



Auchenblae Messenger

Founded in 1999 by Donald B. Rennie

Autumn/ Winter Edition

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DECEMBER 2025

From The Editors

Chris and Keith Ridgway

Welcome to the final Messenger of the year! It feels like only yesterday we were packing away the tinsel, brushing pine needles out of the carpet, and promising ourselves we'd be more organised *next* Christmas. And here we are again—another year older, hopefully a little wiser, and wondering where on earth 2025 disappeared to.

Winter has certainly made its presence known. After the glorious long evenings of June and July, the dark December afternoons can feel a bit of a shock to the system—but there's something wonderfully cosy about lights glowing in windows and the whole village bundling up against the cold. Auchenblae always knows how to make winter feel warm.

Putting together the Messenger is never easy—life seems to get busier for everyone each year—but once again our wonderful contributors have stepped up, and we're delighted to bring you this Christmas edition. Inside, you'll find an update from the Heritage Society, along with news of Jenny Thomson's long-awaited history of Auchenblae. The Friendship Group, the Auchenblae Youth Club, and our local MSP and Councillor all share what they've been up to on behalf of the community.

We also have important news from the Auchenblae Medical Practice, with the changes explained by Lisa Taylor, and some festive poetry from Peter Morriss to help set the Christmas mood. Rev Brian Smith offers both details of upcoming celebrations and a thoughtful seasonal message.

Sports lovers aren't forgotten either—Bob Cattarach brings us the latest from the golf club, and we wrap up the year with the Bowling Club's review as they make their mark in the Mearns Indoor Bowling League.

At home, our own little menagerie continues to keep us entertained. Rosie the retired greyhound has fully embraced domestic life—and developed a worrying enthusiasm for stealing handkerchiefs and shoes. Bryn, our small terrier, has accepted her as family, even if he's not entirely convinced of her "helpfulness." The hens and ducks are also doing their bit, though the older ones are easing into a well-earned retirement while some younger recruits prepare to keep the egg supply flowing.

As busy as this season can be, we hope this edition of the Messenger brings a little pause, a little smile, and a reminder of just how lucky we are to live in such a vibrant, supportive community.

From Christine, myself, and the whole Messenger team, we wish you a warm, joyful Christmas and a peaceful, hopeful New Year.



The Messenger— e-Newsletter

Due to costs & 'staying green' The Messenger continues to be published online at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/auchenblaenoticeboard>

The very few printed copies that have been requested are provided by the very kind assistance of **Hazel Horrigan, Lynn Brodie** and **Alastair Macphie**.
All the best, Kevin (Publisher)

West Mearns Parish Church

Rev Brian Smith

Christmas has a special way of touching our hearts. For the Church, and for Christians around the world, this is the season when we pause to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ—the light who came into the world, the child who brings hope, peace, joy, and love. It is a time filled with meaning, with familiar carols, treasured traditions, and gatherings that remind us of what truly matters.

Across our parish, Christmas is always a beautiful season. Our villages glow with festive lights, windows shine warmly in the dark evenings, and there is a sense of anticipation that builds as the days grow shorter. For many, this is a time to be with family, to enjoy a break from work, and to enjoy a slower pace of life. Children rehearse their school concerts, families put up trees, and neighbours exchange cards and greetings. These small but meaningful rituals help us prepare for the joy of Christmas Day.

But we know, too, that this season can be difficult. Loneliness can feel sharper when everyone else seems surrounded by company. Grief can feel heavier when the world is celebrating. And for those who are struggling financially, the pressure of Christmas—its expectations, its comparisons—can make an already heavy burden feel even heavier. If this is your experience, please know that you are not alone. The message of Christmas is not only for the cheerful and the confident; it is also, and perhaps especially, for the weary, the worried, and the wounded.

We live in a world that often feels broken. Wars continue to devastate communities. Poverty remains a daily reality for so many. Climate change brings suffering through floods, droughts, and natural disasters. As we enjoy Christmas here in our peaceful corner of the Mearns, many people around the world will spend these days not in celebration, but in fear and uncertainty. While we cannot solve every crisis, we can choose to be people of compassion where we are. We can look for ways to be generous, to support charities that are working harder than ever at this time of year, and to offer kindness to those close at hand. Sometimes the smallest actions—a kind word, a thoughtful gesture, a listening ear—create the greatest light.

This Christmas, our churches warmly invite you to share in the celebration. You are welcome—whether you come every week, occasionally, or have not been for many years. On Christmas Eve at 6pm, Auchenblae Church hosts a Family Fun Carol Service, filled with music and joy suitable for all ages. Later that evening, at 11:15pm, Fettercairn Church holds a Watchnight Service, a reflective and beautiful gathering with carols by candlelight as we welcome Christmas Day. Then, on Christmas morning at 11am, Glenbervie Church offers a short Service of Celebration—a lovely way to begin the day.

Wherever you find yourself this Christmas—celebrating, grieving, resting, or hoping—may you know the deep truth at the heart of the season: that God is with us. May you experience moments of peace, unexpected joy, and the warmth of community.

