BELHELVIE BANTER





EDITION 9

DECEMBER 2011

EDITORIAL

This is the second anniversary edition of the Belhelvie Banter. It is hard to believe that it was in mid December 2009 that our distributors went slip-sliding around the Parish to bring you our first edition.



It is encouraging to get the continued support of advertisers to allow us to bring you this free publication and to get feedback from our readers of their appreciation. Please support our advertisers; we regularly hear from advertisers of new customers as a direct result of featuring in the Banter and to hear of new members of groups tempted along by reading about activities in the Banter. In addition, we are told by many that they look forward to the Banter arriving through their letterbox. We are distributing 2000 copies and are hopeful that we are now making deliveries to all the folds and corners of the Parish. If you know differently, please let us know. Can I add that we would really appreciate **some more volunteer distributors in order to speed up the circulation**.

I also invite you to contribute to the Banter – see opposite page. Can I thank our special contributors who regularly or periodically contribute and a huge thank you to Alan, David, Karen, and Shuna; without their sterling efforts this magazine would not exist. May I, on behalf of the Banter team, wish you and yours a Joyous Christmas time and a Happy and Peaceful New Year. Audrey Jeffries, Editor

CHARITY CORNER

With each Banter, we try to include an article on a different charity. We hope to either raise the profile of a small local charity, publicise local charity events, or just simply bring awareness of what the charity in question does for local people. We welcome articles from volunteers, employees or those who simply want to talk about a charity close to their heart.

If you are a volunteer you may need to check with the PR department of your charity before submitting a piece about them but mostly they are very happy for the publicity.

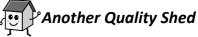
Whatever or whoever you support, registered charities are always in need of support, whether it be financial or from volunteers to keep their good work going. As Christmas approaches, spare a thought for those less fortunate and perhaps offer a small token to help. **Karen Secombes**



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MARY'S MACMILLAN FUNDRAISER

This is the twelfth consecutive year Mary Watson, has hosted a fund-raising Coffee Morning at her home, Homestead, Whitecairns in aid of Macmillan Cancer Relief. Many events are held across the country as part of the World's Biggest Coffee Morning.

Mary's house was buzzing with ladies deep in conversation over coffee and home bakes, but the men were not neglected as husband Hebbie played host to them in the garden summerhouse! A total of $f_{.1312}$ was raised by donation.

So note the date for next year, it is always the last Friday in September and that will be the 28th in 2012, so put it in your diary now, Mary extends a welcome to all.

COFFEE AND CAKE - ALL IN A GOOD CAUSE

Balmedie Library was host to a well-supported Macmillan Coffee Morning. The Library's book group, The Balmedie Bookworms, organised the fundraiser with help from lots of willing volunteers from the local community.

A great array of donated home bakes was on offer, including a colourful cake made by the children of The Links Nursery.



Senior library assistant Maureen Muirden was delighted to welcome a large turnout of local people to enjoy the fare and said, "We are very fortunate to have such a supportive community in Balmedie and are very pleased to have raised \pounds 350 this morning for Macmillan Cancer Support." Local author Delyth Reid was also in attendance signing copies of her first novel, "Keep Her Safe". With a donation from sales, a total of \pounds 125 was raised from the book sales and Delyth's own donation on the day.

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NAE BOTHER _ LEAVE IT WI' ME !!!

The yard at Mosshill Croft, Whitecairns was always bustling with a fascinating array of machinery and equipment, many of them suitably embellished with names – "The Centipede' and "The Flech' to name but two – names which described their functions perfectly but also with humour. Rock crushers, rubber ducks, lorries and diggers of all sizes were everywhere and owner Steve Wilson's response, when called to do a job, was always "Nae bother – leave it wi' me!"

Steve Wilson's roup, at which 2313 lots went under the hammer, took place on 22nd October when he retired from business.



His working life began when he served his time with Duncan's of Methlick. However, a life of changing oil filters and brake shoes, then returning home blacker and oilier than the undersides of the cars he worked on held few charms (or much remuneration) for the young lad. So he and pal Douglas Catto went off to trawling school and then to sea, first with the Craig Group on the trawler '*Grampian Hill*' and later with Richard Irvin on the 'Ben Medie'. Skipper Alex Flett was very sorry when Steve decided to come ashore (I'm not sure but I think a girl might have influenced this decision) as he saw great potential in his young crewman.

He then began working for his uncle, driving lorries and tractors, but soon progressed to diggers, being employed by Alfie Noble of Tarves, where he learned a lot about drainage and sitework from his gaffer, Dan Patterson. He then transferred to Alec Farquhar, Builders, then to Peter Cameron, Builders, before taking the plunge and buying his first Whitlock digger and setting-up on his own, doing drainage and ditching work. Steve recalls deciding to



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BELHELVIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Whilst the summer months have been that little bit quieter, it has allowed us all time to catch up on our own gardening chores. The various flowerbeds around the villages have been looking magnificent and thanks must go the team of helpers who worked hard to get all the bedding plants in and tended throughout the summer; we will certainly welcome all helpers for next year.

