

BELHELVIE BANTER



Balmedie: Whitecairns: Belhelvie: Potterton: Blackdog



EDITION 5

DECEMBER 2010

Belhelvie Banter

Adverts and articles should be sent to

belhelviebanter@live.co.uk

Please include name, address & phone number in case details need to be clarified.

Advertising Prices

Full Page £55.00

Half page £30.00

¼ Page £16.00

Articles

are in font - Garamond 12

We cannot accept anonymous text, but names can be withheld if necessary.

Distribution

Belhelvie Banter is produced and delivered by a team of volunteers. It is delivered to as many households as possible around Belhelvie parish and we hope you have all received a copy through your door. All deliveries are made by volunteers from within each settlement and in the outlying districts, however we are always looking for extra help to reduce size of delivery areas or to cover for holidays/illness.

If you feel able and are willing to deliver in any part of the parish, and not necessarily your own street, then please get in touch via the email belhelviebanter@live.co.uk

Copy date for next issue is:
4th February 2011



EDITORIAL



Here we are with our first anniversary edition of the Belhelvie Banter and I should like to take this opportunity to thank our advertisers for supporting us and financing this venture, our contributors for passing on their news, views and comment and our distributors for bringing the Banter to your front room.

I must give our production group a 'pat on the back' for we are a small team of volunteers who a year ago, as we manually collated the first edition, wondered just what we had taken on, but I hope we all agree this is a pleasant task and not the onerous challenge we first perceived it to be. **BUT WE DO NEED YOU.**

If you are a group leader or secretary please publicise your activities in the Belhelvie Banter, this is **YOUR** community newsletter. We are looking for news from the community on forthcoming activities and any special events that have taken place that will be of interest to residents of the parish. Perhaps you have a special interest or hobby or some poetry or writing you would like to share. So check for our copy date inside the front cover and get thinking over these long dark nights. Perhaps you could volunteer to help us either on the production team or as a distributor, do make contact as we still need individuals to undertake this task.

Last but by no means least: Congratulations to Better Balmedie and to Balmedie School for their successes in the Formartine in Bloom competitions and we look forward to next years colourful flowerbeds at the gateways and around our villages and settlements. I extend grateful thanks to all the volunteers on behalf of the Parish and we eagerly await the appearance of new spring bulbs around the parish.

Finally can I on behalf of the Belhelvie Banter team wish you and yours Joyous Christmas time and a Happy and Peaceful New Year.

Audrey Jeffries – Editor.



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NEWS FROM THE SCOUTS

BEAVERS ALERT

Beavers are the victims of their own success and the Colony has been running at maximum for the last few years. This has resulted in a waiting list and there are currently 10 youngsters who are old enough to join (age 6) but unable to get a place. I would like to hear views from all interested parties and to gauge if there is a will to establish a second Colony. With this in mind, I would like to invite **all parents or those interested in Youth Leadership to a meeting in Potterton Community Centre on Tuesday 14th December at 7 pm.**

My aim is to find a way forward as it upsets me that we cannot currently offer places to everyone. Our existing Colony is led by Elaine, Arlene, Louise, Martin & Laura. Beavers are for Boys & Girls from 6th to 8th birthdays.

CUBS

Cubs had a similar issue to Beavers. However I am please to announce that a 2nd Cub Pack will be starting in the Potterton Community Centre on Monday evenings from 6:30-8:00 pm. **The start date for this new Pack is Monday 10th January 2011.**

Cubs are led by Ivor, Lesley, Alison, Keith, Malcolm & Ian.

Cubs are for Boys & Girls from 8th birthday to 10 ½ .

SCOUTS

Scouts meet on a Wednesday evening from 7-9 pm in the Potterton Community Centre. They have a programme of activities and camps. They are led by Peter, Rob & Arlene. Scouts are for Boys & Girls aged 10 ½ to 14th birthday.

EXPLORER SCOUTS

Explorer Scouts are for young Men and Women from 14th to 18th birthday.

They meet in Potterton Community Centre from 7:30 pm on Wednesdays.

They are self programmed and are guided by their leader, Ali.

For all queries and to attend the Beaver discussion meeting on 14th December, contact **Ian Thomson, Group Scout Leader. 01358 743156 balmedie.scouts@btinternet.com**

CALLING ALL “OLD” GIRL GUIDES

Were you or your daughter a Belhelvie Guide, or Brownie or Rainbow?

If so, I hope you have had a chance to see the display of memorabilia in the Balmedie Library. Not just to giggle at the photographs but to recall some happy memories of your time in the organisation and to take time to leave a message in the “Memories Book”.

Of coarse, reminiscing is not just for those who served locally, all ex Guides were encouraged to contribute. Sincere thanks to those who put the display together and I hope the material is put to good use and perhaps will lead to a reunion of ‘old girls!!’

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FORMARTINE POLICING – Inspector Steve Pratt

I am grateful to the editor for allowing me the opportunity to provide some information for the latest edition of the Belhelvie Banter.

My job title is that of Local Policing Team Inspector for the Formartine area and in a nutshell I am responsible for the day to day policing of the entire Formartine Area and to that end am responsible for supervising police staff at Ellon, Oldmeldrum and Turriff Police Stations. In the parish of Belhelvie a policing response is provided by my officers who are based at Ellon. To assist me with my role I have 5 Police Sergeants, 4 at Ellon and 1 at Turriff. In addition I have 18 Police Constables based at Ellon, 4 at Oldmeldrum and 10 at Turriff along with several support members of staff and a Traffic Warden.

A large part of my role is to liaise with partners from other agencies such as Aberdeenshire Council, the Formartine Community Planning Group, Grampian Fire and Rescue, NHS Grampian, Formartine Partnership and Voluntary Services. By working with these partners we aim to come up with long lasting solutions to any issues that are being raised with us either as an individual service or as a group of services and agencies.

There are 12 Community Councils in Formartine and the utopian position that I am aiming for is Police attendance at each and every meeting but when I take into account the fact that most meet monthly it is understandable that I am not currently achieving what I have set out to do. Certainly Police attendance at Community Council meetings is consistent and the various secretaries and chair persons know to contact me directly if there are policing matters discussed at a meeting and we are not represented.

Attendance at Belhelvie Community Council has been largely consistent in recent times.

I am also in regular contact with all the locally elected Councillors for Formartine and meet with them every 6 months or so at Ellon Police Office to listen to feedback from them and provide updates on policing initiatives or priorities. Outwith meetings they regularly e-mail or telephone me if there are any issues being raised with them that require an input or comment from the police.