God bless you, those you love, and those who love you.

Brian

Minister for the Parish of West Mearns

Update of the Union of three Parishes.

The Church of Scotland is creating new parishes across the country, and in our area this involves the union of West Mearns, Laurencekirk, and Aberluthnott (Marykirk and Luthermuir).

West Mearns Parish Church cont:

The new parish will be known as *The Howe o' the Mearns Parish*.

This union will take effect on 1 January 2026. A service of union will be held to mark the occasion, with the venue and date to be announced on our social media channels.

Christmas Services

24th December Christmas Eve 6pm Auchenblae Church Family Carol Service

 Christmas Eve 11.15pm Fettercairn Church Watchingt Service

25th December Christmas Day 11am Glenbervie Church Christmas Service

Christmas Chocolate Cookies

- 250 grams of soft butter
- 150 grams caster sugar
- 40 grams of cocoa powder
- 300 grams of plain flour
- ½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
-

For the Festive Topping:

- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 175 grams of icing sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Christmas sprinkles



1. **Preheat the Oven:** Preheat your oven to 170°C and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. **Prepare the Dough:** Cream the butter and sugar together until soft. Add the cocoa powder, then mix in the flour, bicarbonate of soda, and baking powder until fully combined.
3. **Shape the Cookies:** Pinch off walnut-sized pieces of dough, roll them into balls, then flatten them slightly to form discs. Place them on the baking sheet, leaving space between each one.
4. **Bake:** Bake for 15 minutes. The cookies will look slightly cracked on top, but they'll continue to cook as they cool.
5. **Cool:** Let the cookies sit for 15 minutes on the baking sheet before transferring them to a wire rack to cool completely.
6. **Make the Topping:** In a saucepan, whisk together cocoa powder, icing sugar, vanilla extract, and 60ml of hot water until smooth. Remove from heat and let it cool for 10 minutes.
7. **Top the Cookies:** Drizzle the chocolate glaze on each cookie, using the back of the spoon to spread it. Add sprinkles while the glaze is still wet. Continue until all cookies are topped.

Auchenblae Bowling Club



After another successful season bowling came to an end in mid September. The annual dinner and prize giving was held on the 11th November when a Emmanuel served up a tremendous meal at Chez Raphael in Laurencekirk.

For as long as anyone can remember bowling finished in September but this year we have taken the plunge and joined the Mearns Indoor Bowling League, which is held at Stonehaven Indoor Bowling Club. We play in a two-hour competition every other Tuesday throughout the closed season.

Indoor bowling on a carpet is considerably different to our usual outdoor green, the ball travels much further, much faster and curves a lot more. We are learning fast, but in the league comprising a dozen local teams it's probably just best to say we are in the top twelve.

Due to a change in weather at the end of the season we didn't finish all our competitions this year and the only prizes were awarded for the Club cup, Men's and Ladies singles and the novice cup.

Competition	Winner	Runner-Up
Club Cup	Ralph Currie	Chris Ridgway
Men's Singles	Ralph Currie	Keith Ridgway
Ladies Singles	Ralph Currie	Keith Ridgway
Novice Cup	Keith Ridgway	Chris Ridgway

In the local competitions we entered the Renny Tailyour Trophy where after victory against Laurencekirk we were beaten in the second round by a very strong Parkview from Brechin. In the Hutchinson Trophy we were knocked out in the first round by St Cyrus.

During the closed season the greens are being prepared for next season, which will start in April 2026. Next season there will be a strong drive to increase membership and to complete the full range of competitions.



