



Auchenblae Messenger

Founded in 1999 by Donald B. Rennie

Autum Edition

VOLUME 28 ISSUE 2

SEPTEMBER 2026

From The Editors

Coming from a big city where every activity and facility is on the doorstep, it still amazes us how much goes on in a small Aberdeenshire village. There seem to be more things to join and enjoy in Auchenblae than in many a city, and that's before we mention the traffic. Our friends in Sheffield moan endlessly about the time it takes to drive four or five miles into the city centre. We love telling them, "Yes, we were held up by a combine harvester this morning." We can get to Aberdeen faster than they can drive into Sheffield. It is a different world.

The boiling hot summer already feels like a distant memory now that autumn has suddenly arrived. With friends and family wilting in the heat in Sheffield and London, we felt particularly grateful to be in the gentler climate of the North-East.

In the garden it was a strange year, and the hot, dry weather gave very mixed results. The vegetables were disappointing, with everything seeming to arrive at once and promptly going to seed. The cucumbers did well, but the tomatoes all ripened together and had finished by mid-August. The fruit was another story. For some reason, cherry trees that hadn't fruited in 15 years suddenly sprang into life and gave us a bumper crop. The plums followed suit: what looked like a disappointing year turned into a glut in September. The raspberries were decent, but thanks to the local bird population we didn't get a single blueberry. The bushes were cropping beautifully, and then within a few days they were stripped bare. The netting clearly needs a rethink before next year.

On the animal front, the dogs are thriving. Rosie, our retired greyhound, has settled happily into home comforts and claimed a sofa, which she fills entirely, but more of her later in the issue. Bryn, our little rescue dog and possibly the first of an entirely new breed, has taken to his long-legged sister and simply walks underneath her when she's in his way. The ducks and hens are laying well, though the old bantam didn't sit on her eggs long enough this year, probably be-

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)

cause of the heat.

In this edition you'll find contributions from the Community Café, the Friendship Group and the Heritage Society, a new piece from our resident poet Peter Morris, and the regular reports from the Youth Club, Golf Course and Bowling Club. How lucky we are to have the golf course, the football pitch and the Den, now with its new tennis courts under construction.

New this time is an introduction to the Gaming Club, which looks to be a hidden gem and is clearly very popular. Reading it, we felt we needed to learn a new language. There is also an interesting and balanced piece on the new Auchenblae/Stonehaven Medical Practice, written from a patient's point of view. And congratulations to Jenny Thomson, whose long-awaited history of the village, *Auchenblae Reflections*, has been very well received and sold like hot cakes.

Halloween is just around the corner, and it's interesting to see how much bigger it has become in the UK. In America it's a major event and another excuse to spend a fortune on plastic tat. We'll stick to a turnip lantern. Before we know it, thoughts will turn to Christmas and the winter edition of the Messenger.

Looking further ahead, we're planning a new regular feature, **Meet the Neighbours**. In each edition we'll chat to someone from the village. It might be a family who have lived here for generations, someone who arrived only last spring, or one of the many people who quietly keep things running. We'll ask how they came to be here, what's changed, their favourite corner of the village, and one thing most people don't know about them. You won't need to write a word: we'll come to you with a cup of tea and a notebook. If you'd like to take part, or know someone with a story worth telling, please let us know.

Which brings us to our plea. We struggled to gather enough material for a summer edition, and we know we keep turning to the same loyal stalwarts. The Messenger belongs to all of us, and we'd love to hear from new contributors. If you're planning a festive event, have a notice to share, or have a story, a photograph, a recipe, a complaint, a bit of local history, a seasonal memory, or a question you'd like put to the village, please get in touch. Contributions for the winter edition should reach us by **1st December**.

With best wishes,





Auchenblae Bowling Club

Bowling Club Keith Ridgway

With the long hot summer and people taking the opportunity to get away it has not been our best season from a competitive viewpoint. We only completed the Novice Trophy, won by Jeremy Goodyear, and the Aitken Trophy, won by Ralph Currie. In the two major competitions, the Rennie Tailyor and Hutchinson Trophy, were beaten by one point by the eventual finalists. In local competitions Ralph Currie was successful in the Drumlithie 7-Ends competition and I managed to sneak a surprise win in the local Gala.

Members also joined in local competitions at Drumlithie, Johnshaven and Edzell and there is a very active and welcoming bowling community throughout the Mearns.

In bowling terms we have a relatively young club with a large percentage of members still working. Changing work patterns makes playing in the afternoon more difficult so we are tending to be more flexible with playing times and members meeting up at different times as well as the scheduled Tuesday afternoon and Friday evening.

Next year we hope to attract more new members and will be holding more "Try Bowls" sessions at the Den.

On a sad note, we recently lost club stalwart George Wilson, who was well known and loved in the village. Most of the current members of the bowling club were taught both the techniques and ethics of the game by George and he will be sadly missed. George was very active in a number of clubs and activities in the village and many attended his "Celebration of life" at Baldarroch on 9th October.

