednesday has not been used much over recent months and so Roy, our Interim Minister, thinks that it's better use of resources, if you would like a chat with him, for you simply to contact him direct for an appointment.

So, if you would like to speak with our Interim Minister, the Rev Roy Henderson, please simply contact him on



07961736061 or email

RHenderson@churchofscotland.org.uk

Strategy Group

Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church are looking for volunteers from the Eldership and the Membership for the proposed 'Strategy Group'. This group will develop, support and progress the union of both Churches in the months ahead. The Remit for this group will include:

- v Completing the Basis of Union document.
- v Supporting the Joint Workings of existing Committees and Groups
- v Employment Contracts
- v Church Magazines
- v Church Websites

For further information please contact the Rev Roy Henderson on



07961736061 or email

rhenderson@churchofscotland.org.uk

Notes from Roy

In my 'down time' I play bass guitar in a folk group some of the tunes are in odd time signatures This prompted me to purchase a t-shirt similar to this: "These are Difficult Times" it says. Too true!

In church terms this is the season after Epiphany. A time to celebrate the shining of the light of Christ into the world.

Curiously, this time of celebration includes Bible readings such as 1 Corinthians 1, which acknowledges the difficulties, challenges and divisions that those local Christians in Corinth were facing.

Recently in church, we read Matthew 4:12-23 where Jesus retreats to Galilee after the arrest of John the Baptist, and then goes public, saying;

'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

It occurs to me that churches, and other organisations often delay taking action because it is not the right time. Yet Jesus chose to announce that God's Kingdom had *already* come near, even in the kind of world when a man like John could be arrested. As if to say there is no 'right time' there is only now.

The Galilee of Jesus day was a multi-ethnic place of trade and Roman occupation. So Jesus' invitation to the fishermen to 'follow me' did not happen in a vacuum, but in real time, to real people, facing real challenges.



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

February 2026 Services

Date	time	location
1 st	9.30	Balerno Parish Church
	11.15	Currie Kirk (Heriot Watt Anniversary)
8 th	9.30	Balerno Parish Church
	11.15	Currie Kirk (Prayer Tree follows the service)
15 th	11.15	JOINT SERVICE in Currie Kirk (No service in Balerno)
22 nd	9.30	Balerno Parish Church
	11.15	Currie Kirk

February 2026 Events

date	Event and location
2	Heriot-Watt Chaplaincy Annual Public Lecture 2026 18.00 refreshments 19:00 lecture James Watt Centre Edinburgh Campus Register via Eventbrite by 29.01.26
3	Life in Scotland in the Good Old Days Currie Guid Speaker: Roy Johnstone Gibson Craig Halls 10.00am
4	Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela Balerno Guild 7.30pm (part 1) Ogston Hall with Neil and Anne Johnstone
17	The Life of Eric Liddle Speaker – Gibson Craig Halls 2.00pm Speaker Sue Caton
18	Local Foodbank: Fiona Watson Balerno Guild 7.30am Ogston Hall
27	Apple Messy Church Gibson Craig Halls; 2.00 to 4.00pm

We cannot wait until we are ready, people are ready or the signs are right. The call to 'follow me' is a call into a way of life shared with other fallible followers of Jesus, like the Corinthians to whom the Apostle Paul wrote, and like those first fishermen, tax-collectors and the rest.

Three Calls, three conversions
Called and converted to Christ
Called and converted to the church
Called and converted back to world again.

Yes, these are difficult times.

And Jesus says that God's Kingdom has come near and calls to follow.

Come and join us for:

Activities Songs Food Crafts Games Stories

Messy Church

'Apple Messy Church!'

Friday 27th February, 2–4pm

Gibson Craig Halls, Currie.

All Welcome!

Balerno Linked with Currie Kirk

Plant Nurture Grow



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, delicious cakes and much more besides. Try it once and we guarantee you'll be back.



Every day we have two varieties of soup, lovingly made by our Mill volunteers and staff. Try our baked potatoes, bacon rolls, roll and sausage or toasted sandwiches and 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

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Balerno?