All in all Aberdeenshire is a safe place to live and work in and Formartine echo's that position with serious and violent crime being a rare occurrence. The fear of crime however is greater than the chance of being a victim of crime. The best example that I can provide is in terms of reported vandalism – for the 6 months of the financial year to date, that is 1 April 2010 to 31 September 2010, there have been just over 100 reported crimes of vandalism in Formartine as a whole. That figure equates to around 5 crimes of vandalism per week for an area with a population of close to 40,000 people. The figure for the same period in 2009 was around 160 reported crimes of vandalism which equates to a reduction of a third in 2010 compared to 2009. The figures speak for themselves.

In terms of the Belhelvie Parish area, if you ask the question in public of whether

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vandalism has increased over the last decade then the answer will probably be 'yes' and yet when I compare what has taken place so far this year as a whole to what happened to date 10 years ago the revelation is that in 2010 there have been 7 reported crimes of vandalism in Balmedie compared to 13 a decade ago, and those figures cover the calendar year to date and not the financial year.

The cynics amongst us will say that incidents are not reported anymore but my reply to that is simple, in rural Aberdeenshire there is still a great deal of respect and pride and if a member of the public gets a window broken in their house or car they will still call the police and report it and, quite rightly, expect that we will do something about it.

Formartine Local Policing Team Ellon mylocalpolicingteam@grampian.pnn.police.uk

TARTS AND CRAFTS

We wish all our customers a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year!

Janice Hutton, who is a resident of Balmedie, will be exhibiting her pictures in our gallery during December. Janice uses a variety of media in her art work.

In addition to our art exhibition we always have a variety of unusual and original crafts made by local people. Please come and visit us and pick up that gift which is something special for Christmas. Our crafts are available in a range of prices to suit all budgets.

Santa is coming to Tarts and Crafts on Saturday 11th December between 2-4 pm

Tarts and Crafts cafe & gallery is situated behind the Library in Balmedie, just follow our signs. We have good parking and disabled facilities. We are staffed entirely by volunteers and aim to meet the needs of the community by providing a meeting point as well as support for local community projects.

We serve delicious home-cooked food, catering for all tastes and special dietary requirements. All soups, cakes, and bread rolls are baked on the premises using fair-trade ingredients where possible. We serve fair-trade coffee and tea along with a variety of herbal teas. We have a selection of child friendly drinks and snacks.

Our opening times are 10 – 4 pm on Weds, Thurs, Fri and Saturday. Please come and visit us to sample our home bakes and relax in a friendly atmosphere, whilst shopping for that unique gift.

Tarts & Crafts is closed between 18th December 2010 and 18th January 2011. This closure gives our volunteers a well deserved break and allows time for cleaning. We are always looking for volunteers so please contact the cafe by email or phone to ask – as little as 2 hours a week would be much appreciated. We are particularly proud of our volunteers who have used their experience working at the café to obtain paid employment. We are sorry to lose them but wish them well.

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A SCRUMPTIOUS WAY TO KEEP THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT ALIVE

As the weather gets colder and the days get shorter, it suddenly seems ok to turn our thoughts to Christmas planning. Each year, as we are bombarded with Christmas adverts, the spirit of Christmas becomes increasingly lost in a commercial clamour. But one way of celebrating the occasion, while still being mindful of the message, is by ensuring that what we **do** buy benefits both ourselves and those who produced the goods—in other words by searching out Fairtrade products. The Mid-Formartine Fairtrade group has now produced an on-line directory, indicating where fair-trade items can be bought in our area (go to www.formartinefairtrade.co.uk and click on “Events” and “Fairtrade”)

To help get you into the spirit of good cheer, here is a Yule log recipe, put together by Beth Bruce-Gardner from the Friendly Food Company. Those of you who have tasted Beth’s baking, will know that this must be worth trying!

FAIR TRADE YULE LOG

For the Sponge

*6 Free Range Eggs
150g Fair Trade Caster Sugar
50g Fair Trade Cocoa Powder*

For the Filling and Icing

*2 Jars Fair Trade Chocolate and
Hazelnut Spread
A little Fair Trade Icing Sugar to
dust*

Preheat oven to 180C / gas mark 4. Line a Swiss roll tin with baking parchment. Separate eggs. In a large bowl whisk yolks and caster sugar until thick and pale (easiest using an electric whisk).

In another large clean bowl whisk the whites to a soft peak stage (again an electric mixer is easiest).

Sieve the cocoa powder onto a sheet of baking parchment or into another clean bowl.

Carefully fold together the yolks and sugar mixture with some of the whisked whites, then alternating with a little cocoa then more whites until blended.

Pour into lined Swiss roll tin making sure the mixture reaches the edges.

Bake for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and leave to cool in tin for a few minutes.

Turn out onto a clean tea towel sprinkled with a little caster sugar. Roll up from long side. Leave to cool completely.

Unroll and spread with chocolate and hazelnut spread. Roll up again and cut off a little at one end at an angle to make a branch, stick this to the side of the log using the spread.

Use more spread to cover the whole log, marking on a bark pattern using a fork. This looks good decorated with a sprig of holly (wrap the stem in foil first).

Move carefully to a serving platter and sprinkle with a dusting of icing sugar for a snowy look!

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- The Minor Ailment Service.
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- Coming Soon is the new Chronic Medication Service!



BETTER BALMEDIE

Since the last edition of Belhelvie Banter, Better Balmedie was awarded a “Highly Commended” certificate in the Formartine in Bloom competition. We were delighted with this as we were newcomers to the competition, in the same category as Ellon, Turriff and Old Meldrum, who have been involved in improving their communities for many years.

We have also been given money from the Formartine Partnership Village Improvements Grant and have installed a bench and planters near the Leisure Centre and football pitches, for everyone’s use.

Aberdeenshire Council gave us 6000 daffodil and crocus bulbs and these have been planted in grassy areas throughout the village, some with the help of pupils at Balmedie School.

We are waiting to hear if we have been granted planning permission to build a Polytunnel at the back of the Leisure Centre, so we can start growing plants for planting around the village.

We continue to enjoy our monthly meetings (see Dates for your Diary for future meetings!). If you would like to join us, you would be very welcome.

All sorts of help is needed, so if you have digging, building, carpentry, computer, craft or gardening skills, please get in touch. We have had very positive feedback from Balmedie residents, but to keep going for years to come, we need to recruit more folk, including some younger ones! There is always something to be done!

Find out more by contacting

Rosie Nicol on 01358 742557 rosie.inform@lineone.net

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BELHELVIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Since our last article in this magazine which majored on the Potterton project we have been busy collating the ideas and comments which everyone made. We wish to thank all those who took the time to come along to the event and give us their comments (good & bad) to allow us to look to the future of our villages and how you the residents would like to see changes and improvements in the amenities.

It has given us a very clear indication that everyone has a strong interest in where you feel improvements can be made and it is our intention to hold another similar type exercise in the spring to progress these thoughts and ideas into actions and we will be keeping everyone informed of our plans.