Trophy Winners 2025



Bowling green maintenance



Auchenblae Reflections

Jenny Thomson

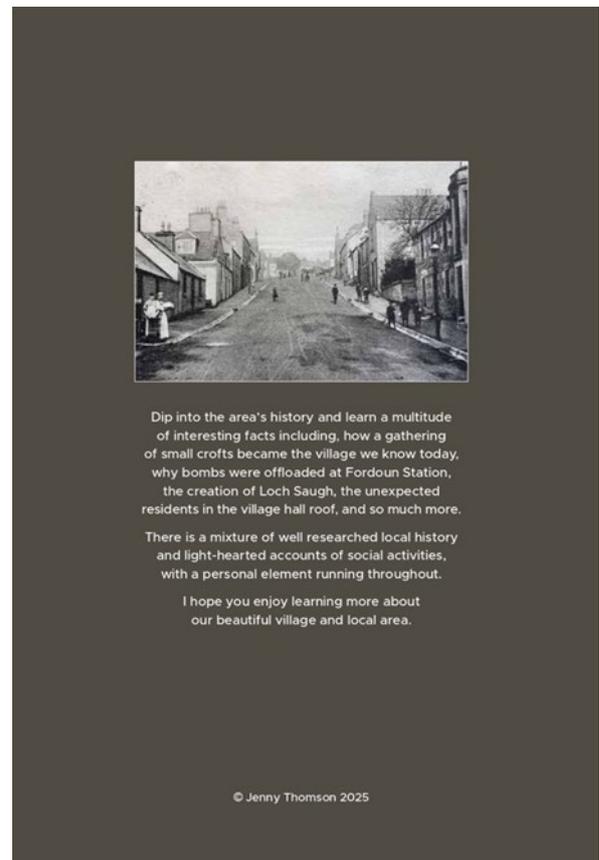
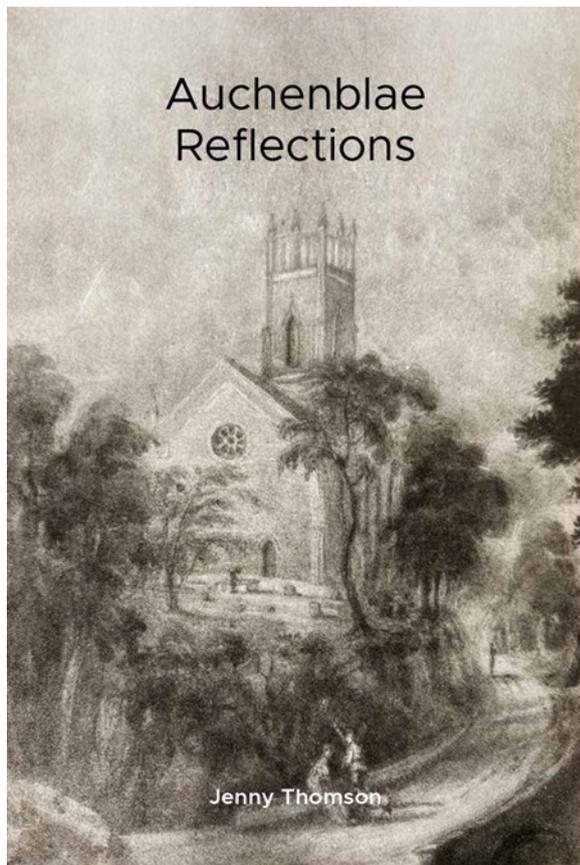
Over the years people have asked me to let them know when I have finished writing my history book based on Auchenblae and district. Well, it's finally happened, and '*Auchenblae Reflections*' - all 404 pages of it - is arriving here on December 16th!

Amongst varied and diverse subjects, this history book touches on events that have shaped our area of the Mearns and explains how the tiny crofting community 'Achadh Na Blath', unlike others, survived extinction to become today's unique settlement.

Included throughout are photographs and images, many previously unpublished, of historic scenes in both Auchenblae and Fordoun villages, and others of the surrounding area.

The book is to be a high-quality hardback, so should be a nice thing to own – at least I hope so. I've done my absolute best to include every subject with accuracy and without embellishment, each thing researched and written by me over many, many years.

Please contact me at jennythomson1@hotmail.com if you'd like to reserve a copy. They are £20 each. Postage can be arranged separately.



Auchenblae Surgery Developments

Lisa Taylor

Stonehaven Medical Group will take over the care of the patients of Auchenblae Surgery on the 1st December 2025. As this date draws closer, we wanted to provide the local community of Auchenblae with some information and assurances around the service that we aim to provide for the local community.



The practice and the dispensary will remain open with the same opening hours as are in place at present.

Several members of the practice team will remain in place and be familiar to you including GPs, nurses, admin and reception team members and the dispensary team. Our primary goal across our whole practice population is to ensure patients have excellent access to the practice and that we can provide patients with high quality healthcare. We also strongly value continuity of care for patients which we believe can provide the best overall quality of care for those with the greatest health needs. However, we also recognise that there are times when continuity of care is less critical and there are issues or conditions or requests from patients that we would want to deal with as quickly and effectively as possible and minimise waiting times for patients when possible.

In order to achieve this balance of providing excellent access, good continuity of care and having a responsive and efficient service for the population, we use a triage model within the practice. This means that when a patient contacts the practice to seek an appointment or advice and support, this request will be passed to a member of the clinical triage team to assess this further. There are a number of goals from doing this which would include

- Identify those patients who have the most urgent clinical needs and organise urgent access to appointment for them
- Identify those patients who require an appointment that promotes continuity of care due to their ongoing or complex health care needs.
- Identify which member of staff within the practice team that is most appropriate for managing the issue and offering a suitable appointment. This could include offering appointments with specific GP or other clinicians with specialist interests, Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Physiotherapists, Pharmacists or other members of the team.
- To provide a rapid response to patients who contact the practice with the aim of providing treatment and care on the same day or the next working day wherever possible.
- Identify times when a service out with the practice would be better to deal with the issue. Examples might include services such as dentists or opticians.

A significant aspect of this is the use of an online consultation platform called eConsult. This has been in use in Auchenblae previously and has been made available again since early October this year. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week and allows patients to complete a consultation using a safe and secure service at a time that suits them best. This also allows patients to take the time needed to provide information to the practice without feeling rushed as may occur during a more traditional consultation. There are robust safety features with this service and also strong security features approved by NHS Scotland to protect personal information.