News in brief from Balerno Community Council

Balerno Community Council met on 8 January for its first meeting of 2026 and the first since November 2025, the December meeting having been taken over by the Lighting of the Main Street Christmas Tree.

The main business of the January meeting was taken up with discussion of the proposal by the Pentland Hills Regional Park to introduce parking charges for the four car parks associated with the Park, at Flotterstone, Bonaly, Harlaw and Threipmuir. The discussion centred on a paper to be considered by the relevant Committee of the Regional Park the day before the BCC meeting. Predictably the proposal was accepted by the PGRP when it came up for decision and was then passed to City of Edinburgh Council to adopt. Adoption will lead to preparation of Traffic Regulation Orders by Edinburgh Council to allow for such charging, and that process will take about a year. BCC recognised that it had agreed at earlier stages for the introduction of charges in principle as the only way that problems of maintenance at the park including addressing vandalism and so called 'dirty camping' could be addressed. However real concern was expressed about the tariffs proposed and the absence of any provision for improvement in safety for pedestrian access from the nearest public transport at Balerno Terminus.

The Council also discussed the preparation of a Local Place Plan for Balerno, in the course of which several members of the public expressed concern about the possibility of development opposite Balerno High School. It was made clear that there was at present no live application for planning permission for such a development in what is part of the Green Belt.

A questionnaire is to be published towards the end of January or in early February soliciting views from Balerno residents on how they might wish Balerno to develop in future. The Church is likely to be amongst organisations approached for their views.

do you have a minute, Lord?

Lord, what do these adults think they are doing? I get a hard time from my parents for being on social media and I am getting fed up with hearing the words, 'I know how you feel.' Contrary to what they may think, I do have an idea about what is going on in your world. We seemed to have got to a point where there was a recognition and acceptance that we could not go on using fossil fuels for ever without imperilling our planet but now there are all sorts of people saying that looking after the planet by using more renewable energy is too expensive!

Does that mean that all that was being said about global warming was untrue? Does it mean that the politicians who want to ignore the advice about global warming don't care? Does it mean that the people in power just spin selected facts to suit their own convenience? I am expected to tell the truth at home and in school - and I get in trouble if I don't - but people in positions of power just seem to get away with saying what suits them even when it is obvious that they are avoiding responsibility for their actions.

There seems to be a double standard here. I think there was something in the Ten Commandments which said something about honouring your father and your mother so that you could have a long life, but how can I respect people who seem to go along with this double standard? OK, maybe my parents don't exactly go along with the double standards if my dad's comments about the news is anything to go by, but the people in the news do seem to be well practised in the art of misdirection in order to avoid inconvenient truths. They would require others to have a 'duty of candour,' but . . . and they think we don't notice!

So, I'm frustrated; I want the world to be better, but I don't know exactly what to pray for!

Contributed



Thesaurus

FRESH (adj)

New, Renewed, Additional, Replacement, Other, different
(slang) - cool, stylish, new, or impressive

START (n)

Beginning, Birth, Foundation, Commencement,
or, together, (and in plain language),

**a collection of household goods to benefit
people setting up home for the first time.**

EARLY NOTICE

is hereby given

(giving warning, or information sooner than you might have expected,
thereby allowing you time to prepare, mitigate risks, and take action.)

OF AN IMPORTANT EVENT

(being a significant occurrence causing major change, shaping a narrative,
and having lasting impact on individuals, societies, and history, acting as
a turning point, a milestone and a catalyst for development)

**For more on this exciting event, should you require it, see
the Balerno Blether or BPC FaceBook!**

Balerno Parish Church

Fresh Start Spring collection -

Friday 24th and Sat 25th April 2026.