A number of residents have given us their e-mail addresses which will allow us to maintain regular contact with updates on our progress and if you should wish us to include you in this mailing then simply send us a note of your name, village and e-mail address.

Our other point of contact of course is through our monthly community council meetings and details of dates and times are posted on the various local notice boards or at the village library in Balmedie.

Our thanks must go to all the very encouraging comments which were made regarding the beauty and colour which the flower beds made throughout the villages and thanks to the generosity of Aberdeenshire Council we will be re-planting again in the spring and will welcome your help and support in achieving this.

It now just remains for me to thank everyone for their support throughout 2010 and to wish everyone a very peaceful and blessed Christmas.

Wishart McBride, Secretary, Belhelvie Community Council
e-mail: belhelviecc@yahoo.co.uk

BELHELVIE S.W.R.I.

The Belhelvie branch of the SWRI meet on the second Wednesday of every month from September to May. There is usually an outing or meal in June.

Meetings are now being held in Egie House Sheltered Complex in Balmedie (formerly held in the Forsyth Hall) at 7:30pm. There is plenty of parking and easy access for the less mobile.

Our syllabus is varied with talks and demonstrations or why not just come along for a chat. A warm welcome awaits you. Why don't you give us a try?

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BALMEDIE SCHOOL

The school entered the Formartine Beginning to Blossom competition and were awarded “Highly Commended” for the state of the school grounds, the school litter campaign and all the other work of the Eco-Committee. Well done to all the pupils and staff involved. Pupils have also been helping the Better Balmedie group with their bulb planting.

On 26 October, 21 pupils from the primary 6 and primary 7 classes performed at the Music Hall in Aberdeen alongside the Drifters! It was a fantastic night for everyone involved and the children thoroughly enjoyed this once in a lifetime experience. The audience gave the kids a huge cheer and all the parents who were there were very proud.

The school is holding a **Christmas Fair on Saturday 4 December from 10.00 – 12.00**. The pupils have been busy making things to sell to their parents and the public. This is a great opportunity to buy unique Christmas gifts and also to support the school.

BALMEDIE LEISURE CENTRE

Spinning Classes hoping to start soon, please contact Leisure Centre for details.

Trampoline classes for Age 3 - 5 on Wednesdays, morning and afternoon sessions available

The new outside 5 a-side football pitches are now open and available for booking

BALMEDIE BOOKENDS

We have been in existence just over a year now. We are a group of literary locals, who get together to discuss a range of books from classic fiction to biographies.

Each month has seen the discussion of a different book on a range of topics from the Spanish Civil War (Winter in Madrid by CJ Sansom & The Return by Victoria Hislop) to apartheid South Africa (Frankie and Stankie by Barbara Trapido) and Nigeria's Biafra War (Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie).

We meet on the first Thursday of every month at 8pm in the White Horse and new members are always welcome. Sarah Cassidy (sarahcassidy1@hotmail.com)

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ABERDEEN'S GRANITE LEGACY

I was delighted to read recently that Aberdeen, “The Granite City,” is planning to set aside a month next year to celebrate the rock that gave our city its name, and the skills of craftsmen who worked in the industry and contributed greatly to the area’s economic development and cultural identity.

It was due to the early death of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria’s commissioning of many memorials that set a trend for lavish memorial stones, Prince Albert Mausoleum was constructed using Peterhead blue granite, and as a consequence this increased the number of stonemasons in our city. This in turn led on to the development of ornamental work using granite and many fine examples can be seen in a variety of local granites on our buildings and in our graveyards. There are some fine but rare pictures in our Museum and Galleries collection of such men at work when much of the cutting was done by hand using hammers and chisels as it was not until the 1890s that pneumatic tools were introduced from the USA.

Rubislaw granite was quarried for more than 300 years, work ceased there in 1971. At first it was used for paving setts then for kerb and building stones, monumental and other ornamental pieces. Aberdeen granite was used to build the terraces of the Houses of Parliament, the base of the fountains in Trafalgar Square and Waterloo Bridge in London and many of the streets of London are not paved in gold but in granite from Aberdeen.

From the deep red of Peterhead, and the salmon pink of Corrennie to the greys and silver of Loanhead, Dancing Cairns, Slattie, Dyce, Kemnay and Rubislaw quarries via a network of canals and rail links granites have been transported and used to provide a local building material and for the export trade from our docks.

This trade was not just to our major urban centres, where many fine examples can be seen like those in St John's College Chapel Cambridge, St George's Hall Liverpool and Glasgow's City Chambers but to Portsmouth and Southampton docks and the Bell Rock lighthouse. The Forth and Tay Rail bridges and as far away as the Bank of Australia in Melbourne these are just a few of the famous landmarks constructed from Aberdeen granite.

At Kemnay, Corrennie and Peterhead (Stirlinghill and Longhaven) granite is still quarried, but it is mostly crushed for aggregate and roadstone. Although Kemnay stone was used as cladding for the new Scottish Parliament and I was delighted to hear that stones are being prepared locally, again from Kemnay Quarry, to be used in the restoration of Marischal College, the world's second-largest granite building. I hope the skilled tradesmen employed will be given an opportunity to showcase their skills and Aberdeen's granite heritage will be celebrated for all the right reasons and not just for Rubislaw being 'the deepest hole in Europe!'



A LIFE CHANGING MOMENT

At Christmastime there is total excitement and anticipation when parcels are opened and for fashion-conscious young girls the thrill of parading their new clothes is the culmination of weeks of waiting, but the girls of the Mercy Childrens' Home in Dindigul are happy with so little.

The Dindigul orphanage in Tamil Nadu, one of the poorest states in the Indian sub-continent, is now the home of 48 girls it has helped to save from starvation "It is a place of hope and happiness for children who have suffered incredible hardship." and it has a place in the hearts of Phil and Pat Murray of the Graylings, Orrock..

It was 13 years ago that Phil and Pat chanced upon the refuge while backpacking in south east India and it could have so easily been different. Both confess to having been sceptical when stopped by a man in the street, who asked them for help with the orphans. Rather than decline, they asked if they might visit the children and it was this question that changed not only their lives but the orphans' lives too.

At that time 18 children were being cared for in a cramped and ramshackle building and the couple were so moved that they pledged to keep in touch and do all they could to help. The Murrays set to finding donors and started by getting friends and family never to give them presents again, but rather to give a monthly sum to the refuge.

Last year Pat was invited to return to Dindigul to see how their support had helped create a new home for 48 young girls. "I went across for 3 weeks and stayed for 10. It was a wonderful and emotional experience." The youngest orphan aged 4 arrived while Pat was there, while five



18 year olds, who still look on the orphanage as home and return regularly - have started college and are studying to become nurses or nursing assistants. Amongst them is Deepa who was a fourth daughter and was brought to the orphanage only just hours from death by starvation after her father abandoned his wife for not giving birth to a son.