As well as the visual projects which we have undertaken, we are always working on your behalf on such things as planning applications, the new proposed Park & Ride Car Park, The Energetica Corridor and a Core Path Plan which is proposed for the area to link the various villages with paths and walkways. Most of these items are part of the medium to long term plans for the area and we will be updating you on these as they progress.

We would welcome volunteers to join the community council and help us to develop your plans for the various villages and communities. If you would be interested in assisting us in any of these projects then please get in touch.

We expect a visit early in December by Grampian Police Community Vehicle to promote awareness of home security, so watch out for details of this over the next few weeks.

> Wishart McBride Secretary Tel: 01358 742884 e-mail: wishart@wishart21.orangehome.co.uk

repaint the old Whitlock; he had done half of the repainting when a job came in and he undertook the contract with the machine half-painted in two different colours! This was back in 1967 and 'Steve Wilson' lorries and diggers have been a familiar feature on the roads around Whitecairns and beyond ever since.

Over the years he has been involved in numerous interesting contracts, some more memorable than others. One incident relates to the installation of a new water supply at Inverey House, Banchory, where he was working with Robbie McCarry. He told Robbie to take the pick-up, go to the top of the hill and turn off the supply at the stop-cock. After some time, he wondered why nothing had happened - even the pick-up hadn't moved, so he went to investigate. Robbie had decided it would be quicker to walk and took a short cut across the River Feugh; however, when Steve found his hapless pal, only his head was above the water and he had to be rescued, none the worse for his escapade but of course, soaked through. Estate workers quickly found him a dry, though oversize old suit to wear – even supplying him with a bowler hat to complete his outfit – and so he became the best-dressed digger driver this side of the Atlantic.

On a personal note, the last job we asked Steve to do prior to his retirement was to supply topsoil for raised beds in our garden. We called him at 9.30 and the digger duly arrived before the end of the morning. Sadly, my wife passed away recently but she was always impressed with his response: Nae bother – leave it wi' me!

Steve would like to thank all his many customers for their support through the years as we also wish him a long and happy retirement. Doing what, you may ask – well he's currently refurbishing the engine on his boat, so maybe it's back to sea. **ADS**





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BETTER BALMEDIE

Mr Pat Leslie of Blairton Farm officially opened the Better Balmedie polytunnel at our first Open Day on 27th August. Mr Leslie's family lived and worked at the farm where the Leisure Centre is now sited and the polytunnel is built where the farm garden used to be so he was the perfect person to perform this task for us. We send many thanks to Mr Leslie and good wishes for the future. The Open Day went well, with many visitors to the polytunnel, and we raised some funds towards future works. We'll have another one next year!

During October, Better Balmedie volunteers planted more daffodil and crocus bulbs around the village, helped by children from Balmedie School. We have also enjoyed visits from children of Links Nursery. They have planted pots of crocus bulbs and made "cress heads" at the polytunnel, and we look forward to more visits next year. In 2012 we will be keen to see other groups at the polytunnel, so would be happy to hear from scouts, guides, playgroups and from adult groups too. Balmedie is a small community so it makes sense to work together, pooling resources and skills.

We have a great team of volunteers, but we would love more people to get involved in Better Balmedie, so if you have an interest in gardening or helping to keep Balmedie looking good, please do get in touch! You don't have to be a gardener though to get involved. We need folk with practical skills, good diggers, and people with financial and funding knowledge who could help us apply for grants so we can expand our work.

On a negative note, we were all upset and disappointed to find that the drystane wall that was re-built by some Better Balmedie volunteers was vandalised in October. We believed that the work was appreciated by village residents, but apparently, not all feel that way! The police have been informed and hopefully, the wall will be left alone from now on...

Better Balmedie now has its own website. Have a look on www.betterbalmedie.org Otherwise, contact Better Balmedie on 01358 742557 or <u>rosie.inform@lineone.net</u> or join us at one of our monthly meetings.

Rosie Nicol





Saturday: 9.00am - 12.30pm

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Shut:

December 25th, 26th, 27th. January 1st, 2nd, and 3rd.

1ST BELHELVIE RANGERS

The Rangers have had a varied term so far. We have tried Zumba at Balmedie, and had a natter night, badge night and a murder mystery night. We are assuming the Zumba will have made up for all the chocolate and biscuits we ate at the other nights! We are very lucky to have been given a \pounds 125 donation from KPMG, which we will be putting towards buying a camera for the unit.

As Christmas approaches, we will be doing some Christmas crafts and organising ourselves a party. In addition, the whole District is going on a trip to the Panto in Inverurie in December - should be a good laugh!

The new term starts on the 12th of January but the exact dates may change if some of the Rangers have prelims.

If you are a 14 to 26 year old woman and interested in joining us then drop me an email or give me a phone. We meet fortnightly on Thursdays in Potterton.

If you are interested in helping with the unit, even on a flexible basis, please get in touch as we always welcome new volunteers.