More information from Susan or Malcolm Ogilvie

Susanogilvie61@hotmail.com
malcolm.ogilvie@hotmail.co.uk

The (former) Treasurer's Thumb A Retirement Package

Now look 'ere Thumb, lad! This has to stop y'know. It's not that it's beyond a joke because that might imply somat mightn't it? And I do know you're reet chuffed that some-one may have appreciated your scribblings to the point of marking you 2 out of 4.... and no I can't understand that whatever you say, and yes I know it's in the Reader's Survey ... and I know you've been following the results of that keenly; you and that hound, Woof, I think is 'is name. Although I'm not too sure about 'im either quite honestly. But of course 'e is doing better than you in the rankings so far - no ah'm not crowing - just saying; so do you think it's maybe time to chuck in towel? Ye've 'ad a good run after all; most editors would've cut you adrift a long time ago. What's that? Yes, I know I shouldn't talk about cutting adrift but it does say the 'former Treasurer's Thumb'; not the 'Treasurer's former thumb'. Yes, I know thumbs don't grow on trees, and yes I know being stuck inside a bandage wasn't the way you wanted to spend 2022. But then readers didn't want to spend 2023, '24 and '25 - far less any of 2026 trying to make sense of what may be rumbling around inside what you call a brain.

What's that? You promise to retire gracefully to the South of France provided that Blether Readers subscribe £20 into the red collecting tin for the February 2026 issue. Do I think they'd do that? Well, it's quite a lot, but there's som 'as said they'd do anything to read something, nay anything else in this rag. Just the once..... they say *please*. They're almost begging; so ah reckon the £20 is on. What's that Thumb? That's not each, is it? It's total; isn't it? £20 in 't pot to get rid of Thumb. Not literally, mind. No, you'll still be there, on hand, at end of arm. Only you'll be silent; (I hope; no more adventures or ramblings. I might even miss some of his ravings. But time moves on, and e's 'ad a good run, as n't e?)

What's that? £50? No, no; I know it's not blackmail. It just sounds like it. It's a negotiated retirement package. e's getting, So £20, and that's it? Ta ra then..... probably. Possibly? Well,

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 Reader Survey

It's not too late for you to complete the Balerno Blether Reader Survey! And this is of course your opportunity to help to develop the penmanship or whatever else you want about the Blether; dare we say your favourite publication.... Like it or loath it however we really would like to have your views. You'll find that if you tear off th last page in this issue the you'll have a copy of the form you can complete tna then hand in to Pam at the office. And you don't have to sign it or admit to it being your form !

Thanks in advance from the team!

Thought for the day!



CLG Dhún na nGall

Well, it is worth a thought isn't it. And while it is a bit 'in yer face' so to speak. It has raised a chuckle here and there

Photo courtesy of the Donegal Gaelic Football

balerno
blether
from the Blether Team

So here we are; it's 2026. So we'll wish everyone Happy New Year even if we're now a twelfth of the way to 2027.

2026 is our Churxh's bi-centennial year, and in July we can reimagine Messrs Melose and Stevenson sitting in the farmhouse at Clayhills pondering the future. Were they confident?

Importantly, we're not in 1826. If Messrs Melrose and Stevenson were wandering around the village today they might possibly recognise Malleny House and Doocot and Malleny Bridge, possibly Bankhead House, Ravelrig Doocot and the 1805 Bridge over the Bavelaw Burn. But they would be walking around a community which only 6 years before would have known only too well of the widespread economic hardship and confusion leading to the Radical War and the hear of the clearance of the population of Rum. It was a brutal and different time.

And yet Melrose, Stevenson and their colleagues pressed on with their ambition to establish what became Balerno's Parish Church, Call it what you will they must have had a vision of what they would like the future to be, and they, in modern parlance, went for it.

So here we are; it's 2026, and the world after countless wars, economic depressions and the like, is still a difficult place.

If 200 years later we have even half the confidence and ambition of Melrose and Stevenson in 1826 we should be able to say 'Here's to the future; we can make this work.'

balerno
blether

Woof

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

Happy New Year to all my friends out there. All the family visitors over Christmas and New Year have departed and the plane is so quiet. It was nice to have my two furry pals to visit and we feasted quite royally on turkey and ham. The pals were quite popular with the folks who had never met them before and that gave me the opportunity to bury a rather juicy gammon knuckle bone in my favourite garden spot. - well, it could have been thrown in the bin, couldn't it?