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“The refuge is now housed in a lovely if basic building with a walled garden and now has staff who are dedicated to caring for the girls. The children know that education is their way to a new future and are so keen to learn.” Phil was very proud to send their congratulations to Suganya who has recently graduated Master of Arts, a tremendous achievement for an abandoned youngster who owes so much to the Murrays who stopped that day while on the tourist trail in south east India. Further fund-raising events are planned, so look out for these next year. Pat is willing to talk to your group/organization on the work of the orphanage.

If you want more information or could help Pat and Phil in some small way then please telephone 01358 742541 or email philpatmurray@btinternet.com

CONGRATULATIONS TO ENTERPRISING DIANE!

Balmedie based Diane Whyte, one of our advertisers, has recently graduated from Aberdeen College with an HND in Photography and picked up an Enterprising Student Award after being nominated by her guidance tutor. The awards, run by Scotland's Colleges and the Federation of Small Businesses, Scotland, mark the achievements of students who have started their own business.

Diane combined completing her college course and launching her new business with taking care of her baby son. Diane's interest in photography developed

while study for a degree at Gray's School of Art but as she was not able to specialise in photography at that time, she pursued other avenues and eventually her determination to pursue her chosen profession was realised when she signed up for the College's HND course and last Autumn saw her launch her business. Congratulations Diane.



CHRISTMAS AT BELHELVIE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Christmas is a special time of year for many of us and we hope that at some point you'll be able to join us in the church or the community for some of our services and social events. There's a lot going on!

It's around this time of year that we start raising funds for our Right Christmas campaign where we seek to support a group who really need a present at Christmastime. In the past we've supported projects working with children in Bangladesh and Kenya, and also work among the homeless in Aberdeen. In three years, with help from the community, we've raised £20,000 to give away at Christmastime, which seems to us much more in keeping with the reason for the season.

This year we're supporting Monty's Maggies Cancer Centre Appeal which is aiming to build a new Cancer Care Centre in Aberdeen, and also the work of Street Pastors who offer a practical, caring presence on the streets of our city in the wee small hours at weekends. We look forward to seeing what we (and you) can manage to do to help both charities between now and Christmas.

Every blessing for the season and for 2011 from all of us here at your local Church of Scotland.

Services

Sunday 28th November 11am Gerry Bowyer will be leading the service and talking about the work of 'Street Pastors' in Aberdeen.

6:30pm Christingle Service. A lovely all-age service, part of which is held by candlelight. Don't know what a Christingle is? Come and find out! This is an especially popular service with children.

Sunday 5th December 11am The award-winning Bon Accord Silver Band lead us in a service of Lessons and Carols.

Sunday 12th December 11am Informal Communion Service

Sunday 19th December 11am Nativity Service (held in the Forsyth Hall)

Friday 24th December (Christmas Eve) **4pm** Community Carol Service (Held in Balmedie Leisure Centre). A new venture for us. An informal, fun service aimed at folk with younger children.

11pm Watchnight Service. Half an hour of carols followed by a short, candlelit service to bring in Christmas Day.

Saturday 25th December (Christmas Day) **11am** Christmas Day Service. A short service to welcome Christmas Day – kids are encouraged to bring along a new present to show us!

Sunday 26th December (Boxing Day) **11am** Morning Worship.

Social Events (all profits to Right Christmas campaign)

Friday 19th November at 7:30pm. Belhelvie Church Guild are having ‘An Evening of Music,’ a varied musical programme, in Belhelvie Parish Church. All proceeds, through donations, to go to our Right Christmas Appeal.

Saturday November 27th 7:30pm Right Christmas Quiz Night, Forsyth Hall. Entry £10, half price for children/concessions. Entry price includes meal. BYOB.

Friday December 3rd 7:30pm Movies By Candlelight, Belhelvie Church. A showing of the classic black and white Christmas movie “The Bishop’s Wife” starring Cary Grant. Donations to Right Christmas welcome.

Saturday December 4th 2.00pm ‘Kids’ Movies By Candlelight, Belhelvie Church. A showing of “The Muppet Christmas Carol”. Donations to Right Christmas welcome.

Friday December 10th 7:30pm “Songs for the Season” Concert in the Forsyth Hall – with singer/songwriter Bruce Davies

CHRISTMAS GROUP CELEBRATES SECOND YEAR

At the time of writing Balmedie Christmas Lights Group plans its second year of festivities with the village Christmas Tree and lights switch-on happening on Saturday 20th November.

The Group has been working hard since last year, fundraising with Coffee Mornings, Craft Night, Gala Stall and Children’s Discos in order to fund the work required this Christmas to light up more of the village. The cost of the additional lighting, along with positioning the existing lights and tree run in excess of £3000 and the group will be continuing its fundraising focus into the New Year in order to meet the cost.

Be sure to keep your eyes open for a **special visitor** on his sleigh who will be coming around the streets of Balmedie at teatime on Sunday 5th and Monday 6th December - he will be collecting welcome donations toward the cost of this year’s decorations.

As with most volunteer groups the old adage “many hands make light work” applies and the group is urgently seeking help from anyone willing to come along and get involved. Group meetings are informal and friendly and many of the fundraising events are aimed at providing more social activities in the village which gives a positive and fun focus to the group.

Anyone interested in joining us can contact the group by email at **christmasgroup@hotmail.co.uk** or by contacting Elaine on 01358 789771

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CHRISTMAS DANGERS FOR YOUR PETS

Christmas should be a time of celebration and good cheer. The last thing you want is to have an emergency trip to the vets when you should be sitting down to your dinner. So here are a few suggestions on what to avoid and what to look out for.



Food and drink

Many dogs live to eat. However a sudden large intake of any rich food can often lead to unpleasant vomiting and diarrhoea. At Christmas there is often food lying around on worktops and tables.



A raid on such may seem a good idea to Fido but can have disastrous consequences as well as ruining granny's dinner. Bones should not be fed. Cooked bones become brittle and sharp pieces can choking and perforation of the gut.

Chocolate is poisonous to dogs. Even a small amount can be lethal to a small dog. If you suspect your dog has eaten chocolate, contact your vet for advice.

Grapes and raisins can cause kidney failure so keep the Christmas cake out of reach.

Animals cannot metabolise alcohol well and it should not be given to them. When granny and grandpa fall asleep while watching the Queen, remove their drinks from the floor. It does not take much sherry to induce stupor and a possible fatal collapse of your pet.