Susan 01224 703335 s.osbeck@rgu.ac.uk

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WINTER NATURE NOTES – BALMEDIE COUNTRY PARK

By Sarah Gosden, Coastal Ranger, Aberdeenshire Council

Balmedie Country Park and beach provides a great escape from the Christmas madness of excesses and indulgences. A bracing stroll along the beach on Boxing Day will invigorate you and help burn some of those extra calories consumed. Top tip for winter: the wind at Balmedie comes more often than not from the south or southwest. So, if this is the case, when planning your walk, try to walk up the beach towards Newburgh rather than facing Aberdeen - then you won't get a face full of sand. This sand movement is an important part of the nature of the dune system though. If it wasn't for the sand blowing, sand dunes wouldn't be formed and the marram grass wouldn't be stimulated to grow. In the summer the beach tends to build up with sand and the slope is quite shallow. In winter with stronger winds and wave energy, the beach becomes steeper and there may be some undercutting of the fore dunes. This is all part of the natural, dynamic processes that have been happening for thousands of years, and is nothing to panic about if you see the base of the dunes being washed away. Next summer they will build up again. Of course the dunes do change, some will be eroded, but there will be another one growing somewhere else. It's all part of what makes Balmedie so special.

If there is a fine day without too much wind, it is well worth going beachcombing to see what interesting items have been brought to the shore by the winter storms. You'll probably find all the usual shells, which many people can identify - mussels, razor shells, limpets, cockles and tellins or "butterfly shells." A cool trick you can do with cockles is to tell their age. Cockles have lines going around the shell, rings going round, and a crinkly bottom. If you count the rings, each one represents one year of growth - just like in a tree. There are other shells that can only be aged by scientific analysis but can grow to be over two hundred years old - the Icelandic cyprine is a large, thick two-part shell or "bivalve," each half can be up to 13cm across. Other interesting shells you may find if you are lucky are - tusk shells which are, as the name implies, long and conical; pelican's foot shell which is a pointy snail type shell like a whelk but with a 3 or 4 pointed lip on its opening which looks like a wading bird's foot and the Faroe sunset shell which is very pretty and an odd shape but is hard to describe in writing!

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You may also find crab shells or bits of crabs washed up too. Crabs moult when they grow too big for the shell they are in – they make a hole in their back end, crawl out bottom first, leave that shell behind, and hide for a few days while their new, bigger shell hardens. You will probably find more crab shells from moulting in the summer when more growth takes place but have a look in the winter too – they may not be from dead crabs as many people think. You may also find legs or claws – crabs have a clever adaptation to remove their own limbs when in danger – next time they moult, they will grow a new leg. There are a few different types of crab that have been found washed up at Balmedie – common shore, edible, spiny spider, velvet swimming and masked crabs.

Another thing you may find washed up on the beach has the charming name of "dead man's fingers." They are not fingers, or from a dead man, but a soft coral that grows on rocks and reefs around the north east coast. When alive it can be white, yellow or orange and has a furry appearance as it is made up of many individual "polyps" which stick out their tiny tentacles to feed on plankton. If it becomes dislodged and washes up dead on a beach, it can appear to be like white, fat, swollen fingers – hence the name.

So why not take a walk down the beach a do a little beachcombing - there are many more interesting things to find than I can mention here. And if you do find anything particularly interesting, or unusual, or from a long way away I would be very interested to hear about it.

FRIENDSHIP GROUP

The Friendship Group continues to meet in the lounge of Eigie House, Balmedie on every second Tuesday at 2-4pm. There will be a talk on birds of the Ythan estuary, Historic Ellon and the annual Christmas party at the Whitehorse still to come this session (see Belhelvie Banter Sept 2011 edition for dates). The New Year sessions will resume on the 3rd January 2012. New members aged 50 or over from any part of Belhelvie parish are very welcome. Sessions confirmed for the New Year are shown in Dates for your Diary on the back cover.

Other activities/sessions up to Easter are to be confirmed but for further information please contact: Margaret Murison, secretary on 01358 742285 or Mr Vic Deans, President on 01358 743634

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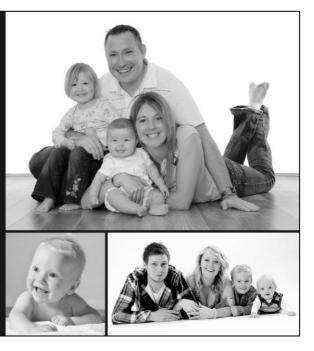
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A JOYOUS SEASON



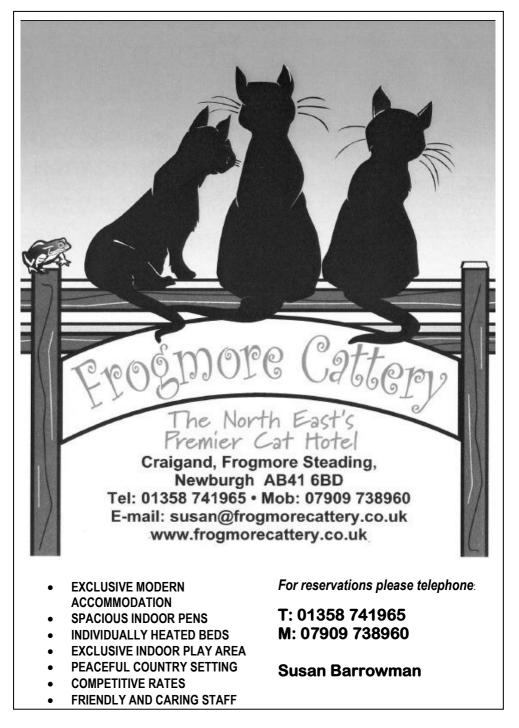
Winter is the time of year For rosy cheeks and Christmas cheer, Snowy days brings lots of joy For all the little girls and boys.