With the take over the total amount of clinical, nursing and administrative staff available to support the patients at Auchenblae will increase and we believe this will offer patients greater access to services, more choice within the practice team and also access to a range of additional services that may not be currently be provided within Auchenblae. This could include services such as additional minor surgery treatments, contraceptive coils and GPs and

CONT:

Advanced Nurse Practitioners with specialty interests such as dementia, respiratory, diabetes, dermatology and cardiology.

Our long-term commitment to the community of Auchenblae is to strengthen and secure primary care services within the village in the existing practice building, to maintain the practice dispensary to give patients local access to medications and to work with patients and the wider community to promote long term health and well-being within the community and toensure long term resilience.

Important Update for Auchenblae Patients
Stonehaven Medical Group is taking over care for Auchenblae Surgery patients from 1st December 2025.

What's Staying the Same?

- The **practice and dispensary will remain open** with the same opening hours.
 - Many familiar faces—**GPs, nurses, admin, reception, and dispensary staff**—will still be here to help you.
-

What's Changing?

- **More staff and services** will be available, giving you better access and more choice.
 - We'll use a **triage system** to make sure you get the right care quickly:
 - Urgent cases seen same day or next day.
 - Continuity for ongoing or complex conditions.
 - Appointments with the most suitable clinician (GP, nurse, pharmacist, physiotherapist, etc.).
 - Referral to other services when needed (e.g., dentist, optician).
-

Online Consultations – eConsult

Online Consultations – eConsult

- Available **24/7**, safe and secure.
 - Complete a consultation online at a time that suits you.
 - Approved by **NHS Scotland** for security and safety.
-

Our Commitment

- Keep primary care services **in Auchenblae**.
 - Maintain the **dispensary** for local medication access.
 - Work with the community to promote **long-term health and resilience**.
-

Questions?

Please contact the practice team—we're here to help.

Pothole Progress

As everyone will know potholes are a real concern to us and following lockdown, the Mearns was one of the worst areas of Aberdeenshire. We had both the Chief Executive and the Director on Infrastructure Services out with us to see how bad some stretches were. Following that however, things have improved and credit where credit is due, we have a lot less dangerous defects than we had. Budget constraints have curtailed our ability to resurface roads, but they have agreed to have a stronger proactive process to respond and deal with potholes, and the official portal to use is [fixmystreet.com](https://www.fixmystreet.com). We Councillors have a small avenue to request repairs if local needs determine a pothole requires repair against policy, and these usually follow requests from community groups.



In tandem with the changes to policy, you may have noticed a change in the materials being used to repair potholes. They have been trialling different materials and a new pothole JCB machine has been bought which can repair a pothole with one driver, so hopefully you will see it on a road near you soon !

Can I take this opportunity to wish all readers a lovely festive holiday and best wishes for 2026.

Cllr George Carr
Conservative
Mearns Ward
Aberdeenshire Council

Auchenblae Golf Club



Here Bob gives a general report on how the golfing year has gone at Auchenblae, and also the course changes that have taken place recently.

Auchenblae Golf Course has had a very busy season, the exceptional Spring and Summer weather attracting a record number of visitors to the course. Membership continues to grow, along with a healthy number of youngsters playing, and a good turnout of children attending the introduction to golf sessions on a Saturday morning.

The head Greenkeeper, Niall Bruce, has settled in well in his first season in charge.

Several course changes were carried out in October by Allgrass. This included a car park extension, enlarging tees, reshaping bunkers and constructing a new practice putting green beside the first tee. A huge thank you must go to Bill Nixon and Maven for their financial contribution towards this project. The finishing touches to the changes will be completed in house, and we look forward in anticipation to members and visitors alike playing the revamped course next season.

Bob Cattarach

Golf Club cont:



Auchenblae Friendship Group



As the year draws to a close (by the way where has 2025 flown to!), it is time to reflect on what we have been up to in the Group.

We did not plan it but our themes this year have been travel and memories. Thanks go to our speakers – Sandra, Gillian, Phillip, Adam, Brian, Georgie and Jenny for interesting and stimulating talks. To name a few places we have been on “our magic carpet” Domenica, West Indies, South Africa and Portugal. We even got close up and personal with salamanders courtesy of Adam.

We have had entertainment from Ray Milne, Phil Smith and our George Wilson as well as our usual monthly bingo and games sessions.

In September we held a very informal 25th Birthday party and we still have three founder members with us! The Group (or Clubbie as it is affectionately known as) was formed in September 2000 – a brainwave of the late former Reverend Donald Rennie along with the late Dr Ross Muiry. The two gentlemen thought it would be a good idea to hold a weekly morning group where pensioners could meet up for a cuppie and chat and some interesting times together. At the time of its inception the minimum age to join was 60 – which nowadays would be considered as ageist!

There was a Friendship Group song, composed by Donald Rennie, which was sung before the morning’s activity. The membership boasted many couples and had at one time 30 members.