Many nuts e.g. macadamia nuts are poisonous. Onions, even in small amounts can cause severe anaemia. Make sure all leftovers are disposed of properly. Greasy Bacofoil and plastic bags can cause obstruction of dog's bowels.

Decorations

Make sure the Tree is anchored firmly as cats will climb it and some dogs will swing from its branches. Baubles and chocolate are tempting targets. Tinsel and shiny objects are particularly attractive to cats and if eaten can cause obstruction of the gut.

Make sure all cables are safe from chewing to avoid electrocution.

Some liquids (eg. anti-freeze and cut-flower food) which can be added to water are sweet but poisonous if drunk.

Many seasonal house plants such as Holly, Poinsettias and Mistletoe are poisonous.

The oils in Potpourri can be attractive but are toxic.

Candles can be knocked over by wagging tails and even if placed high up, may not be safe from investigating clumsy cats.



Presents

Dogs and cats will eat small toys ! Losing an expensive plastic Star Wars character into the dog may cause obstruction of the bowel.

For certain, it will not make for a harmonious Christmas morning between you and your children!!

Cats like ribbon which, if swallowed, can cause obstruction.

All packaging can become a target, especially if it has been associated with food.

Some glues are poisonous.

Batteries, if eaten are very toxic.



This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the dangers that surround Christmas - instead it is a note to highlight the more common injuries and incidents we see.

So may I wish you a safe Christmas and New Year and please, when you are done partying and all is quiet, put away the Paracetamol as dogs will poison themselves with these too.

(Article submitted by Ardene Veterinary Practice)



tradesadvisor

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Merry Christmas
and a
Prosperous
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**From
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tradesadvisor.com

GO ONLINE FOR THE BEST BUILDING-TRADES ADVICE *(advertising Feature)*

Until now, we have tended to turn to family, friends and colleagues for help and advice in finding local reputable and dependable tradesmen. Well now a local trade-specialist website aimed at being the best friend of, and those looking for, tradesmen, has just gone online in Aberdeen. TradesAdvisor (www.tradesadvisor.com) has been launched by Aberdeen-based Tradesadvisor Limited. The concept was borne after Quantity Surveyor Gavin Esslemont was struggling to find reputable trades people to undertake a project on his home. "There are many excellent trades people around but I found I was relying more and more on recommendations from friends and colleagues. So transferring these word-of-mouth recommendations into a local trade-specialist website database appeared to be the next logical step."

TradesAdvisor offers and maintains an interactive system populated by trades people and consumers and it gives the trades people the opportunity to receive automated referrals and an instant online web presence, whilst providing consumers the opportunity to post their trade requirements and leave feedback on tradesmen, which benefits other users of the site. "The fact that companies are continually monitored by their customers gives users peace of mind that they are dealing with trades people who value their reputation and are at the top of their game," Gavin said.

"TradesAdvisor is growing to be a valuable tool for local tradesmen that are new to the market and others that are looking to expand their businesses. The automated referral system provides the connection between a consumer looking for a tradesman and a tradesman looking for new business. It is already saving people lots of time calling around for quotes. It also provides an effective platform for local suppliers to promote their trade-related products and special offers that they are currently carrying."

Gavin, who has a degree in Quantity Surveying and years of experience in construction and procurement in the oil and gas industry, sees TradesAdvisor as a win:win for everybody. Co-founder Darren Ross added, "We have developed the site based on customer feedback and incorporated a fair bit of community information, such as local scams, DIY advice from our members, and promoting businesses that are receiving good feedback. We've even got a social networking part of the site where businesses can interact with each other and partner up to undertake larger projects. It's important for us to maintain TradesAdvisor with a local focus and develop an online community that assists in the often-fraught search for dependable tradesmen."

An Ellon resident commented, "I am undertaking a fairly sizable project and to have the resource of TradesAdvisor available to me is invaluable. I posted three projects and within a day I had received eight calls, fantastic response! I will be securing the services of a builder, joiner, plumber and electrician all through TradesAdvisor and having recommended tradesmen working on my project gives me total peace of mind."

Projects recently posted or awarded at TradesAdvisor include house renovations, internal decoration, garden lighting projects and roofing repairs. To find out more, visit **www.tradesadvisor.com**

NEWS FROM Bridge of Don Academy

S3 Biology and Geography – Tree Planting

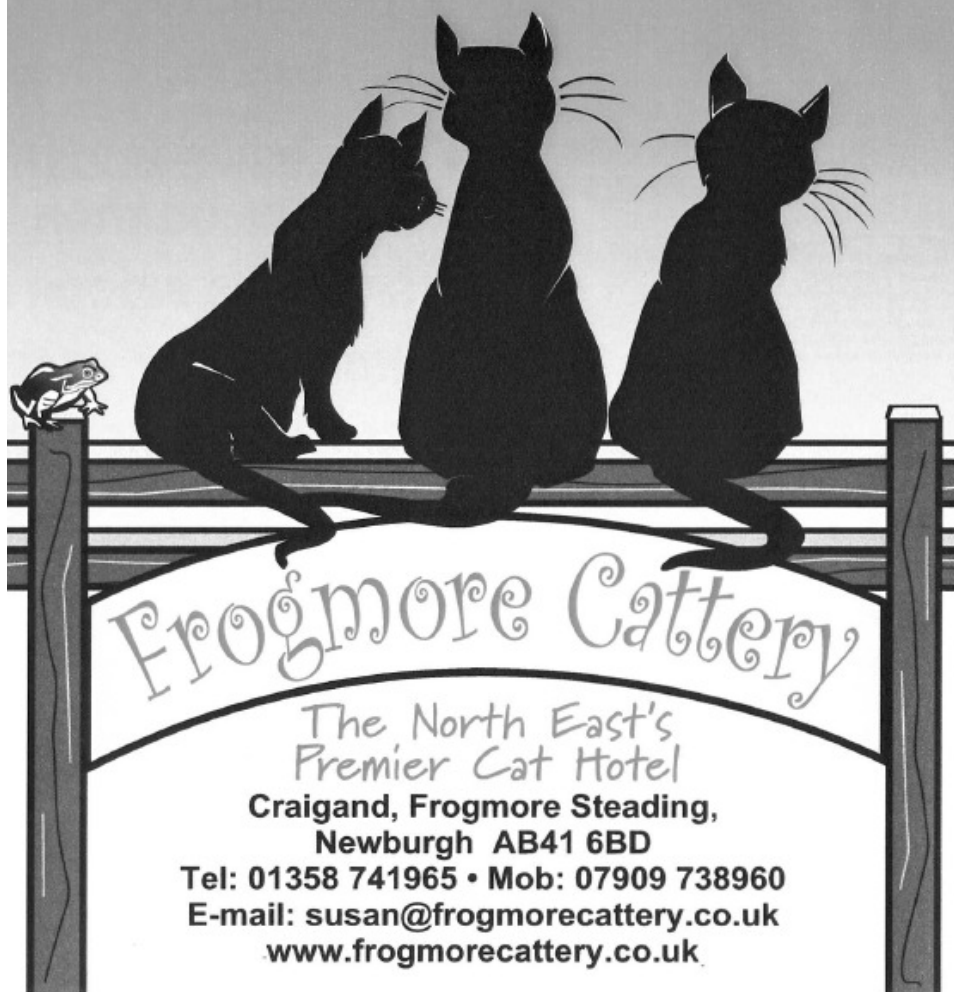
S3 Biology and Geography pupils have been actively involved in Aberdeen City Council's tree planting in Westfield Park.. Ruth Bone from the council's Countryside Ranger Service talked briefly to the pupils about the project before taking them out into the park and showing them how to plant the young trees. A huge variety of species have been randomly planted – holly, rowan, ash, hawthorn and some conifers and this will help provide an excellent habitat for birds and other animals. The whole project is fitting with International Year of Biodiversity in 2010.