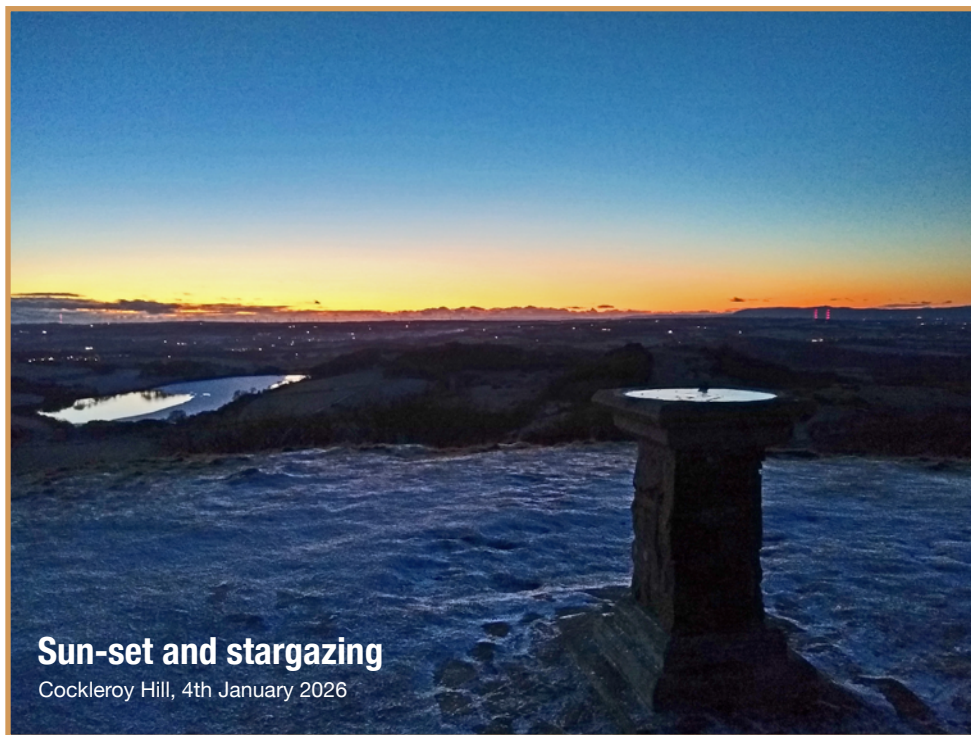
We had some snow during the holidays and the two pals had romped about with great glee. And me? - well quite frankly if you've seen snow once what's so special about a repeat appearance, and there's little worse than to come home with a thoroughly wet undercarriage!

Thank goodness the butcher has reopened after the holiday break, and I can get back to my duties. The last thing I need is a dearth of titbits after such an healthy time. I'll need to be outside the shop bright and early just in case someone tries to muscle in on my patch! - just let them dare.

So then, I'll bid you farewell until the next time - I'm looking forward to a very happy and profitable new year with loads of doggie opportunities available. I'll let you know. Cheers.....!

woof! woof!





Sun-set and stargazing

Cockleroy Hill, 4th January 2026

12 January 2026

Dear Lesley,

In our first Sunday service of 2026, Rev Roy Henderson mentioned how he enjoyed seeing more stars here in Balerno and Currie than he had done in Glasgow. This prompted me to complete my trip round the solar system. Yes, you can walk and drive, or cycle if you're really fit, from the Sun to Pluto in one day!