Auchenblae Golf Club



It has been another busy year on the golf course at Auchenblae. The warm, dry summer brought people out in high numbers, although the lack of rain for long periods was challenging from a maintenance point of view. The Open tournament in July was full up and thanks once again to Bill Nixon and Maven for sponsoring the event. The Winter course comes in to play on the 1st of October till the end of March, and hopefully another good year in 2027.



Auchenblae Community Cafe



The Auchenblae Community Cafe has had a busy start to the year celebrating its third birthday in January with lots of cake. We hosted the patient participation group from the new Stonehaven Medical Practice who took notes on your concerns to feed back to the practice. This was followed up by a visit from doctors and management team to address and reassure the community of continued good practice. We were also joined by Hannah from Abilitynet who talked through internet safety and the online eform for the surgery.

March brought Mother's Day so we had an afternoon tea lunch to appreciate all our mums. For Easter this month we had a few wee treats and crafts for the kids.

Our next special event will be on Monday, 25th May where we will host a sandwich and dessert lunch as part of Gala week. The community cafe team will host the tearoom and cake stall on Gala Day, Saturday 30th May so look out for requests for baking donations nearer the time. We are also planning a summer outing, date and destination yet to be finalised, weather dependent. We are lucky enough to have received some lovely, generous donations recently and these will be put towards our outing to make some treasured memories.

The Auchenblae Community Cafe is held every Monday in the Village Hall from 10-12 noon. We have a lovely, friendly bunch of regulars but it would be wonderful to see some new faces joining us for a cuppie, chat and cake. We are open to all ages and for our whole community to mix and mingle. Hope to see you there!! - **Elizabeth Shand**





MEET YOUR COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS

Working together for a healthier community



**MONDAY
26TH OCTOBER**



6:00 PM



**Stonehaven Medical Centre
32 Robert Street
Stonehaven
AB39 2EL**



The PPG would like to invite you to come and meet the community pharmacists that cover Stonehaven, Newtonhill and surrounding areas.



You will be made aware of all the services and help they offer within our communities and have the opportunity to ask questions you may have.



Please email us at ppg.stonehaven@gmail.com to reserve a space. If you are unable to email us, walk-ins are also welcome.

PARTICIPATING PHARMACIES



**TOGETHER WE CAN SUPPORT
HEALTHIER, STRONGER COMMUNITIES**



*The Auchenblae Messenger***Putting the Garden to Bed***A few autumn jobs for Mearns gardeners**Produced with the help of our friend Claude AI*

It's tempting, once the last tomato has been picked and the evenings start closing in, to hang up the trowel, put the kettle on and leave the garden to its own devices until spring. Resist the temptation, if only for a few weekends. A bit of effort now pays you back handsomely next year, and there's something very satisfying about a crisp October afternoon spent pottering outside before the weather turns properly Scottish.

Clear up, but not too much

Start by clearing out the spent vegetable beds. Pull up finished tomatoes, beans and courgettes and put the healthy material on the compost heap. Anything showing blight or mildew is better off in the brown bin. Then give the bare soil a blanket for the winter: a good layer of compost or well-rotted manure will be worked in by the worms long before you need the ground again.

In the flower borders, go easy. Seedheads on teasels, sunflowers and grasses look lovely with a frost on them, and they feed the finches through the lean months. Hollow stems give ladybirds and other beneficial insects somewhere to sleep. A slightly untidy garden is a living one.

Leaves, and the secret of a good compost heap

Fallen leaves are free gold, so don't bag them up for the tip. Rake them off the lawn and paths and put them straight on the compost heap.

The trick to a heap that rots down into rich, crumbly compost rather than a soggy, smelly mess is the **brown and green rule**. "Browns" are dry, carbon-rich materials: fallen leaves, straw, shredded cardboard, and the bedding from hen houses, duck sheds and rabbit hutches. "Greens" are moist, nitrogen-rich materials: grass cuttings, vegetable peelings, spent bedding plants and soft green prunings.

Too many browns and the heap just sits there; too many greens and it turns slimy. So build it up in layers, a few inches of browns, then a layer of greens, and repeat. If you have a pile of leaves or animal bedding, layer it with grass cuttings: the cuttings get things heating up, and the browns stop the grass from turning into a smelly mat. Aim for roughly equal amounts of each, keep the heap moist but not sodden, and give it a turn with a fork every few weeks if you can face it. By next autumn you should have the finest soil improver there is, and you won't have paid a penny for it. **Plant now for next year**

October and November are ideal for planting garlic. It needs a cold spell to form proper bulbs, and the Mearns is rarely short of one. Pop cloves in pointy end up, about an inch be-

bushes and raspberry canes. They are cheaper than potted ones and usually establish better.

A word on fruit

If you grow summer-fruiting raspberries, cut the canes that fruited this year down to the ground and tie in the strongest new ones. Leave autumn-fruiting varieties until February.