The pupils helped to plant hundreds of trees on three occasions between the school and the Alex Collie Sports Centre. For many pupils, this was their first occasion of planting, and over their next few years at school they should be able to see substantial growth from these small saplings creating new woodland for future generations.

HEAT 3 Pilot Project

Bridge of Don Academy was selected to work with NHS Grampian on the HEAT 3 pilot project. This involved both the Home Economics department and the PE department working with some second year pupils. This national initiative focused on a family centred approach to target 3 main components – healthy eating, physical activity and behaviour change to encourage healthy weight in children.

The pupils worked on a variety of activities within the 2 departments including using the Wii within circuit training activities, developing and cooking recipes, as well as pupils word-processing recipes in IT. Pupils were filmed during some of these activities and a short film has been made. There was also a parents' evening where parents were invited in to try some of the activities and find out more. The sports co-ordinator and Anna Gale from NHS Grampian also attended.



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Susan Barrowman

BELHELVIE PARISH: ITS AGRICULTURE

Nearly all readers live within the parish of Belhelvie but how much do you know about the parish? For example do you know where its boundaries are? Most of the parish lies between the sea and the B999, from just south of Potterton and Blackdog, to 6 miles north. It is the area we aim to cover with this quarterly magazine, and is the parish served by Belhelvie church, Belhelvie Community Council and Balmedie School. It is the first rural parish north of Aberdeen, north-east of Dyce, south west of Newburgh.

I think we are pretty lucky to live here. The parish has some beautiful countryside, dunes and beaches, yet we are in easy reach of the city which was rated the best Scottish city to live in, according to a recent survey. Apart from commuting times, Aberdeen can be reached in half an hour from anywhere in the parish, although the city itself is seriously congested. As most of us know, Belhelvie is classic commuter country and most residents work in the city and use it for entertainment, shopping, hospitals and other services.

But in some ways, Belhelvie parish is self-sufficient, with our own primary school, churches, 4 village halls, a chemist and several small shops, pubs, and tradesmen – just study the adverts in this issue to see what services we have locally. There is an extensive road system, with about 12 miles of through roads (A90 and B999), and a 40 mile network of rural roads criss-crossing the parish. We have 6 miles of beach and a coastal Country Park.

There are roughly 1800 homes in the parish and a population of around 4200. Most live in one of our 5 settlements (Balmedie, Potterton, Belhelvie village, Blackdog and Whitecairns), but around 450 people live in the rural, outlying areas.

Back in 1970, the parish was mainly devoted to farming with a few other local industries such as quarrying and retailing. Most people lived in the small settlements, with virtually no housing schemes, and in the farmhouses and cottages in Belhelvie's rural areas. Once North Sea oil was discovered, the housing boom started to accommodate commuters to the new industrial estates, offices and the offshore sector. The oil and gas sectors never physically came to Belhelvie parish partly because of planning restrictions on industrial developments north of the junction of the A90 and B999. Belhelvie was part of Grampian Region's Green Belt policy and so we retained a rural landscape but with a few rapidly-expanding villages, notably Balmedie and Potterton. This has left us with the situation today – countryside living with little industry in the parish and most workers commuting daily out of the parish.

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Farming was the largest industry located in the parish and possibly still is today: it depends how you measure scale. It uses most of the land (9000 acres), provides significant local employment (140 workers) and generates about £3 million of output probably more than most other sectors located in the parish. Other important local industries are: construction, hotels and catering, quarrying and industrial storage.

Farming in Belhelvie is particularly interesting since it has been here for centuries but has had to adapt in recent times to: changing markets, farm mechanisation, attractive job opportunities outside agriculture for farm families, and the effects of a much larger local population mainly in our expanded villages.

The following is a closer look at agriculture in Belhelvie and how it has changed since 1964 (before oil and the Common Market). This may be of interest to people living in the parish, not connected with farming, but who drive past fields and animals every day. For farming is a very visible industry; we can easily see the crops and livestock, tractor operations and farm buildings. By contrast, who knows what goes on inside the Baker Oil Tools shed?

Fortunately, the Scottish Government has kept meticulous records of farm statistics for years so these can be reliably used to track changes over time. In the table I have used the statistics for 1964, 1984 and 2009 – a 45 year span of farming in the parish. For some items the numbers have been estimated, but the totals are correct.

There are 60 farmers in the parish farming, on average, 155 acres each but varying from a few acres to several hundred acres (a full-sized football pitch is about 2 acres). Half the productive land is in grass (for grazing, silage or hay) and half is used for crops (mainly barley, but also wheat, oats, oilseed rape, neeps, potatoes, and some horticultural crops). The parish also contains about 1000 acres of rough grazing, like Harestone Moss, which is of little use agriculturally. About 200 acres is taken up by farm roads, buildings and yards. 28 farmers have woodland on their farms (about 10 acres each), mostly as a result of recent plantings under various schemes which give financial incentives for new plantings. The woodland area in Belhelvie has increased sevenfold in the last 25 years and is set to go further – new planting outstripping felling. Under current rules, woodland which is cut down must be replaced by new planting.

So there you have it – 9,000 farmed acres in the parish, 60 farmers and a concentration on growing barley – both autumn-sown and spring barley. For readers interested in more detail, please examine the figures in the table.

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Where does all this produce go? The barley (7,000 tons in a good year) is sold for animal feed, or for malting which ends up in beer and especially whisky distilled on Speyside. Some grain may also be exported to a variety of destinations in Europe depending on the size of the harvest in the importing countries. For example, Russia has had a very poor harvest this year – they may change from being a major world exporter to importing, to fill their deficit.. This, and other factors, has pushed up world grain prices very sharply so that farmers here may receive prices 40% higher than in 2009. But the opposite could happen next year. Farming is a risky business!