The frost's a blanket on the ground Picturesque scenes are all around, Icicles hanging from branches high Snowflakes floating from the sky.

Darker nights come all too soon Shiny stars and a big bright moon, Inside it's cosy from the fire's warm glow With candles flickering soft and low.

Yes, winter is the time of year To play or relax and not to fear, So open your heart and find a reason To embrace the winter, a joyous season.

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BALMEDIE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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CHRISTMAS FAMILY SERVICE Sunday 18th December 2011

Everyone Welcome

CHRISTMAS DAY

Joint Service at Danestone Congregational Church Community Area, Fairview Street 10.30a.m. Children to bring a Toy

CHRISTMAS EVE

Watchnight Service 11pm followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies ALL WELCOME

NEW YEARS DAY

Joint Service at Danestone Congregational Church Community Area, Fairview Street 10.30a.m. Children to bring a Toy If you require transport, please call Andy Cowie

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL POTTERTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Meets 2 pm Last Tuesday of the month in the Stead Inn, Potterton Over the Christmas Period we are to hold joint Services, with Balmedie and Danestone Congregational Churches. **Please see notices above. And if you require transport, please call Rev. Andy Cowie - 01224 703248**

THE SWRI BELHELVIE INSTITUTE (THE RURAL)

We meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month in Eigie House Balmedie - a very comfortable and warm lounge for our meetings. We have increased our members since advertising in the Banter so I hope we are successful in more ladies coming along and seeing what we are all about.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!

November is our birthday month. Belhelvie SWRI has been going for 85 years. Eigie House has easy access and parking is usually plentiful along the street. If you are interested, either just come along or phone myself....

Elaine Strachan 01358 743173

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BRIDGE OF DON PUPIL MEETS HANNAH MILEY

Erin McIsaac of Balmedie attended a swim clinic with Hannah Miley on 5 October 2011 at Robert Gordon University pool. Hannah, who is a student at Robert Gordon University, is the reigning European 400m individual medley champion in both long course and short course formats. She represented Scotland at the 2010 Commonwealth Games, winning a gold medal in the 400m individual medley.

Erin was one of only three young people from the 12 -15 year age group chosen from Bridge of Don Amateur Swimming Club to work with Hannah. Hannah and her coach gave the young people tips and advice.

Erin liked the question and answer session best and got some good tips – particularly on how to do tumble turning really fast.

Erin hopes to be picked to swim for COAST – City Of Aberdeen Swim Team – and represent the city at national events.

Photo: Erin and Hannah



INTERNATIONAL DANCE COMPETITION

Carly Main from Danestone and Melissa McLaren, Potterton, recently took part in an International Dancing Competition in Paris. Both girls are members of Aberdeen Academy of Performing Arts and participate in the weekly Musical Theatre classes offered there. In October they were given the chance to travel to Paris for five days with their group to take part in a competition against teams from England and America. The girls performed a variety of solo and group dances, including a "Wicked" melody which gave them the opportunity to show off their singing, dancing and acting skills. They also performed other routines including a "Pirates of the Carribean" dance and a "Nightmare Before Christmas" routine. Before leaving, the girls visited Disneyland, where their group took part in a street parade and attended a Mickey Mouse Halloween Party. Finally Melissa and Carly were given the opportunity to learn Bollywood dancing, courtesy of instructors who had flown in especially from India for the occasion. Both girls had a fantastic time on the trip and appreciate that it was 'a once in a lifetime' experience. Well done girls!

BoDA PUPIL WINS 3RD PRIZE IN ART COMPETITION!

JCI . Junior Chamber International Aberdeen Worldwide Federation of Young Leaders and Entrepreneurs



Before the summer, the Art Department at Bridge of Don entered Academy two classes into an art competition run by Junior Chamber International (ICI)Aberdeen in connection with UNICEF. This competition focussed on Children's Rights.

Pupils tackled tough subjects such as "Right to an Education" and "Freedom of Belief" and all those involved spent extra time during their lunch breaks to complete their artwork. Many schools across Aberdeen entered and Potterton girl Taylor Forman was successful in winning 3^{rd} prize in the competition. As a result, her artwork was on show in the Aberdeen Art Gallery for a week in August. She also received a book token and a photography lesson with a professional photographer, and the Academy Art Department was given £200.



POLICE UPDATE

Aberdeenshire in general and the Formartine area in particular are very safe places to be in in terms of serious and violent crime. The instances of such crimes being reported in my policing area are very few and far between from one year's end to the next. That is particularly so in the Parish of Belhelvie you will be glad to know.