The format has not changed much over the years – we still have our cuppie and piece to begin with followed by whatever activity has been chosen for that morning. There have been only 3 programme co-ordinators so far. I asked the founder members for their memories and they came up with the following:-

- 25 years ago, in the village, there were three shops consisting a butcher, a post office and a general store – now 25 years on, we have one general shop and a visiting PO; a weekly visit by the Royal Bank of Scotland van and not forgetting the Carron Fish Bar visiting once a week on a Tuesday evening.
- The pub is sadly no more. The café since the early 2010s has had 3 name changes.
- The main road has got busier and busier with farm vehicles and lorries becoming bigger and more sophisticated.
- The village has weathered various storms over the last 25 years with a lot of storm damage occurring in The Den. However, there have been, over the years, many major developments in the Den, at the football pitch and the Golf Course which have been appreciated by the villagers and tourists alike; and
- In the late Autumn 2025 we saw a proliferation of 20 mph signs being put up through the village. At long last we have to drive slowly.

I could go on with more details but space does not allow me to do so!

Turning to the future, our 2026 season kicks off on Wednesday 7 January

Friendship Group cont:

2026 at the Church Hall at 10.00 a.m. when our George Wilson will be presenting a singalong entitled "Friendship – Golden Memories of 51". In February and March respectively we welcome two new speakers to the Group – the Reverend Fyfe Blair talking about his experiences working and living in New Zealand (we are off on our travels again) and in March Angie Mutch who is training to be a Deacon with the Church of Scotland will be giving a talk of her life's adventures. These are examples of what is planned between January and March 2026.

Please do come along if you wish to do something different and want company. We meet at the Church Hall, during school term times, on Wednesday mornings at 10.00 onwards, weather permitting (and we don't have a minimum age – we are often joined by young Amelia aged 4).

In the meantime we wish the Messenger Editorial Team and everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Auchenblae & Dist. Heritage Society

Our outing at the end of last year was to Montrose Air Museum where we had the opportunity to visit the various displays at our leisure with help always on hand to answer our queries. A few of us were pictured in the hangar beside two exceptional exhibits! It really was a wonderful place to visit and within easy reach.



In September, our first meeting was held outdoors when we learnt a little about the history of "The Kirkton" area of the village in the days before today's church was built. Among several markets sanctioned by Queen Mary was Paldy Fair which saw sellers and buyers coming from throughout the area - on foot mainly, as most of the roads were too bad for any kind of wheeled transport. We heard also about the old Drove Road where hundreds of cattle were herded through on their way to markets in the south.

Once in the Kirkyard (a recent addition by comparison) we looked briefly at the Wishart Monument in memory of local man, George Wishart of Pittarow, who was burnt at the stake at St Andrews in the early days of the Reformation. By the time we reached the ruined chapel, darkness was beginning to fall which hastened my brief talk about the crypt (seen central in photograph) within which bodies of the landed gentry are buried.



Auchenblae Messenger – Update from Tess White MSP

As we head into the winter months, I want to thank everyone across the Mearns for your continued engagement. It is always a pleasure meeting residents, visiting local community groups, and hearing first-hand about the issues that matter to you. I've also valued working closely with my MP, MSP and Councillor colleagues as we tackle a range of important local challenges together.



By the time this newsletter reaches you, Aberdeenshire Council will have met to consider SSEN's proposal for the Kintore–Tealing 400 kV overhead line. Whatever the decision, one thing is already clear - communities across the North East have been loud, united and unwavering in making their views known. Recently, Angus Councillors voted unanimously to object to the proposals, sending a powerful message that local landscapes, livelihoods and heritage matter. I have been consistently clear in Parliament, and in discussions with ministers and stakeholders, that communities must not be sidelined, and Scotland's energy transition must not come at the expense of those who live and work along the route.

During a recent meeting with Leigh Jolly, the new Chief Officer of the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership, I raised several pressing concerns affecting our rural communities. We discussed the urgent need for sustainable funding for rural and remote GP practices, the impact of transport budget cuts, and the centralisation of inoculation services away from local GPs—something that disproportionately affects people in Laurencekirk, St Cyrus and Auchenblae. We also spoke about the Invercarron Resource Centre in Stonehaven, which remains underused after being repurposed by the Council. I reiterated my view that it should be returned to the community it was built to serve, as its current usage feels a bit like 'tumbleweed'.

Amid these challenges, there was welcome news on the future of Auchenblae Medical Practice. With GP surgeries under pressure and some closing elsewhere in the North East, it is a real relief to see this vital service continue under new management. From Monday 1st December 2025, Stonehaven Medical Group will take over day-to-day running of the practice, and I wish everyone involved the very best as they take this important work forward. Accessible, local healthcare is essential—it supports families, reduces travel pressures and helps people stay well.