Plum and cherry trees should *not* be pruned now. Winter cuts leave them open to silver leaf disease, so save the secateurs for summer.

And if, like some of us, you lost your entire blueberry crop to the birds this year, winter is the time to build a proper fruit cage. Blueberries also like their soil acidic and their water from the water butt rather than the tap, so it's worth topping up their pots with ericaceous compost while you're at it.

Protect the tender ones

Before the first hard frost, lift dahlias, dry the tubers off and store them somewhere cool and frost-free. Move pots of tender plants into the greenhouse or against a sheltered wall. Raise containers up on bricks or pot feet so they don't sit waterlogged all winter. Give the greenhouse a good wash while it's empty, as the extra light makes a real difference in the dark months.

The lawn

Give it a last cut on a dry day, with the blades set a little higher than usual, and put those final grass cuttings to good use on the compost heap with your leaves. Then rake out the moss and thatch and spike any soggy patches with a garden fork. Your knees will complain, but your lawn will thank you in April.

And finally: think of the hedgehogs

With Bonfire Night coming up, please check any pile of garden rubbish before you set it alight. To a hedgehog, a heap of prunings looks exactly like a five-star hotel for the winter. Better still, build the pile on the day you burn it.

Then, with the tools cleaned, oiled and hung up, you can retire indoors with a clear conscience and the seed catalogues. It's never too early to start planning next year's triumphs.



The Life of a Greyhound

If you've walked through the Denlethen Woods lately, you may have met Rosie, a tall, elegant, slightly bemused-looking greyhound who regards Denlethen with the calm dignity of a retired athlete. Which is exactly what she is. Rosie is one of thousands of former racing greyhounds who, every year, swap the starting traps for a comfy bed and a loving home. Her journey took her from Ireland to the north of England and finally to the Mearns, and it's worth telling.

Born to run

Most racing greyhounds in the UK start life on a breeding farm, many of them in Ireland. A litter of six or eight pups will spend their first year or so tumbling about together, being handled, fed up and, most importantly, allowed to run. Each pup is registered and given a racing name, and Irish-bred dogs have identification numbers tattooed inside their ears. So if you ever see a greyhound with mysterious letters in its ears, now you know. Rosie, Irish born and bred, has hers.

A litter can come in a surprising range of colours. Black, fawn and brindle (a tiger-striped mix of dark and light) are all common. Rosie is officially classed as "blue", which, to the untrained eye, looks remarkably like grey. Greyhound people are very particular about this.

At around a year old the youngsters begin their schooling. They learn to chase a lure, to burst out of the starting traps and to take a bend at speed. Not every pup makes the grade. Some simply aren't interested, which, as anyone who has met a retired greyhound will tell you, is entirely in keeping with the breed's character.

Life at the track

A racing greyhound's career usually begins at around 18 months and lasts only a few years. Life revolves around the kennel, with a strict routine of feeding, exercise, rest and racing. People often assume racing dogs are badly treated, but a good racing greyhound is a valuable animal. A promising youngster with a strong pedigree can change hands for thousands of pounds, and the dogs in a well-run kennel are fed, exercised and looked after accordingly. A race itself is over in less than half a minute, but in that time a greyhound can reach speeds of over 40 miles an hour, making it the fastest dog on the planet. From a standing start, a greyhound will out-accelerate most family cars.

Kennel life is very different from family life, though. Most racing dogs have never climbed a staircase, seen themselves in a mirror, walked into a glass door or met a cat on friendly terms. They have lived almost entirely among other greyhounds, and that makes the next stage of the journey such an adventure.

Rosie's racing days

Rosie began her career in Ireland, racing at Dundalk under the name Swift Rosemary. She showed enough promise to be bought by a racing syndicate with the splendid name of the Little Bag of Sweets. The membership fee was exactly what you'd hope: to join, you had to give every existing member a small bag of sweets. Swift Rosemary then crossed the Irish Sea to race at Sunderland under trainer Paul Miller.

Retirement

Most greyhounds retire somewhere between the ages of two and five, often because they've slowed a little or picked up a minor injury. With a typical lifespan of 10 to 14 years, that leaves a great deal of living still to do. That's where the rehoming charities come in. Organisations such as the Greyhound Trust, along with many smaller local rescues, take in retired racers, assess their temperament, test whether they can live with cats and small dogs, and match them with new owners. Rosie came to us through Fife Greyhound Rescue in July 2024, aged four, and we can't speak highly enough of the care they take in finding the right home for each dog.

The first few weeks in a home can be an eye-opener for everyone. Stairs are a puzzle. The television is suspicious. The kitchen bin is a revelation. But greyhounds are fast learners in more ways than one, and most settle into home life remarkably quickly.

Learning to be loved

It's worth remembering that a retired racer has spent its whole life as a working dog, not a pet. Kennel staff look after them well, but there's little time for cuddles on the settee. So the first taste of family life, with a warm house, a soft bed and people who want to fuss over them, can come as quite a revelation.