My priorities are driven very much through Community Engagement, and what the public are telling me that matters most to them. It will not come as any surprise I am sure that the most common complaint that I get is 'speeding' and in order to deal with that all of my officers are trained to use the hand held speed detection device that records the speed of vehicles. Very recently, I have had complaints about speeding in Belhelvie and over the coming weeks you will find that my officers will be out in the area trying to tackle the problem.

As the dark winter nights have arrived it is sensible to take some simple motoring precautions. Check your vehicles to ensure that they are fit for purpose, paying particular attention to tyres, lights, windscreens, and washer bottles. Quite often the advice given out is 'think ahead' but this winter my advice is 'think back' and by that I mean 'back to last winter' and how much snow and ice there was about and what precautions and measures you had to take when out and about.

There is one particular crime that takes place in my area from time to time, that annoys me intensely: theft from unlocked cars and garages. I have already said that your area is a safe place but from time to time there are spates of thefts that are entirely avoidable so please take the time to lock your cars, even when they are in your garage, just in case you have forgotten to lock the garage! And don't leave valuables in the car. Simple measures taken can prevent the opportunist thief from leaving with your property. I hear individuals saying, "what are the police doing about it" when there is a spate of thefts and my answer is simple: "What are you as a car owner and householder doing about it? It's your property and your responsibility to look after it."

Steve Pratt, Inspector Formartine Local Policing Team, Ellon Police Office





'TIS THE SEASON...



The year is rapidly coming to an end, and no, I don't know where the time has gone either! The nights are drawing in and we all feel a bit gloomy, but we will soon be taking out the Christmas lights and cracking open some festive cheer.

Yes it's that time of year when we tend to overindulge. We rush around buying too much, eating too much and we also drink too much. I am sure that the long dark nights and poor weather are important factors in this, but can we still have fun and not go too far?

Clearly my answer is a "YES"!! I hope that you've all enjoyed some of the crisp autumn days we've had (indeed a few days felt warmer than our summer did!), and kicked a few fallen leaves and found some conkers. You can still keep up the good work and get out into the gloom and still enjoy a brisk walk. This will help you enjoy the festive season without the worry of shifting that excess all over again in January. The other huge benefit is the feeling of well being that exercise gives.

When we exercise, our brains release compounds called endorphins, and these give a feeling of well being, or put another way, a "reward" for exercise. You do not have to flog your body in a gym to feel this, just go and enjoy a brisk walk. The other happy by-product is that you burn off calories, a definite "win-win"! So keep going and try and not give up when the weather is poor, wrap up and go for it.

So how else can we survive the coming season without regrets in January? I feel that a good rule is "moderation in all things, including excess!" By all means enjoy the rich seasonal fare and enjoy a tipple, but try and avoid too much. This is particularly true of alcohol, as over-indulgence is a real and growing problem. Also, alcohol is quite calorie dense, so you can gain weight for little nutritional gain, leading to the expression "empty calories."

Many of us have an "all or nothing" approach to it and cannot resist the urge to drink to oblivion. This seems to be a feature of North Europeans so, again, I'm sure climate and long dark nights are involved. But we can change this!

Alcohol is a difficult drug. Some can become hopelessly addicted and others not. It is seen as a vital part of socialising, yet causes most anti-social behaviour. We know that a little can be good for you, but too much is harmful. Small wonder there is confusion and controversy about it!



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Alcohol causes the blood vessels to open up a little; this is why you flush when you drink. This is thought to be one reason why a little alcohol may help prevent heart attacks. Also some alcoholic drinks, red wine in particular, have anti-oxidants in them which again are thought to be important in the prevention of cardiovascular disease. There are possible benefits from drinking, but all is lost if you take too much.

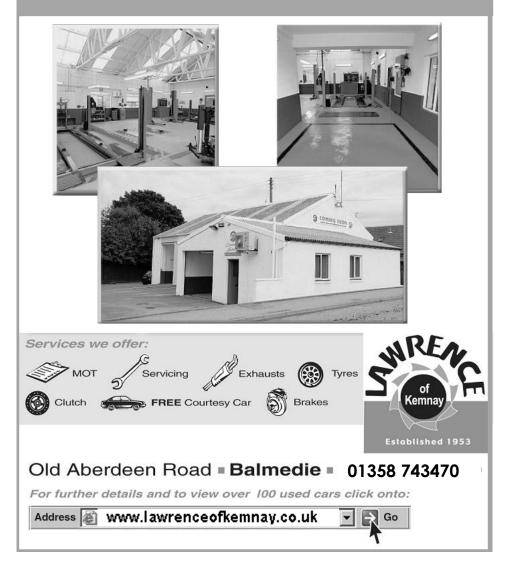
I feel that you should try and learn a little more about alcohol. Try and savour your Christmas wine, not just glug it down. We should try and copy the south European way of eating and drinking more slowly, savouring flavours and enjoying conversation at meal times. I know this is a challenge with the inlaws round and over-excited children, but worth a try; it really cannot be worse than usual!!

So keep up the exercise, savour the season, slow down and enjoy your food and drink, and who knows you may have less to shed in the New Year!!

Wishing you all a Merry (but not too) Christmas and a mellow 2012!! Dr Alasdair Forbes



For your next MOT or SERVICE contact our Balmedie Workshop



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. We encourage folk to re-think how they 'do' Christmas to reduce some of the stress and expense, and get together for some low-key but enjoyable fundraisers.