One of the real joys of this role is visiting the brilliant businesses that keep our local economy thriving. A recent highlight was visiting Burnside Brewery in Fordoun, where I presented Steve and Margo with two Parliamentary Motions celebrating the opening of their new brewery and their contribution to our food and drink sector. Their innovative, community-rooted brewery is a fantastic asset, and I enjoyed a tour and a chance to sample some of the finest beers in the North East. As well as getting out and about locally, I also welcome many groups into the Scottish Parliament—and it's always a real treat when the guide dog puppies in training come to visit.

In September, I was honoured to be awarded Backbencher of the Year at the 2025 Holyrood Political Awards for my work representing constituents. This recognition means a great deal—not for the title itself, but for what it represents. The judges highlighted my advocacy on the safety of women and girls, my efforts to speak up for communities concerned about high-voltage pylons, and my commitment to asking the difficult questions on issues ...

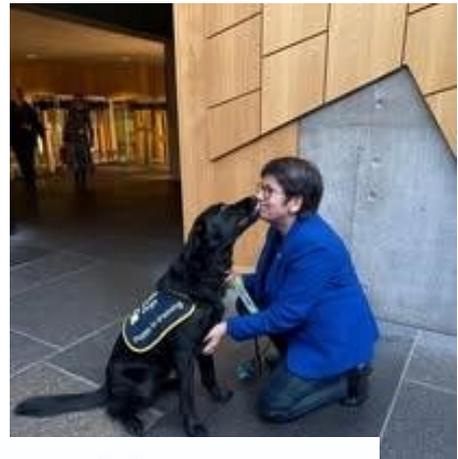
Tess White cont,

.affect ing the North East. It is a career highlight and one I will truly cherish. My thanks go to everyone who voted for me, and to my team whose hard work makes it all possible.

After much reflection, and with a very heavy heart, I have decided that I will not be standing in the Scottish Parliament election next year. This has been an incredibly difficult decision. Representing the people of the North East has been a great privilege, and for the remainder of this parliamentary term I remain fully committed to serving you.

If you would like to discuss any issues with me in person, please email

Tess.White.MSP@parliament.scot and we can arrange a call or a meeting in the village.



Christmas Trivia

The first artificial Christmas tree was made from dyed goose feathers

"White Christmas" is the best selling Christmas song of all time (50 million copies)

The Rubik 's cube was the best selling Christmas toy in 1980

Tinsel was invented in 1610 in Germany

The first Christmas card was sent in 1843

Home Alone is the highest grossing holiday movie of all time

Christmas on December 25th wasn't celebrated until about 336 AD.

CHRISTMAS OVER THE MEARNS

A stumbling mist cradles brooding hills,
gaunt peaks shoulder their tired skies,
Ragged winds scatter fallen remnants of
autumn, under frosts tenacious grip a cold
earth sighs.
To a snow cast landscape the holly's blood red
beacons burn bright,
Advent candles turn the gloom from darkness
to light.

As a child is born, in a stable, in the still of the night.

Throughout the Mearns tall majestic beeches
parade with naked bough,
'Tis the harbingers of Christmas that echo
across Kincardineshire now!
Frost borne winds tease Cairn 'O' Mount's
heather lined ridge,
Drumtochty Forest evergreens extol in
silvered foliage;
Fettercairn's merry burns banter to their
rippled notch,
On Yuletide's eve sombre pines, sentries of
the slopes keep silent watch.

As a child is born, in a stable, in the still of the night.

As nature scribes winter's chapter to season's
book,
Festive lights a'twinkle spread cheer across the
Mearns homely nooks;
On Christmas day, church bells message
of joy
ring clear,
Heralding Christmas and a Holy day
drawn
near.

As a child is born, in a stable, in the still of
the night.

© Peter Morriss



CHRISTMAS JOY

When season rings out
her joyous bells,
And on children's faces
the look of Christmas joy
excels.

A time for loving,
A time for giving,
A time for sharing,
A time for caring.

To see the season's joy
on many faces,
As the pure joy of Christmas
the season embraces.

© Peter Morriss 07.12.2022



Christmas Quiz (answers on page 29)

Music

1. Who sang 'Last Christmas'?
2. Who wished it could be Christmas everyday?
3. What were the boys of the NYPD Singing on Christmas Day?
4. Which song was the Christmas number one in 1975 and again in 1991?
5. Which artist has the most streams on Spotify?

Movies

6. Which animated film involves a train that carries children to the North Pole at Christmas?
7. What is the name of the last ghost that visits Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*?
8. What is the name of the family featured in *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*?
9. In *Home Alone*, what do the burglars call themselves?
10. What is the name of the reindeer in *Frozen*?

Geography

11. Which country has the longest coastline
12. Which country produces the most coffee
13. Which country has the largest land area
14. Which Country has the most Islands
15. Which sea does the River Nile flow into?