And how they respond. Greyhounds soak up affection like a sponge. A dog that arrives shy and unsure will, within a few weeks, be leaning its whole weight against your legs and pushing that long nose under your hand for more. They adjust so well, in fact, that being apart from their people can become stressful for them, so it's wise to build up time on their own gradually.

Rosie is a case in point. She doesn't like anyone to be out of the room, and if you leave it, she will usually follow. At night she sleeps on the bedroom floor beside us. Given half a chance, she would be stretched out in the middle of the bed, and we suspect she hasn't given up hope.

The forty-mile-an-hour couch potato

Here is the great secret of the greyhound: they are the laziest dogs you will ever meet. People expect an athlete to need hours of exercise, but greyhounds are sprinters, not marathon runners. Two or three short walks a day, perhaps with the occasional mad dash around a securely fenced field, is plenty. The rest of the time they sleep, often for 18 hours a day, frequently upside down with all four legs in the air. Greyhound owners call this "roaching", and it is not a dignified look.

In our house, Rosie has claimed one of the sofas as her own and fills it from end to end. Bryn, our little rescue dog, has decided that his long-legged sister is essentially a piece of furniture, and simply walks underneath her when she's in his way. She doesn't seem to mind.

A few things to know

If you're tempted, there are a few things worth knowing. Greyhounds have thin skin and very little body fat, so they feel the cold. A good coat is a must for a Mearns winter. They have a strong instinct to chase, so many are best kept on the lead in open country, and some wear a muzzle at first while they learn their manners around small furry things. They are gentle, quiet, affectionate and rarely bark, which makes them wonderful companions for older owners and young families alike.

One word of warning: greyhounds are accomplished thieves. That long nose reaches comfortably over a kitchen worktop, and as far as a greyhound is concerned, any surface holding food is fair game. Leave a sandwich unattended at your peril. Rosie can clear a worktop in the time it takes to answer the phone, and she will look entirely innocent afterwards.

A well-earned rest

There is something deeply satisfying about watching a dog who spent its early life chasing a lure round a track finally stretch out in front of the fire, safe, warm and loved. If you've ever thought about giving a dog a home, do consider a retired greyhound. You won't need to be a marathon runner. You will, however, need a big sofa.

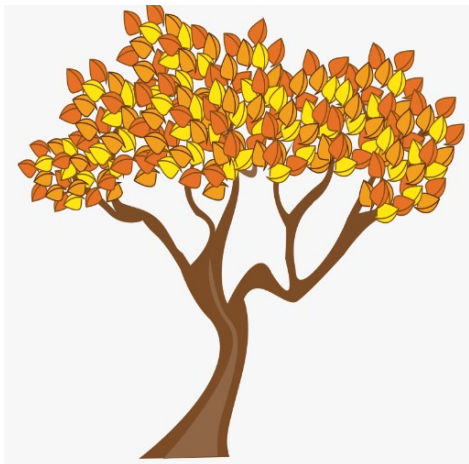




HIGH PEAK WOODLANDS

Peter Morriss

When the day awakes and rides
the morning still,
Above woodlands reclining on the
shoulder of peak and hill;
When the wind creaks among
the sombre deeps of pine,
Those silent armies that stand
row on row, line on line.
Dear God, how I wonder at the glory
of it all.
When I harken to the sound of
busy rills meander,
That court the open moorland,
peak and boulder;
When dusk's long shadows pave way
to the lowering of the night,
And an owl on wing calls in
spectral flight.
When the wind scythes the heather
like a whetted knife,
And the Moon ascends to the sound
of woodland's nocturnal life.
Dear God, how I wonder at the glory
of it all.
'Tis then from all Earthly toil
I savour calm release,
As I wend homeward with a
new-found inner peace.



Auchenblae Gaming Club

Auchenblae Gaming Club
Bruce Stevenson



Who are we?

The Auchenblae Gaming Club have 21 members, and plenty of non-members. We play card, board and tabletop games.

We had a great session on the 30th of August. It marked the 1st birthday of the club and we had a great day with 46 people turning up to play and have a bit of cake.

The AGM went well and got some feedback for things we could do moving forward.

Cary Dick started her Pokémon "bulk battle" championship this month, loads of people turned up to play. Congrats to Ru for winning this month. Point swill be stacked up for the year. This will return next month.

Sam Fleming on "The monster of the week" had a full table and finished on a cliffhanger!

Warhammer had a few tables playing and one table of people painting for the upcoming tournament in Warhammer World, Nottingham. A few sprues were given out to build too!

Club merchandise arrived and was handed out, so many of our members are now sporting our hoodies, Zoodies and T-shirts. If you would like one I will put another order through once we have enough requests.

Memberships are now open for 2026/27.

If you would either like to get an AGC membership or clothing, just PM me ☺

All in all a great session.