This year we're supporting the work of Nkhoma Hospital in Malawi who badly need kits of surgical instruments for use in caesarean sections. The staff at Nkhoma can do anything up to seven of these operations a day, but have only two kits to operate with. When power goes down (which is a regular occurrence) they cannot sterilise their instruments and therefore cannot operate. We look forward to seeing what we (and you) can manage to raise to help them over the Christmas period. Look out for some of the forthcoming events below and please come and join us – you'll be very welcome.

Every blessing for the season and for 2012 from all of us here at your local Church of Scotland. Rev Paul McKeown

SERVICES

Sun 4th Dec 11 am The award-winning Bon Accord Silver Band lead us in a service of Lessons and Carols.

Sun 11th Dec 11am Informal Communion Service

Sun 18th Dec 11am Nativity Service (held in the Forsyth Hall)

Sat 24th Dec (Christmas Eve) 4pm Community Carol Service (Balmedie Leisure Centre). 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.

Sun 25th Dece (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!

SOCIAL EVENTS

Sat Dec 3rd 7:30pm Right Christmas Quiz Night, Forsyth Hall. BYOB, Adults £10, children/oap half price. Buffet supper at 7:30. Proceeds to *Right Christmas* **Fri Dec 9th** 7:30pm Movies By Candlelight, in Church. Showing of the classic black and white Christmas movie *"It's A Wonderful Life"* starring Jimmy Stewart. Donations to *Right Christmas*

Sat Dec 10th 4pm 'Kids' Movies By Candlelight, Belhelvie Church. A showing of 'Home Alone''. Donations to Right Christmas welcome.



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BALMEDIE PLAYGROUP

Community Room, Primary School, Telephone 07923 470741

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 qualified playgroup staff and we have a rota for parental help. For further information please contact us on the above number.

BALMEDIE OUT OF SCHOOL CLUB

Based in the primary school, affordable childcare during the school term. Breakfast club at 7.30am and After School Club - 3.30pm till 6pm.

At Breakfast Club children may have toast or cereal, choose to play in the lounge, play computer games or watch TV.

After school, children receive snacks when they arrive and can then choose from a range of games and activities including football in the gym.

Fees: Breakfast Club £4.00 After School Club Half session till 4.30pm £4.00Full session till 6pm £7.00For information contact 07920 295508



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PARISH THREADS BY MARY CANE 'HUNGRY GAP'

While we struggle with our fiscal problems and envy the precious metal find in Glen Cononish, we might remember that we have gold in Belhelvie parish. Yes we do. Haven't you driven down towards Whitecairns from Newmachar when the craggy hills are ablaze with Whin, and there is a dark grey blue sky, slanting sun and a rainbow?

Actually common gorse, Ulex europaeus, Whin, or Furze, is a country resource now forgotten. Flowering at all times of the year, '(When gorse is out of blossom, kissing's out of fashion)', a backdrop to our journeys around the parish; it is only known now as a prickly nuisance, a shelter for rabbits or lost golf balls. It is unloved, sprayed and grubbed up. However, the coconut-scented flowers are edible, loved by bees and the dry plant burns so fiercely it was used to fire ovens.

It seems unlikely, but it was also a valuable cattle feedstuff here in Aberdeenshire. The months when grass is lifeless are long in Northern Britain and it was hard keeping farm animals going through the 'hungry gap' of late winter. Sheep will browse on gorse in snowy weather, and it is said farmers could tell a bad winter by the number of blood spots on a sheep's face. It's related to peas and beans so it's no surprise that the food value of the Gorse plant is twice that of turnips, but the prickles make it necessary to break it up for cattle who are grazers not browsers. For them to benefit from the free Whin nutrition, the green branches had to be cut by hand and then flailed, chopped or ground... hard work. There was a horse driven Gorse crusher... a Whin Mill here in the parish. It was down at Menie House. There is a short film held by the Scottish screen Archive of it working as part of 'Belhelvie Jubilee Gazette'. I am looking at it now on my 'I-pad', courtesy of youtube, a silent black and white clip from 1935.

Miraculously, I have a new 'app' called "I-TimeTravel" and as I concentrate on the grainy image I am swirled down into the 'I-Pad' screen, back in time like Alice down the rabbit-hole. Here I am, now in the farmyard at Menie where a horse is trudging circuits, pulling around a large millstone. It is cold; a mean breeze is blowing. Low-lit, the tall beech trees are black against the light sandy dunes. Rooks are making their early spring ruckus. Two farm workers fork over the partly softened Whin, and in drab belted long coats, two women watch. The colour scheme has only moved from the shades of grey on the film, to shades of beige in reality. The horse is halted on the stone raised walkway to be reharnessed to pull the great milling stone the other way. The iron trace-chains clink as the big wooden spindle is clipped onto his other side. The lad wearing a







hat pulled down secures the reins to the nearside terret while he realigns the harness. Taking up the reins again, he makes the noise with his tongue and cheeks that every horseman knows. It moves the horse forward, into the leather collar.