Food and Drink

16. Which brewery supplies the Rovers Return?
17. What is the name of the Indian Restaurant in *Eastenders*
18. Which chef is continually having *Kitchen Nightmares*
19. In the UK what game bird cannot be shot and eaten before 'The glorious 12th' of August?
20. Which drink has the slogan "All good things come to those who wait"



Auchenblae Youth Club



Club Sessions Auchenblae Youth Club Annual Reflections and Highlights April 2024 – December 2025 20 Months of Youth Power, Community Spirit & Making It Ours



Auchenblae Youth Club opened in April 2024 with a simple idea that quickly grew into something much bigger: a place for young people to belong, feel safe, have fun, try new things, and shape something that is truly theirs.

Twenty months later, AYC has become a vibrant, youth-led force within the village — buzzing with creativity, friendships, volunteering, learning, and community pride. We've grown from an idea shared around a table to an award-winning, well-established youth hub, powered by committed volunteers and incredible young people.

This report brings together our journey so far — our achievements, highlights, learning, milestones, and magic moments that have shaped AYC from April 2024 to December 2025.



Overview of Operations – Weekly

AYC continued to run free weekly Friday sessions during term time, with consistently strong attendance (averaging around 30 young people). Sessions became increasingly diverse, energetic, and youth-led, including:

Outdoor adventures at the Den

- Creative arts and baking
- Board games, and team challenges
- CPR and life-skills training
- Silent discos and craft stations

When severe weather prevented in-person sessions, the club stayed connected by hosting online quiz nights using Teams and Kahoot.



A Strong and Growing Volunteer Team

AYC now has 13 volunteers (8 regulars) who bring energy, skills, and enthusiasm. Over 20 months, volunteers have contributed more than ****10,000 hours**** of time — supporting activities, trips, outdoor sessions, fundraisers, and community events.

New volunteers joined this year, helped expand gaming, creativity and outdoor fun. One volunteer said: “The buzz on a Friday night is amazing. You can really see the difference this club makes.”



Year 1 at a Glance (April 2024 – March 2025)

Year 1 was themed *****“Making It Ours – One Year of Youth Power in Action!”**** Young people shaped activities, chose themes, supported planning, and made AYC truly theirs.

Key achievements:

- 33 club sessions delivered
- 77 members
- 2,526 individual learning hours
- 337 social learning hours through trips
- 250 hours of community volunteering (Den clean-up, Christmas cards, Gala, village events)
- A digital tourism project featured on My.Scot
- Auchenblae’s Got Talent fundraiser raising £948
- Young people receiving Saltire Awards & volunteer certificate



Young people described AYC as:
"A safe place to belong, see friends, and be ourselves."
"Somewhere that's just for us in the village."



Year 2: April – December 2025

Year 2 began with strong momentum. On 25 April, the first term session welcomed 34 young people and 8 volunteers. Warm weather allowed for multiple outdoor sessions at the Den, where young people enjoyed teamwork, exploration, nature play and activities they helped choose. New 10-year-olds joining added excitement, while older members transitioned confidently.



Community Events & Visibility

AYC has become part of the fabric of village life, proudly supporting: Gala & duck race



Drumtochty Games (car park stewarding)



Halloween Fair



Pre-school Christmas Event



The Den Clean-Up



Christmas card delivery for older residents



AYC Community Youth Talent Event



PPutting Auchenblae on the tourism website



Supporting local people with firewood stacking



Summer 2025 – Six Sessions at the Den

Six outdoor sessions offered freedom, exploration and fun. These were some of our most popular sessions yet, with lots of positive feedback from families.



Inverurie – Over 2 Youth Event – Aberdeenshire Council



Ten Pin Bowling Dundee – Escape Rooms, Bowling, laser quest and Karaoke lounge,



First Residential - Big Ideas Weekend – Stirling Uni



AYC's first-ever residential trip took place at Stirling University during the ****Big Ideas Weekend****. Young people joined groups from across Scotland for workshops in:

- Special effects makeup
- Glitter arts
- Confidence sessions
- Team-building
- Social events and campus life



For many, this was their first residential — and they described it as “awesome” and “the best weekend ever.”



Halloween Programme

Year 2 included a creative Halloween club night with Project Auchenblae a Halloween Disco with spooky costumes. Celebrating Halloween remains a



Growth of Gaming Activities

Thanks to volunteer leadership, gaming has become a major part of AYC c strategy board games, group challenges, tournaments and problem-solving



Partnerships & Community Connections

AYC strengthened partnerships with:

- Stonehaven Youth Club & KMYC
- Stonehaven Community Collective
- Ceangail CIC
- Auchenblae Parks
- Auchenblae Community Cafe
- Auchenblae Community Association
- Project Auchenblae

These partnerships widen young people's world, provide skills, and support community pride.

Awards & Recognition



AYC members received **KMYC volunteering awards** and those aged 12 years plus received **Scottish government Saltire Awards** for their contribution to club and community from Provost Judy Whyte.

AYC received a **Community Award** from Laurencekirk Rotary Club in 2025. KMYC won the national 2024 **Community-Based Youth Work Award**, with AYC's achievements contributing to this success.



AYC Volunteer wins the Inspiring Aberdeenshire Future Award!

Our Youth Club volunteer and KMYC Trustee, Remi Salvain won the Inspiring Aberdeenshire Future Award for his dedication to community activism and youth representation, democracy and action.