Around a quarter of Belhelvie's barley will never leaves the farm but will be retained for feeding, mainly to cattle. Seed is another outlet for cereal crops, either retained on the farm for next year's planting, or sold to seed merchants for cleaning and grading and onward sale to other farmers – perhaps hundreds of miles away.

Apart from barley, small areas of wheat are grown, and oats, which has increased recently in response to a strengthening demand for organic oats for inclusion in healthy foods including, of course, porridge. Oats was the main cereal 45 years ago (see table) but its area decreased in the 1970s as yields could not compete with the newly-bred barleys. But oats is on the rise again and its straw is more valuable than that of other cereals.

Other changes in Belhelvie's cropping over the years are the dramatic fall in neeps, (all for cattle or sheep), largely replaced by silage, the expansion of oilseed rape and increase in soft fruit. But the most important sector of Belhelvie's agriculture is grass for beef cattle and sheep. The areas of grazing and mown grass have remained steady over recent years (4600 acres) but cattle numbers have fallen to 3000 head (June 2009) mostly beef. Many small dairy herds have disappeared from the parish which used to produce milk for Aberdeen. Nowadays our milk mostly comes from large herds, some in Belhelvie, and is processed and packed in huge factories.

Beef is the mainstay of the cattle business here – breeding cows, store cattle, and finished animals at 2 years old. Many cattle are sold and bought through auction rings, mainly now at Thainstone. Mature cattle are slaughtered and processed at one of several meat plants in Aberdeenshire – none in Belhelvie. Beef would be the most valuable output from farming in the parish, estimated at 400 tons annually, worth more than £1 million, followed by sales of cereals at around £0.8 million this year.

Belhelvie's sheep population has fallen sharply in recent years, the breeding flock is only one quarter of its scale 25 years ago.

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But more lambs are purchased in the autumn off the hills further west, for fattening over the winter – these are not shown in the figures which apply only to June. But the fall in the number of local breeding flocks is surprising, perhaps due to a shortage of shepherds or interested young farmers.

Pigs and poultry, so important in the past, have virtually disappeared from farms today. Geese and goats which used to be kept by one or two farmers have also gone but the main livestock which have increased over recent years are, of course, horses – kept for riding. “Horseculture” is one of the factors which have led some young families to move into the parish and take on small farms and crofts or rent grass from neighbours. But there is a long way to go before horse numbers reach pre-war, pre-tractor levels when several hundred were required to farm Belhelvie’s 9000 acres. And the horses needed feeding too – a small but significant share of the oats and grass grown. That meant fewer cattle and less grain for sale. The absence of horses and the vastly improved technology means that today’s farm output is probably three times pre-war levels. But our farms do use more fossil fuel!

Finally, who grows the nearly 8000 acres of crops and grass and looks after the 4000 cattle and sheep in the parish? The 2009 Census is a guide. First, we have our 60 farmers, but not all will be full-time: some with smaller farms will have other part-time jobs or will be partly retired. Then the 2009 Census records 40 spouses working on the farm, again some full and some part-time. In addition, only 13 full-time employees are recorded in 2009 plus 28 part-time workers. Of these 41 employees, more than half will be sons and daughters of the farmer. So farming is still largely a family business. And there will be fewer folk working the land in future as the land gets consolidated into fewer farms with less family labour and fewer employees, and greater use of contractors and machinery rings. With well-paid jobs still available, directly or indirectly, in the oil sector, workers for farming are hard to find and keep although some are prepared to do seasonal or part-time farm work.

And Belhelvie agriculture in 20 years time? Fewer but larger farms, less people involved but probably still growing cereals and beef cattle. Some expansion of very small units for those wanting a rural life with horses. More emphasis on the leisure market. Or will it be “sun farming”, the latest idea in renewable energy – fields of photovoltaic collectors all facing south and wired up to produce electricity for the farms and for the national grid?

Who knows? With global warming, the north east may be able to grow maize, tree crops and more soft fruit. But there will still be cattle for quality beef.

And there will be farming in Belhelvie long after North Sea Oil has run out !

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	1964	1984	2009
No. of farms	154	90	60
Farmers	160	67	60
Spouses working on farm	**	22	40
Full-time employees	107	38	13
Part-time employees	24	24	28
Total Farm workforce	291	151	141
Area rented (acres)	1,220	1,250	466
Area owned	9,628	8,381	8,837
Total Farmed Land	10,848	9,631	9,303
Wheat (acres)	123	180	286
Barley	841	3,021	2,278
Oats	1,532	86	100
Total Cereals	2,496	3,287	2,664
Oilseed rape (acres)	0	47	400
Potatoes	163	89	20
Swedes & Turnips (neeps)	697	277	50
Veg & Fruits	25	1	30
Non-cereal crops	885	414	500
Total Crops (acres)	3,381	3,701	3,164
Grass (acres)	5,842	4,478	4,621
Rough Grazing	1,460	1,158	1,039
Total Crops & Forage	10,683	9,337	8,824
Farm Woodland	70	42	295
Other Land	95	242	184
Total Area	10,848	9,621	9,303
Dairy Cattle	1,426	375	700
Beef Cattle	3,562	3,535	2,270
Breeding Ewes	1,505	1,622	385
Other Sheep and lambs	3,794	3,990	604
Pigs	1,585	1,728	20
Poultry	30,219	2,446	191
Other Livestock (inc. Horses)	200*	50*	62
* estimated ** included in no. of farmers			

Article submitted by Mike E. Daw

BALMEDIE LIBRARY

Eigie Road, Balmedie

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OPENING TIMES

MON **2.30 - 4.30**
5.30 - 7.30

WED **2.30 - 4.30**
5.30 - 7.30

FRI Closed
SAT **10.00 - 1.00**

TUES Closed

THUR **10.00 - 1.00**

BALMEDIE FRIENDSHIP GROUP

The Friendship Group meets on Tuesdays, 2-4 pm every two weeks in the lounge of Eigie House, Balmedie and welcomes members aged 50+ from all over Belhelvie Parish. The programme up to the Christmas break is as follows:

Dec 7th Alan Cameron – Ellon Historic Trail

Dec 14th Christmas Party at the Whitehorse Inn, Balmedie

New dates for meetings up to spring 2011:

Jan 4th Bingo/Whist

Jan 18th Illustrated talk on Antarctica

Feb 1st Illustrated talk on 'China, Ancient & Modern'

Feb 15th 'A Trip to Africa' by Bob Davies

Mar 1st The Cruden Singers

Mar 15th Entertainment by Tom Wyness

Mar 29th Talk by John Corall on 'Union Terrace Gardens'

Members pay £2 per meeting and are asked to bring a small raffle prize, the fee covering tea and biscuits and the raffle ticket

For further information please contact

Mrs Vic Deans **President** **01358 743634**

Mrs Margaret Murison **Secretary** **01358 742285**

BALMEDIE PLAYGROUP

We are a friendly group offering fun activities and learning for pre school children. Working in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council we provide pre school education for children aged 3-5 years. Sessions are led by playgroup staff and we have a rota for parental help. Activities available include art and craft, baking, water and sand play, music sessions, role play and construction activities. Sessions are planned around the "Curriculum for Excellence" and children may attend up to five sessions per week with a mixture of morning and afternoon sessions being available.