Times are hard; stores for the livestock are low this April. These people of Belhelvie Parish are struggling through the years of depression. The Great War, 'the war to end all wars', is a decent time behind them. Stanley Baldwin has still to manage the abdication crisis and the man who built the first computer at Bletchley Park is a young man learning his trade at the General Post Office. The first regular T.V. broadcast will be in two years. The inventor of the 'I-pad' won't be born for 20 more years. Laurence of Arabia has one month to live... European politics are not a top priority here, but a cat's whisker wireless set at the big house brings news from the wider world, and this month changes are afoot. Hitler is re-arming Germany, disregarding the Versailles treaty. The rise of Fascism continues, and there are rumbles in Spain.

In my time travelling guise, I focus on what's happening in front of me. There is a feeling of expectation on this cold April afternoon. A local man from Ardo, Captain Harvey-Loutit has arrived in his motorcar. He sets up his bulky cinecamera and tells everyone to avoid looking at the lens. The filming begins and the workmen are suddenly keener than before. I watch the scene, knowing, yet not knowing that after the film is shown at the Belhelvie Community Hall (now known as the Green Hut) for 6d to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George the fifth, the reels will be stored for more than 50 years before they will be found in a Kirk cupboard and given to the Scottish Screen Archive for safe keeping.

I watch breath held, as the horse trudges, the men add water to the crushed spiny gorse, and the women pretend to watch the work but glance towards the camera. Their ambition to be on celluloid is transparent. I surreptitiously take pictures with my mobile phone and no one seems to notice. After a few more circuits of milling, the mix is deemed ready; the lad unhitches the horse and gives it a handful of the mossy milled Whin with its little flecks of embedded gold.

The filming and the entertainment over, the little crowd disperse. My 'time travel app' times out. I am returned to my office desk through the I-pad to the present winter of 2011/12, to under-floor heating, a warm jacket made from recycled plastic, the European financial crisis, and the supermarket up the road selling strawberries all year round. Check out my I-photos next time you see me...





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BALMEDIE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS GROUP

With Christmas fast approaching we would like to thank everybody who has helped out with our various fundraising projects throughout the past year. Funds raised have allowed us to store, maintain, insure and erect the lights for this year. The lights and tree switch-on happened on November 19th. With the current economic climate we have decided not to make this a fundraising event this year, nor to ask for any financial contributions from locals over the festive period.

Our plans for the future include being able to provide additional lighting in other areas of the village as well as planting and providing an electrical supply to a permanent tree. BUT we cannot do this without more help. We really do need more volunteers to come forward and help with the group. Meetings are held every couple of months in the Whitehorse and are very friendly and informal.

If you are able to help, have any suggestions or would like to become involved with the group then please contact:

christmasgroup@hotmail.co.uk

In the meantime we would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and we will look forward to meeting up with some of you at our fundraisers in 2012.

3RD BELHELVIE BROWNIES (POTTERTON)

We've been working on a new challenge, 'World Guiding goes Tartan'.

The WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) held their tri-annual conference in Scotland this year. In usual Guiding style a challenge was created around it. All about Scotland and WAGGGS and the conference - as you might guess. We had to find out which countries started WAGGGS, (there were 26 original members, now there are 145). We had to find out how far the delegates had to travel; coming from the other side of the world takes a long time. We had to do activities about Munroes, Scotland being famous for them. We also looked at the rights and responsibilities of children because WAGGGS' mission is to help girls and young women to develop their full potential as responsible citizens of the world. We learnt a new game called Haggis, Neeps, and Tatties. Finally, we talked about what should be discussed at the conference. It was good fun and we all now have another badge.



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POTTERTON PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP

Tues & Thurs 9.30am-12 noon, 12.45-3.00pm; Wed 9.30am-12 noon We are a friendly local group offering fun activities, outside play and learning for children aged 2 years 10 months to 5 years. We offer commissioned places for children aged 3 to 5. In addition, we accept non-commissioned children aged 2 years 10 months who would be fee-paying.

Qualified playgroup staff and a rotational parent helper run all sessions. Our activities are planned using "Curriculum for Excellence" and the Children's ideas/choices. We go for walks, visit local parks, away trips and numerous other activities.

POTTERTON 2'S GROUP

Monday and Friday mornings 10am-noon

This is a local group offering a service to the under 3's. Children can attend the group from 18 months of age accompanied by a parent/carer. At two years old, children can be left at the group without a parent/carer after a settling-in period.

At 2's group, we aim to encourage social and communication skills through positive play within our happy and safe environment for your child/children. The group is run by qualified staff and rotational parent helpers.

If you are interested in joining either group or require further information, please telephone 01358 743335.

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Zara, Jenna, Keri and children from the Links Nursery who helped Better Balmedie members Rosie, Ishbel, Sue, Sandra, Margaret and Isobel plant bulbs.

BALMEDIE CRAFT CLUB

The craft club is up and running after the October holidays. We have made some Halloween cards and mobiles, we have also made keepsake boxes and over the next few weeks, we will be busy making lots of Christmas items and something special for St Andrews day and will finish for Christmas with a party. We have places available for primary school children who enjoy crafts. **Catherine 01358 743114**

OPENINGS AT BEAVERS – CUBS – SCOUTS – EXPLORERS

Opportunities exist for Adults, both male & female, to train as Beaver Leaders, Scout Leaders and for those who wish to share their hobbies as Skills Instructors.