The tale originates in 1776 with David Stewart Erskine the 11th Earl of Buchan whose home was Kirkhill House, now surrounded by modern properties in the east of Broxburn. He was fascinated by the astronomy of his day, was friendly with Benjamin Franklin, and had a large stone pillar in his garden, covered in symbols, equations and latin inscriptions indicating the position of the six known planets of his

time, but on May 20th 2255. Why he chose this date is thought to be to do with the transit of Venus which occurs around that date, and which occurred twice in his lifetime in 1761 and 1769. The pillar was surmounted with a belltower and cross and the Earl also created a model of the solar system in his garden from stone and bronze spheres at the odd scale of 12283.23 miles to the inch, but both the model and the equations on the pillar appear to be quite accurate compared to modern-day computations. The pillar was renovated in 1988 and moved to the visitor centre in Almondell & Calderwood Country Park where you can see it today - a nod to the fact that the Earl's younger brother built and lived in Almondell House. It is all that remains of the original model.

The Earl in other aspects appeared to be quite eccentric, apparently advising Robert Burns how to improve his poetry writing and offering Walter Scott his assistance in making funeral arrangements when Scott was ill in 1819 - thankfully Scott recovered.

The Earl's efforts were commemorated with an art installation, completed in Sep 2008 with eleven pieces of art distributed to scale around West Lothian, centred on a glowing sun on the roof of Broxburn Academy. These represented our nine planets of the time plus the moon and a large asteroid representing the asteroid belt. Sadly, some have been vandalised and in fact Earth and its moon have vanished, (perhaps a very apt and worrying metaphor for our times!) but I did manage to find most of them and their information plaques or at least the site of them all. You can find a lot about the model if you search for 'Kirkhill Pillar Project' and I believe the visitor centre has information on it as well.

As a bit of fun, I checked where Voyager 1 - the furthest man-made object from Earth - would be, on this scale. Travelling at ten miles per second for nearly fifty years since launching, it will reach the milestone of one light-day of distance from us some time in the next year or so, and on the model, it has got to about the centre of Airdrie! Further out, our next nearest star cannot be on the model at this scale, as it would be off our planet altogether, about one seventh of the way to the moon!

So it was, on the first Sunday of this year, that I parked at Beecraigs Country Park visitor centre in a mini-blizzard. When it cleared to a beautiful crisp evening I made my way past Pluto (incongruously mounted in black granite on a toilet block!) and on to the frozen top of Cockleroy hill where I enjoyed a glorious sunset of turquoise, pink and tangerine before turning my gaze to the east and picking out the site of each planet in the model. It really made me pause and wonder at the tiny little place we call Earth and the vastness and beauty of the universe. As the hymn goes - 'How great Thou art' indeed!

Ronnie Turnbull

Balerno Fairtrade Village Group



Happy New Year, Balerno!

Yes, what hard things are going on, locally and further away. But don't let's give up hope; 2026 really is bringing others too which may help a little to cheer and inspire us.

So please book this one into your diary right now: the Fairtrade (FT) Morning on Saturday 7 March, 10 am - 12 noon in St Joseph's Hall. Come and support stalls bringing us all lovely FT crafts and foods, helping promote fair trading conditions worldwide; and maybe even a Seed Swap. Help encourage our local youngsters to go on caring about fairness for all their/our fellow-people, as you admire their prizewinning FT-themed entries from this year's Balerno Schools FT Art Competition; and at 11 am enjoy Depute Lord Provost Cllr Lesley Marion Cameron's presentation of their prizes, generously supported again this year by Scotmid. We hope also in the next 'Blether' to confirm the much-loved FT Banana Bike's reappearance, courtesy of the Edinburgh Bicycle Cooperative.

Also from 10 - 12, in the Ogston Hall, come and recharge with our amazing Guild's famous refreshments and baking. You'll even find a children's activity table there too, thanks to kind Dean Park staff.

All profits go to two great FT causes, Transform Trade and Scottish Fair Trade's Youth Collective.

Look out for more in the February/March 'Blether' - and we're looking forward very much to your company on March 7th. See you there!

Balerno Fairtrade Village Group -
always delighted to hear from new supporters.)