For further information or details regarding current spaces please contact us on the above number or pop into visit us. Open daily during school term 9.30am till 2.45pm.

Community Room,

Primary School Tel 07923 470741

1ST BELHELVIE RAINBOWS

At Rainbows we have been very busy with lots of fun, crafts, games and songs. Some of the things we have done include having a Rainbow Chat (where the Rainbows get an input as to what they would like to do during the term), making card flip-flops, mime games, parachute games, thinking about what our promise means, making a door hanger for our bedrooms and we had a Halloween Party.

We have also been busy with activities as part of our Centenary year celebrations. We went to a Princess Party in May, we have earned our Adventure 100 badge (where we



completed activities from a list which are all pointed and we had to achieve 100 points or more to earn the badge) and of course our end of Centenary year celebration called Vision at the AECC in October. This was a night of fun and entertainment, including X-Factor finalists Olly Murs and Stacey Solomon, where we renewed our promise at 20.10hrs on the 20th October. We looked great with our flashing tiaras on.

We can now decide exactly what we will be doing from now until Christmas. Whatever we decide it will definitely include Christmas crafts and activities, starting a Rainbow roundabout (where we complete 4 tasks to earn a roundabout badge) and of course we will be having a Christmas party and hoping that Santa will be able to visit.

In the New Year we will be continuing with our fun, games and singing as well as seasonal crafts.

We currently have spaces for new girls in the group. If you would like more information, please contact:

Pauline Wood Tel 01358 743002 or Sheena Hill Tel 01358 741942.

BALMEDIE INDOOR BOWLING CLUB

All age groups welcome. No facilities for wheelchairs

The club meets every Tuesday and Friday at 7pm from September till March. New members always welcome.

We meet at: Balmedie Primary School

Further information available from: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/clubs

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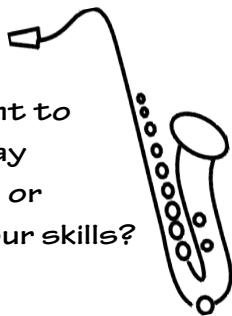
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Emergencies -Fire, Police, Ambulance, Coastguard	999 or 112
Police – Non Emergency Calls	0845 600 5700
National Gas Emergency Service	0800 111 999
Scottish Water (Water Supplies and Emergencies)	0845 601 8855
Electricity	0800300 999
NHS 24 (Calls from 6pm to 8am)	08454 24 24 24

COUNCIL

Aberdeenshire (General Inquiries)	0845 608 1207
Cllr Gifford	01651 869493
Cllr Hendry	01358 743091
Cllr Johnston	01651 851198
Cllr Loveday	01651 872591
Balmedie Library	01358 742045
Eigie House	01358 743506
Community Centres - Bookings (Belhelvie and Potterton)	01358 727910
Balmedie Leisure Centre	01358 743725

CHURCHES

Church of Scotland	(Rev Paul McKeown)	01358 742227
Congregational Church	(Rev Paul Jennings)	
Catholic Church	(Parish Office)	01224 626359

SCHOOLS

Bridge of Don Academy		01224 707583
Emergency Contact	0870 054 1999	PIN 011020
Balmedie Primary		01358 742474
Emergency Contact	0870 054 4999	PIN 021290
Ellon Academy		01358 720715
Emergency Contact	0870 054 4999	PIN 021040

DOCTORS

Danestone Medical Practice	01224 833866
Ellon Group Practice	01358 720333
Oldmachar Medical Practice (Jesmond Drive and King St)	0845 337 0510
Scotstown Medical Practice	01224 702149
Udny Surgery	01651 842204

Dates for your Diary

December		
Thu 2	Balmedie Bookends group Whitehorse Inn	8.00pm
Fri 3	Movies by Candlelight Belhelvie Church	7.30pm
Sat 4	Kids movies by Candlelight Belhelvie Church	2.00 pm
Sun 5	Carol service with Silver Band,Belhelvie Church	11.00am
Sun 5 & Mon 6	Christmas group Santa Tours Balmedie	Tea time
Tues 7	Friendship Group(Ellon Historic Trail)Eigie House Lounge	2.00-4.00pm
Fri 10	Songs for the Season Bruce Davies Forsyth Hall	7.30pm
Sat 11	Santa Visits Tarts & Crafts	2.00-4.00pm
Tue 14	Friendship Group Christmas Party Whitehorse Inn	2.00pm
Sun 19	Nativity service Forsyth Hall	11.00am
Tue 21	Term ends Balmedie primary, Ellon Academy,	
Wed 22	Term ends BoDA	
Fri 24	Community Carol Service Balmedie Leisure Centre	4.00pm
	Watch night service Belhelvie Church	11.00pm
Sat 25	Christmas day Service Belhelvie Church	11.00am
Sun 26	Morning Worship Belhelvie Church	11.00am
Jan 2011		
Wed 5	Term Starts Balmedie Primary, Ellon Academy	
Thu 6	Term starts BoDA	
Wed 12	SWRI Eigie House Balmedie	7.30pm
Thu 27	Better Balmedie Planning for the year ahead Balmedie Sch	7.30pm
February		
Thu 3	Balmedie Bookends group Whitehorse Inn	8.00pm
Fri 11	Midterm Balmedie Primary, BoDA, Ellon Academy	
Mon 14	Midterm Balmedie Primary, BoDA, Ellon Academy	
Tue 15	In-service Balmedie Primary, BoDA, Ellon Academy	
Wed 16	In-service Balmedie Primary, Ellon Academy	
Wed 9	SWRI Eigie House Balmedie	7.30pm
Thu 24	Better Balmedie(Growing vegetables) Balmedie Sch	7.30pm
March		
Thu 3	Balmedie Bookends group Whitehorse Inn	8.00pm
Wed 9		
Thu 31	Better Balmedie(Pruning plants and shrubs) Balmedie Sch	7.30pm
April		
Fri 1	Term ends Balmedie Primary, BoDA, Ellon Academy	
Mon 18	Term starts Balmedie Primary, BoDA, Ellon Academy	
Thu 28	Better Balmedie (Duthie Gardens tour)	7.00pm