General club info

We normally run on the last Sunday of the month.

You could try one of our many different board/card games. We have the favourites like Dominos, Battleships, Carcassonne & Scrabble, and plenty of members who would have a game with you.

If you fancy giving a Table Top Role Playing Game (TTRPG) like Dungeons and Dragons a go, come have a look at "Monster of the week" hosted by Sam Fleming.

If you like chess, why not see if Shibliu can teach you a thing or two, or maybe even challenge him?

Cary, our master of Pokemon will be there to trade & play.

Finally, we have a squad of Warhammer lovers, there's always a few games booked, so head to the table booking poll and secure a table. Normally there is 40K and AOS, but there is also interest in Blood-bowl, Killteam, Necromunda and The old world.

So come alone, bring a group or your family. We are open to all ages and skill ranges, so if you fancy playing a game or learning something new, pop along for a blether and a bit of fun. It's free if you're over 70, so why not come and have a look?

over 18s need to be accompanied by an adult

Special events-

November 7th WARHAMMER TOURNAMENT.

Warhammer 40K tournament held in Auchenblae village hall.

This is a singles event. 1vs1, 1000 points per player, (2000 per table) . There will be 3 games, 5 battle rounds per game.

DECEMBER 2026 SPECIAL EVENT BOOSTER PACK BATTLE

- Cost for each player will be £20 for members & £22 for non-members
- Each player receives 4 new booster packs (keep all cards you open)
- We supply all Energy cards (please bring your own sleeves to protect your cards)
- Build a 30-card deck from the cards you open
- Four 20-minute rounds



Mearns FM – Your Voice, Your Music, Your Community Maxinse Smith



Do you like listening to music? Have you ever stopped to think about the value of having a radio station that is actually part of your local community?

Yes, we play music – and plenty of it! From pop, indie, country, dance and disco to R&B, jazz, blues, soul, reggae, folk and more, there really is something for everyone. But Mearns FM is about far more than music.

Our Business Spotlight, supported by Business Gateway Aberdeen City & Shire, gives local businesses the opportunity to tell their stories, share their experiences and connect with the community. Our community programming brings local events, organisations, information and issues to the airwaves, while Community Spotlight provides a platform for charities and initiatives supporting people across Kincardine and Mearns. Then there are our young people.

Student Sound Off gives young people a genuine microphone and a genuine voice. We have worked with students from Mearns Academy, supported young people through The King's Trust and Aberdeen Foyer, and welcomed individuals interested in broadcasting, music and gaining practical experience.

Our newest programme, Beyond The Microphone, takes that community conversation further, exploring the real issues affecting real people, from wellbeing and social challenges to creativity, local authors and topical issues.

At the heart of all this is a simple belief: **today's young person is tomorrow's business owner, community leader, professional or volunteer.** We want to help give them the confidence, communication skills and experience to take their next step. And here is something many people don't realise: everyone at Mearns FM is an unpaid volunteer. There are no paid presenters. In fact, our presenters contribute financially to help sustain the station.

We have a big **C** in our name. It isn't commercial. It is **COMMUNITY**.

But community radio needs a community. **WE NEED YOU!**

You can listen locally on 105–107FM and DAB+, or online via our website, Alexa, Radio Player and Radio Garden.

We need listeners, businesses, community organisations, partners, funders and people who believe in what local people can achieve together.

Perhaps you could help us create the next opportunity?

Mearns FM – Your Voice. Your Music. Your Community.

www.mearnsfm.org.uk

studio@mearnsfm.org.uk

Text: 82228 – start your message with MFM

WhatsApp: 07810 001238

Spring to Summer at Auchenblae Youth Club

Our club opening hours are 6.45 to 8.30pm on Friday nights during the school term time.

We welcome young people between the ages of 10 and 25.

New members would be most welcome.



Overview of Spring & Summer Sessions

AYC continues to welcome between 20 and 30 young people each week from Auchenblae and the surrounding area, providing lively and engaging sessions. Due to a wet and cold spring and summer, most youth club sessions have taken place in Auchenblae Village Hall but we have still enjoyed a few sessions in the Den, making the most of the beautiful outdoor space.



Session Highlights

We continue to receive support from local primary school teacher and artist Aimee Stevenson, who leads monthly **art sessions** for our members. These sessions have been hugely popular, giving young people the chance to explore a range of drawing and painting skills and techniques, and to leave the session with artwork they can be proud of.



Our young people have launched several fantastic clubs within AYC:

Our **Reading Group**, called 'AYC Book Nook'. Our first book was 'The Hobbit', which we read over the summer term before discussing it at our first Book Nook session. We gave the book a rating of 4/5 - If we could invite one of the characters to dinner, it would be Bilbo Baggins. He is the main character from the book, he has been on exciting adventures and would have lots of great stories to tell. He also loves food, and is kind at heart, sensible and great at solving problems! We are now reading our second book, 'the boy in the striped pyjamas.'