Remi said, "It was an incredible night, filled with inspiring stories of individuals making meaningful contributions to our communities and the lives of others. I am deeply honoured and privileged to have been nominated, and absolutely thrilled to have won. My heartfelt thanks to my KMYC colleagues for believing in me and putting me forward."

Membership & Participation

Membership continues to grow, especially younger members turning 10. Engagement stays strong across all terms. Youth voice tools like the "To Be Honest" box help shape planning, rules and activities.

Young people said:

"It's cool to have somewhere in the village that's just for us."

"The volunteers are great!"

Promoting Positive Behaviour, Respect & Safe Club Culture

As AYC has grown, both Year 1 and Year 2 brought behaviour-related challenges — natural in a busy, open, inclusive youth space. Rather than viewing these negatively, AYC and KMYC used them as opportunities for growth, learning, and co-design.

Together, young people, volunteers and leadership created new organisation-wide policies:

- **Mobile Phone Policy** promoting safe, respectful digital behaviour
- **Behaviour Policy** clarifying expectations, unacceptable behaviour, consequences and support

In some cases, serious incidents resulted in temporary exclusions, never taken lightly, always focused on safety and long-term success. We now use:

- Individual behaviour plans
- Restorative conversations
- Clear communication with families
- A focus on building a culture of mutual respect

Volunteers report feeling more equipped and supported through clear procedures and shared expectations. Our commitment remains strong: promoting inclusion, safety, fairness, respect and kindness across the club.



Looking Ahead

AYC ends 2025 with a joint Panto trip to the Tivoli Theatre with SYC — nearly 60 young people attending.

Our goals for 2026 include:

- Expanding youth leadership and volunteering
- Increasing outdoor & nature-based sessions
- Strengthening creative and gaming activities
- Offering more trips & residential
- Growing youth voice and co-design in decision-making



Final Reflections – 20 Months of Youth Power

Auchenblae Youth Club has become:

- A youth-led movement
- A safe place to belong
- A hub of creativity, confidence and connection
- A space where young people shape their own community
- A team effort powered by volunteers, families and partners

Young people have raised money, cleaned the Den, delivered Christmas cards, performed on stage, created digital tourism content, represented Auchenblae across Scotland, achieved awards, and supported each other.

AYC is more than a club — it is a family, a community, and a spark of possibility.

To every young person, volunteer, partner and parent:

Thank you. You are AYC. The future is bright because of you!

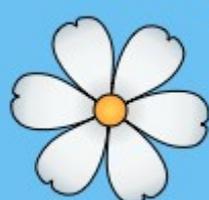
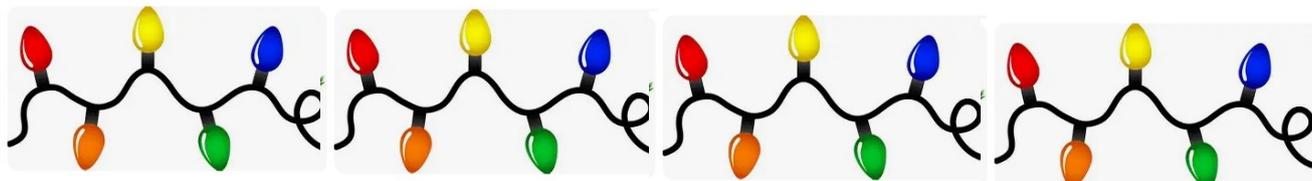
And Festive Greetings and New Year's Blessing from AYC



Winning AYC Christmas Card
by AYC member Lexi

Christmas Quiz

1. Wham
2. Wizard
3. Galway Bay
4. Bohemian Rhapsody
5. Taylor Swift
6. Polar Express
7. The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come
8. The Griswolds
9. The Wet Bandits
10. Sven
11. Canada
12. Brazil
13. Russia
14. Sweden
15. Mediterranean.
16. Newton and Ridley
17. The Arjee Bahji
18. Gordon Ramsey
19. Grouse
20. Guinness



The
BLAE
your communities social network



Check out the social community network online, advertise events, book the hall, promote your group and lots more: [www.http://theblae.org/](http://theblae.org/)



FORECAST COURTESY OF THE MET
OFFICE

Monday 15 Dec - Wednesday 24 Dec

The current unsettled spell of weather is likely to continue through much of next week. Further spells of rain are expected, likely to be heavy and prolonged at times, particularly in the west and northwest. Some drier spells of weather are also likely, these most reliably across southeastern parts of the UK. Often windy, especially in the north and west where there is potential for a spell of very strong winds to develop for a time early next week. Generally mild with any overnight frost patchy and mainly in the north. There are signs that conditions may become less disturbed heading towards the Christmas period, with the potential for high pressure to build bringing drier conditions, with the risk of overnight frost and fog patches increasing.

Updated: 14:00 (UTC) on Wed 10 Dec 2025

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The publisher for this issue was **Kevin Newstead**