Picture of the month January 2026

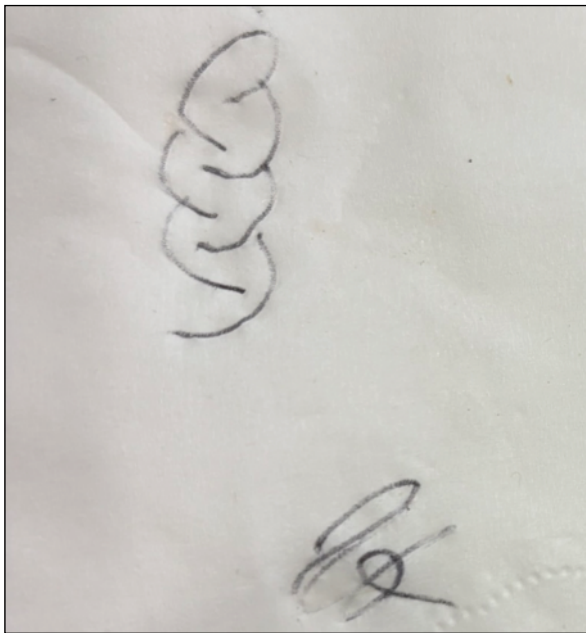
This month's picture of the month is an original artwork, in the nature of a sketch on textured paper, using a fluid ink pen.

In this captivating work the artist has used delicate strokes to capture the essence of life, while enjoying an excellent beverage and good company in a busy cafe. The intricately detailed multiple lines forming the core of the sketch recapture the artists's recollection of an award winning original entitled 'Intestin inferior de la roussette', now unfortunately lost to history. In fact the artist was so dissatisfied with this most recent replication of the concept that they consigned it to the waste bin of history thereby, unfortunately, denying generations the opportunity for years of research. All that is left therefore is the inadequate facsimile.

The canvas selected by this inspired maestro, a cafe napkin, itself adds a touch of elegance to the composition, while the artist's skilled hand has deftly captured the subtle structure of the subject. Note in particular the seemingly creased line continuing seamlessly through the work creating a sense of depth and purpose within the confined space of the napkin.

Overall, this piece celebrates the beauty of everyday moments and invites the viewer to pause, take a breath, and appreciate the simple pleasures that surround us.

It is a testament to the artist's virtuosity that they contrive to elevate the ordinary to the extraordinary.



Intestin inferior de la roussette

Copies of this work may be obtained on application to the editor, price £1.

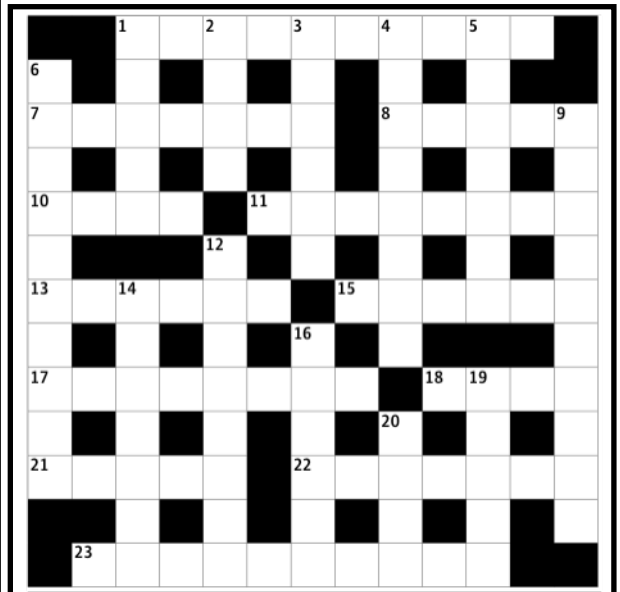
Crossword corner Christmas Special answers

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

Crossword corner December/January answers

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

Crossword Corner - January 2026 puzzle



Across

Down

- 1 In prison (6,4)
- 7 Inauspicious (7)
- 8 Approximate – rudimentary (5)
- 10 Major international fair (4)
- 11 Struggle clumsily – flatfish (8)
- 13 By (word of) mouth (6)
- 15 Confused (6)
- 17 Opening (8)
- 18 Devon river (4)
- 21 Clean by hard rubbing (5)
- 22 Excitingly attractive quality (7)
- 23 Tie the knot (3,7)