Our monthly **cooking club** has been cooking up a storm - we have very much enjoyed their home-made offerings, such as macaroni cheese and sweet and savoury scones. Our snacks are always a little bit more special when the cooking club is running!



Our **AYC Pokémon Club** runs every second session and aims to be a social space for Pokémon enthusiasts to get together, play games and discuss their card collections. We are very thankful for the support we have received from **Auchenblae Gaming Club** and **Redcaps Montrose**, who have taken the time to speak with our members, encouraging and supporting them to plan their club.



In July, we celebrated our members' contributions to their youth club and wider community at an **Awards Ceremony**. We have been so impressed by their enthusiasm for volunteering and were delighted to present them with well-deserved **Saltire Awards** for members aged 11+ and **KMYC Awards** for members aged 10. Some members also received **Dynamic Youth Awards**, and **Oor Howe volunteering appreciation awards**. It was a fantastic evening and a great opportunity to invite parents to see what we get up to at AYC.



Some of our young members have come together to design an **AYC birthday card**. We love their artwork and send these out to members to celebrate their special day with them.

Trips and Events

AYC have enjoyed several trips and events over the spring and summer period:

Auchenblae Gala Week is always an exciting and fun time in Auchenblae, and AYC were happy to support this by hosting a pizza night (raising £30 for the Auchenblae Community Association) and hosting a stall on Gala Day. Our stall supported our young entrepreneurial members to sell their amazing makes (beaded bracelets and keyrings, and 3D printed fidgets). We also had face painting, glitter tattoos and provided an opportunity for local kids to 'SPLAT' their teachers with a wet sponge (thank you to Mrs Stevenson and Mrs McFarlane for agreeing to this!). We had lots of fun at both events.



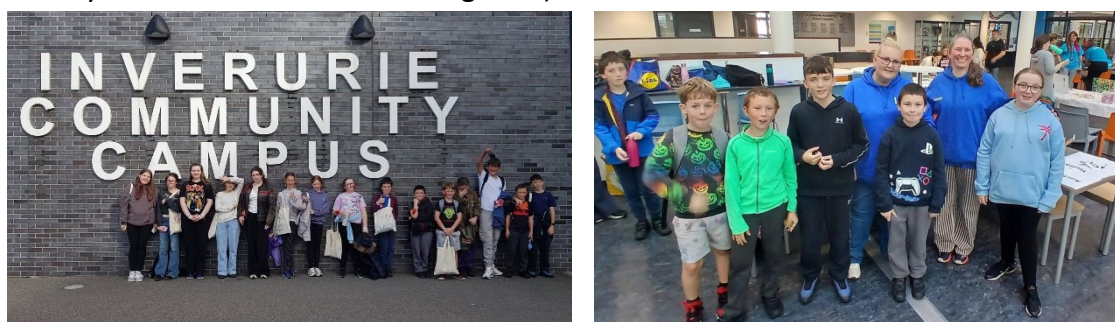
We were invited to be car parking stewards at the **Drumtochty Highland Games**. As well as managing the traffic and getting the cars parked in straight(ish) lines, we had the opportunity to explore the games and enjoy the dancing, caber toss, pipe band, taekwondo demonstration and much, much more.



In June, we ventured all the way to **Landmark Forest Adventure Park** in Carrbridge for the most epic of adventures. 30 young people braved the 6 hour round trip for a day filled with high adrenaline activities, exploration and optical illusions. The day was a huge hit for both the young members and staff team.



In September, we attended the **Over2Youth** event in Inverurie. The event invited youth groups and services from around Aberdeenshire to share their thoughts around youth inequalities, and offered several fun and engaging activities (such as rock climbing, live music, crafty activities and sumo wrestling suits).





Extras

Congratulations to **Bruce Stevenson** for receiving a **Community Award** from the Laurencekirk District and Rotary. This recognises the contribution that Bruce makes to his local community for both founding the Auchenblae Gaming Club and regularly volunteering at the Auchenblae Youth Club.



We have strengthened our support for members by training another staff member in first aid, bringing the total to three, and welcoming two new volunteers, Nonie and Alexis.

Thank you

We are deeply grateful for the support of our local community, which is essential to our success.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to:

Laurencekirk Inner Wheel, for continuing to support us with generous donations.

Drumtochty Games Committee, for giving us the opportunity to support the Highland Games and for their generous donation.

A past resident of Auchenblae, Olive, who read Jenny Thomsons book (Auchenblae Reflections) and was inspired to send a donation to AYC.



The Auchenblae Calendar

Jenny Thomson

Since 2010, I've been producing and selling **The Auchenblae Calendar**, raising funds for a variety of worthwhile local causes along the way. Two years ago, I announced that it would be my last. However, here I am again, with another calendar in support of a project which I believe will make a real difference to both residents and visitors to our village!

Like so many others, I was hugely disappointed, not to say shocked, when the decision was made to close public toilets throughout the region. For a village like Auchenblae, which welcomes so many visitors, the loss of this essential facility was a real blow.

Thankfully, when the opportunity arose for community groups to take ownership of former public amenities through an asset transfer scheme, our local Parks Committee was quick to act. They secured the former public toilet block in the Square, beside the Taylor Memorial Tea Garden, with the aim of bringing this much-needed facility back into use.

Since then, a dedicated sub-committee has been tasked with raising the funds needed to transform the building. The plans include a modern, fully accessible, multi-use toilet facility, with the remaining space offering exciting possibilities for other community uses in the future.

Yesterday, the group organised a Scavenger Hunt around the village. Unfortunately, attendance was disappointing, perhaps because of the school holidays and so many families being away. However, I hope everyone will get behind their future fundraising events. This is a project that will benefit us all, and every bit of support will make a difference.

And so, to this year's calendar!

Once again, I've delved into my collection of historic postcards and selected twelve wonderful old photographs of Auchenblae. None of these particular images has featured in my previous calendars, so I hope they will be of interest.

As always, I'm using Brechin City Printers, who have consistently done a first-class job over the years. I don't actively seek sponsorship, but if anyone would like to make a small contribution towards the printing costs, it would be very much appreciated. The more costs we can cover, the more money we can raise for this worthwhile project.

Calendars will be available from Auchenblae's Premier Shop, the Brae Café, or directly from me.

I hope you'll consider buying one, whether for yourself or as a gift for someone with a connection to Auchenblae. Not only will you have a little piece of the village's history to enjoy throughout the year, but you'll also be helping to bring an important community facility back to life. Thank you, as always, for your support!



Auchenblae Medical Centre – a new future ahead

Angus McNicoll

Auchenblae Medical Centre Patient

On 1st December 2025, Stonehaven Medical Group took over the responsibility of caring for the patients of Auchenblae Medical Practice following the relocation of Dr. Taylor and his Wife to Vancouver, Canada. Fortunately, Dr. Hastings remains continuing her excellent care and Dr. MacKenzie also remains to support patients at Auchenblae Medical Practice. He also now works on a Thursday morning at Stonehaven too.

Stonehaven Medical Group began actively communicating the change on their Facebook page in September 2025, giving Auchenblae patients their first opportunity to seek further information or submit questions about the changes. In addition, they also held two face-to-face meetings in Auchenblae, including a requested evening event.

Like many Auchenblae patients, I was concerned the surgery would lose its local connections and suffer by being run by another surgery some 13 miles away. I'm in the "more mature" category of patients and have a couple of chronic illnesses which I have generally managed myself over many years. I did consider moving to another GP practice but decided to give the new regime a chance to see if there were any improvements.

So, almost a full year later, how has the transition gone?

My first experience of change was my repeat prescription requests via online Patient Services were being dealt with more efficiently and with more accuracy. I had previously voiced concerns to the surgery about the declining quality of this aspect of their service, with delays in processing the prescriptions, inaccuracies and missed items resulting in more trips to collect unfulfilled and delayed prescriptions. As a result of this I had my prescriptions dispensed at a local Community Pharmacy.

However, since the change I can now order my prescription and collect well within the three-day turnaround, in fact often within 48 hours!

I noticed that the Patient Participation Group linked to Stonehaven Medical Group were running information evenings for patients and I went along to one on Asthma which was of particular interest to me. I have suffered chronic asthma all my life. The evening was well attended and provided some really good quality information for asthmatics and their relatives.

The purpose of the PPG is for Stonehaven Medical Group and volunteer members to work together to understand the needs of the patient community and to enhance the patients' experience at both Stonehaven and Auchenblae surgeries. The Stonehaven Patient Participation Group has its own very active Facebook page which has regular information posts and contact details.

The major change for me and for most Auchenblae patients was the introduction of eConsult as the new means of contacting the surgery. I was very sceptical of this as I had heard many horror stories! However, I tried it when I needed some help.

I filled it in late one afternoon answering many questions as best as I could and waited for a response. I received a telephone call first thing the next morning to arrange an appointment at the surgery. On turning up for my appointment, I was surprised to discover that I was being dealt with by a Physiotherapist (I had a knee problem). This is when I realised that Auchenblae surgery has access to more specialist care now that it is part of

Stonehaven Medical Group. I've used eConsult on a few occasions since then, always with fully satisfactory results.

In addition to Dr. Hastings who has special interest in Women's Health and is a certified Menopause Specialist, a few of the new doctors have particular specialities. Dr. Reary has specialist interests in orthopaedics, sports medicine, and minor surgery. He is a Senior Medical Adviser on general practice policies for the Scottish Government.

Dr. McLaughlin has a special interest in respiratory medicine and is the Clinical Lead for the Grampian Respiratory Managed Clinical Network. He is also Hospital Medical Director for Kincardine Community Hospital. It is refreshing to have this level of clinical skills available in Auchenblae. A real bonus for the local area.

We used to be able to just pop into Auchenblae surgery and have a chat with the receptionist to obtain an appointment quickly. In Dr. Pirie's days, we had the luxury of a morning drop-in surgery too. Much has changed since then, and like many patients I miss this easy, informal approach.

However, eConsult has allowed the surgery to prioritise more important issues, allowing the GPs to see more patients during a working day. In order to help them to help you, the more detail provided on eConsult, the easier it is for them to judge how best to manage your problem.

I found out that Stonehaven Medical Group leave eConsult switched on at all times, and it is regularly reviewed throughout the working day by clinical staff. This means an eConsult form can be filled out at any time suitable for the patient and will be dealt with quickly by the end of the next working day.

The practice appreciates not everyone has the ability or equipment to deal with online forms. In these cases, the eConsult form can be completed on a patient's behalf by another person, or a telephone call can still be made to the surgery reception if required. The personal service has not disappeared.

Recently, Stonehaven Medical Group was involved with running a Community Appointment Day for Kincardine and Mearns designed to offer people the opportunity to access support for a wide range of services under one roof, with a strong focus on prevention, early intervention, and self-management.

Patients who had not been seen for some time at local surgeries were invited along to the Town Hall in Stonehaven between 1.00pm and 8.00pm. This enabled patients who work during the day to access information regarding their health. There was the opportunity for patients to drop in too. It was well attended and the intention is to develop this approach further in the future with more such events.

So, what's not working so well? All GP practices in Scotland receive the funding to provide reviews for patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, or hypertension. In recent years, the approach to this at Auchenblae Surgery has potentially been less rigorous and as a result, there is now a backlog to be carried out. However, if any patient has a particular concern about their condition, they can now use the eConsult form to request a review if they haven't attended the surgery for one during the last 12 months. Once again, if you are unable to access the form call the surgery and request a review.

Stonehaven Medical Group also have a very comprehensive website with excellent quality support information, and it is well worth familiarising yourself with the contents before you need them in a hurry.

In conclusion, I've personally found the changes at Auchenblae Medical Centre beneficial especially with the improved access to additional services.

Prescriptions can be ordered seamlessly and timely. eConsult is a useful tool enabling prompt attention in the specific area required.

However, for those struggling with the online form there is still the opportunity for calling the surgery if necessary.

Overall, the change for me has definitely been positive.

Auchenblae & Dist. Heritage Society

Our session commenced in September when over 30 members had a walk around Castleton Farm and Factory led by Anna Mitchell when we learned about the evolution of the Castleton Enterprise which was most interesting. Thereafter we got to sample lots of fruit from the farm and had a lovely tea and cakes at the cafe. Thanks go to the Mitchell family for their time and hospitality.



Have any of you wondered about a sign on most cemeteries stating "Commonwealth War Graves are located here" ? Well, here is your chance to come and find out as we welcome **Gavin Barclay on 2nd November 2026** speaking to us on Commonwealth War Graves Commission; on **7 December 2026 Mrs Jenny Thomson** will be speaking about the inspiration behind her book Auchenblae Reflections; on **1st March 2027 Mr David Fleming** from Stonehaven will be gave us sounding talk called "Rabbit Holes and Harbours". **On 10 May 2027** we held our AGM followed by a talk from **Mrs Anne Lawson** on Taylor, Tea and Empire. A warm welcome is extended to those living in the Howe of the Mearns (and beyond) who want to learn more about our local history.

Karen Martin, On behalf of The Heritage Society

Auchenblae Friendship Group



The Group is back in action at the Auchenblae Church Hall on Wednesday mornings (10.00 - 12.00) during school term time. (We do make a small charge of £3.00 to cover our expenses). The activities we have enjoyed so far are a craft session with one of our members, Michelle, a talk from Gillian Siddons from the Village in September to talk about the Ancient Art of Basketry and a lovely "Teddy Bears Picnic" at the reopened Brae Cafe. We will also have our usual Games, Bingo and Quiz mornings. Looking ahead we welcome back as a Guest Speaker, Dr Philip Cooles, with Volume 2 of his book Pelagrosa and another craft session with Michelle in time for Christmas. A warm welcome awaits anyone who wishes to come along and have a bit of company and hopefully learn something new.



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

Frida 16 October—Monday 9th November High pressure brings settled weather at first, but there are signs for a gradual shift away from high pressure and towards a more changeable pattern, with areas of low pressure moving towards the northwestern UK from the North Atlantic. Showers or longer spells of rain are likely, with the wettest and windiest weather typically in the west and northwest, and drier conditions favoured in southern and eastern parts. A trend to more widely unsettled conditions is possible into November. Whilst some occasional colder interludes will be possible at times, temperatures are likely to be near or a little above normal for the period as a whole.

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Messenger Production Team—Chris & Keith Ridgway, Kevin Newstead, & Eddie Cairns
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