We currently cannot meet the demand for places at Beaver Scouts by a long way and have got to expand to stop disappointing so many youngsters. Trainees will work alongside established leaders to gain the experience they need to run a Colony. Each Colony will have a minimum of three Leaders. If you think you can commit a regular 90 mins after school or early evening, get in touch and discuss it some more. If you want to "Try Before you Buy" that's fine too.

Boys & Girls can become Beavers from their 6th to 8th birthdays. There is currently a long waiting list to join Wednesday Beavers.

We currently have a vacancy for a trainee Scout Leader to join our Troop which meets on a Wednesday evening and some weekends. Trainees will work alongside established leaders and will join an existing team.

Scouts are for Boys & Girls from age 10 and Explorers from 14.

We also run two Cub Packs meeting on Monday & Tuesday evenings. Cubs are for Boys & Girls aged from 8 to 10 years. There are vacancies for new Cubs at our Monday Pack.

To discuss either Leadership opportunities or to find out more about our Beavers, Cubs, Scouts or Explorers call us on:

0774 384 4040 or email: balmedie.scouts@btinternet.com

TARTS AND CRAFTS

(Telephone 01358 742002) situated behind the Library in Balmedie. We have good parking and disabled access. Open Thurs– Sat 10am – 4pm

We are pleased to report that we have been inspected by Aberdeenshire Council and awarded our Hygiene and Information certificate. This has been awarded to the café as a whole business and is testimony of the high standards practised by all the volunteers.

Santa is to visit the café again this year so keep an eye out for posters with details around the village.

The café will close 21st Dec and re-open for business on 4th Jan 2012.

The café is organising a series of fundraising events. Our target is $\pounds 2000$ to buy a reconditioned coffee machine so that we can continue to use Fair Trade Coffee. To date we have raised $\pounds 117$ from an evening of fun. Brothers Stephen and Pete Webb entertained for two hours with magical storytelling, poetry, and song.

In addition to being a café, we are an art gallery exhibiting paintings by local artists and we stock a wide range of local crafts. We have products to suit both those who want to spend their pocket money, and for people wanting to invest in something more exclusive. Why not visit to get gift ideas and make Christmas shopping easier.





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	Dates for your Diary			
December				
Tues 6	Friendship Group Talk Historic Ellon Eigie House	2pm		
Fri 9	Movies by Candlelight Belhelvie Church	7.30pm		
Sat 10	Kids Movies by Candlelight Belhelvie Church	4pm		
Sun 11	Informal Communion Belhelvie Church	11am		
Tues 13	Friendship Group Christmas party White Horse Inn	2pm		
Wed 14	SWRI(Rural) Eigie House	7.30pm		
Sun 18	Nativity Service Forsyth Hall	11am		
Mon 19	Belhelvie Community Council Meeting Venue TBA	7.30pm		
Wed 21	Tarts & Crafts Closes for Christmas			
Fri 23	School Term ends Balmedie Primary , BoDA, Ellon			
Sat 24	Community Carol Service Balmedie Leisure Centre	4pm		
Sun25	Christmas Day Service Belhelvie Church	11am		
January	2012			
Tue 3	Friendship Group – Bingo- Eigie House	2-4pm		
Wed 4	Tarts & Crafts reopens after Christmas			
Mon 9	Start of School term Balmedie Primary , BoDA, Ellon			
Wed 11	SWRI(Rural) Eigie House	7.30pm		
Mon 16	Belhelvie Community Council	7.30pm		
Tue 17	Children's Hospice Association Scotland (CHAS)Sarah Secombes	2-4pm		
Wed 25	SWRI Whist Eigie House	7.30pm		
Thurs 26	Better Balmedie Business and Planning Balmedie School	7.30pm		
Tue 31	Dennis Shepherd & Friends Entertain Eigie House	2-4pm		
February				
Wed 8	SWRI(Rural) Eigie House	7.30pm		
Fri 10	Mid-term break Balmedie Primary			
Mon 13	Mid term break Balmedie Primary , BoDA, Ellon			
Tue 14	Talk & Slides on a Trip to India by Bob Davies Eigie House	2-4pm		
Tu 14 -We15	In service Balmedie Primary , BoDA, Ellon			
Mon 20	Belhelvie Community Council	7.30pm		
Wed 22	SWRI Whist Eigie House	7.30pm		
Thurs 23	Better Balmedie Talk All about Lawns Balmedie School			
March				
Wed 14	SWRI(Rural) Mini Rural Show Eigie House	7.30pm		
Sun 18	Better Balmedie Willow Fencing Workshop Poly Tunnel	TBC		
Mon 19	Belhelvie Community Council	7.30pm		
Wed 28	SWRI Whist Eigie House	7.30pm		
Thurs 29	Better Balmedie Meet Beach Rangers Balmedie School	7.30pm		
Fri 30	School Term ends Balmedie Primary , BoDA, Ellon			
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