- 1 Airship – barrage balloon (5)
- 2 Catchy phrase in a pop song (4)
- 3 In a prying manner (6)
- 4 French wine region (8)
- 5 Circular emblem (heraldry) (7)
- 6 Take place (4,2,4)
- 9 Genetic (10)
- 12 Ralph cut (anag) – Greek biographer (8)
- 14 Inspiring fear (7)
- 16 Vivid – promising – smart (6)
- 19 Keep away from (5)
- 20 Impulsive – eruption (4)

March Blether

Alteration to publication date

The publication date for the March 2026 Blether would ordinarily have been Friday 27 March. However publication will be delayed until Friday 6 March to allow for coverage of the Joint Kirk Sessions Meeting on 25 February.

The Joint Kirk Sessions meeting originally meeting scheduled for Tuesday 20 January was postponed and rescheduled for 25 February.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused by this delay in publication, but the Blether Team think is appropriate in order to provide coverage for what we think is likely to be a very important meeting.

copy date for



March 2026
is

**Friday 20th
February**

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

20th February

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

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**PLEASE HELP US TO IMPROVE THE
BALERNO BLETHER BY COMPLETING
AND RETURNING THIS SURVEY FORM!**



**JUST TEAR OFF THIS FORM AND
RETURN TO THE CHURCH OFFICE!
BY END OF FEBRUARY IF POSSIBLE !!!**

Balerno Blether – Reader Survey – 2025

Hello from the Blether team!

The Balerno Blether has been produced monthly since the dark days of the Covid lockdown, in February 2020, so after almost five years it's probably time we checked with our readers what they think of the Blether!

We would love it if you were able to complete this survey form to help us improve the Balerno Blether. The aim is to give us some more information about what you think and what you would like. It is after all your magazine.

Completing this survey shouldn't take more than a few minutes, and of course you don't have to fill in everything; although the more you can tell us then the better able we will be to respond.

It would help us if you were able to return your survey form by the end of the year.

November 2025

A bit about yourself!

1. How long have you been a reader of the Balerno Blether?

Less than 6 months

6 months to a year

1 – 3 years

Over 3 years

2. How did you first hear about the Blether?

Word of mouth

Social media

Website

other

3. We are interested in the demographics of our readership, so, do you mind telling us roughly how old you are?

Please tick the box which best describes your age

Under 40

Age 40 to 60

Age 60 to 70

Over 70

Prefer not to say

Reading Preferences

4

What type of content do you most enjoy?

(score each below 1 to 4 with 1 most and 4 least)

	1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4
Church news					Kirk Session news				
Local events					Church calendar				
Human Interest					Community Council				
interviews					Hearsay/Heresy				
Opinion pieces					Treasurer's Thumb				
Editorial					Woof				

Please return your completed questionnaire to Balerno Parish Church Office or
if you have completed it on-line please send to bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk

PLEASE HELP US TO IMPROVE THE
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'Do you have a
minute, Lord?'
Minister's column

Crossword

'Other

- 5 How would you rate the current content quality of the *Blether*?
Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor

Are there any topics or themes you would like to see more of in future issues? Yes No

If *yes* then please tell us more!

- 6 How frequently do you read the Balerno Blether?
Every issue
Most issues
Occasionally
Rarely

- 7 What format do you prefer for reading?

Print copy

If print copy selected, then please say where you pick up your copy.

*Balerno Library? Currie Library? The Mill Café?
Gibson Craig Hall? Elsewhere?*

Digital (pdf / online)

Both

Design & Layout

- 8 How do you feel about the current design and layout of the Balerno Blether?
Very satisfied Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

Overall Experience

- 9 Overall, how would you rate your experience with the Balerno Blether?
Excellent Good Average Below average

- 10 What is one thing you would change about the Balerno Blether?

Additional Feedback

- 11 Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?

Many thanks from the Blether team!

Please return your completed ques
If you have completed it on-line please send to bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk