

Westhill Bulletin

Spring 2022
Issue 169



Winter Storm Damage at Carnie Woods — *see article on page 50*

Published by Westhill & Elrick Community Council
Westhill website – www.westhillelrick.org



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Disclaimer: The inclusion of adverts in the Bulletin does not imply that WECC promotes or endorses any particular business or service.

SUBMITTING ITEMS FOR THE BULLETIN

We distribute over 5000 copies of the Westhill Bulletin quarterly to houses and businesses in Westhill and surrounding villages. We offer good advertising rates and are keen to support local businesses and services.

Adverts and articles for the summer issue should be sent in by **Friday 6th May**. The Bulletin will be distributed from 27th May.

All contributions or enquiries should be emailed to:
westhill.bulletin@gmail.com

Telephone enquiries re adverts or articles to:
Bulletin Editor – David Ritchie on 01224 744058 or 07989 637461

Articles should be submitted as **Microsoft Word** documents attached to an email. Articles larger than 600 words may be edited.

2022 advertising rates:

Eighth Page £32, Quarter Page £57, Half Page £93, Full Page £175
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For more details on advertising see www.westhillelrick.org/bulletin

BULLETIN DELIVERY

The Bulletin is delivered by an army of dedicated volunteers. More deliverers are always required to replace retiring helpers and add to the pool of relief helpers.

If you can spare an hour or so four times per year to help deliver the Bulletin in your locality or nearby then please ring David Ritchie on 01224 744058.

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Community Council meetings are held on 2nd Thursday of each month at 7pm in Holiday Inn West, Westhill and are open to all residents of Westhill & District

The agenda is placed in the noticeboard outside Co-op a week before the meeting and posted on the Westhill website www.westhillelrick.org

If you would like to join the meeting remotely a Zoom link can be sent - contact weccsecretx@gmail.com



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Welcome to the Spring issue of The Westhill Bulletin. It's good to be able to refer to spring and to put the darker winter days behind us. Indeed Xmas and Hogmanay now seem to be a long time ago with everything packed away for another year. But we can't let that happen without a word of thanks to all those who helped make the "switch-on" of our Xmas lights by no less than Santa himself such a success. The switch-on was accompanied by traditional carols, hot drinks and snacks and, for our younger guests, story-telling by Santa himself in his special Grotto.

This year for the first time WECC worked in collaboration with MAPP Town Centre Management and local Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) to put together our most ambitious event ever. Feedback on the event has been generally excellent, as putting on such an event on requires a lot of effort behind the scenes as well as on the day, so WECC wish to thank all those who contributed in any way, front and back stage. It was all great fun and we've picked up some tips and ideas to make it even better next year.

Storm Arwen damaged many roofs, trees and fences in the town and then to cap it all, even more damage was caused by Storm Malik and Storm Corrie. However in some ways we in Westhill got off lightly as elsewhere, tragically some people lost their lives.

Again though community spirit in Westhill came to the fore and a lot of voluntary efforts were made to look after vulnerable residents. These efforts along with support from Aberdeenshire Council helped mitigate the worst effects. As a direct result of these storms WECC are now planning to work with key stakeholders, to produce a Community Resilience Strategy for Westhill; to develop our ability as a community to identify and use available resources (energy, communication, transportation, accommodation, food, etc.) to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations.

The results of this work will take some time and in the meantime you may want to think about your own personal/household resilience plan. Prolonged loss of power probably has the greatest ability to impact on Westhill and some simple measures may help a lot – e.g. get a battery operated/clockwork radio, torches, and spare batteries; thermal blankets or throws; keep your landline, and if the budget will stand it, consider buying a generator.

It's been some time since we've heard of a Major Planning Application for Westhill, but Cala has recently submitted a Proposal of Application Notice (PoAN) to Aberdeenshire Council outlining their intention to lodge such an Application in due course; the Application being for 50 new houses, including 12 "affordable" ones on the site to the north of Burnland Park and south of the A944 (Straik Road). WECC will be scrutinising the Application once it becomes live and members of the public will also be able to have their say at <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning>.

Unfortunately Covid continues to take it's toll on the financial viability of local organisations, so just a reminder that WECC continues to distribute funds to organisations that meet the qualifying criteria – please see page 62 on how to apply.

Finally, the days are stretching out, and the clocks will be going forward soon, so there is a lot to look forward to. Have a great spring and why not make time to explore the Westhill Orbital Trail and enjoy the daffodils and crocus along the way.

Mervyn Barr
Chairperson WECC

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Councillor Iris Walker (Westhill & District)

Gulls

Aberdeenshire Council is continuing a detailed review of the way it tackles the extremely complex issue of urban gulls. I was hoping to see some early progress of the actions which the council can take. That report will not be sighted until March. Careful consideration is being given to all legal options open to them. We know that human behaviour has created a false environment for the gulls and residents are urged not to feed gulls or drop food scraps. Property owners can discourage gulls from nesting by erecting deterrent devices on chimney heads and flat roof areas such as spikes and nets. You can arrange for an appropriately licensed pest control company to oil or pierce eggs to prevent hatching or have the nest and eggs removed from your property. I am hoping that the March report brings forward some short and medium-term solutions from the council's perspective to complement the actions individuals can take.

Weather

When Storm Arwen struck last November, it was widely acknowledged that Britain can expect greater disruption from storms in the future and should prepare for more extreme weather. I don't think anyone expected another storm so soon with Malik closely followed by Corrie. Service providers such as SSEN, Scottish Water and BT are already under pressure to storm-proof their infrastructure as well as review their communication strategies so that customers get reliable information when affected. Aberdeenshire Council is undertaking a full review of their response, with communities being asked to feed into this process and we will consider the outcome in due course. Community councils and other organised groups have already or are considering making their own community resilience plans. What can individuals do? There is some really good information on <https://www.ssen.co.uk/PreparingForAPowerCut/> to enable us all to have a personal/family plan in place as far as possible.

Westhill to Kirkton of Skene Path

It was brought to our attention a number of weeks ago that the barriers on the above-mentioned path had been removed after a complaint was made by a cyclist. Unfortunately, no consultation was carried out with elected members, path users or the community council before removal. There is a view within the community that this action has made the path less safe for pedestrians and younger cyclists. I fully support the calls for this issue to be re-visited. I very much welcome the support of WECC and for the comprehensive report of actions suggested, namely for chicanes to be installed which meets the requirements of both pedestrians and cyclists, appropriate signage and a review of the speed limit on the Hill of Keir Road. I hope that the Roads service will make these issues a priority.

Congratulations

It was a privilege to visit Dod and Agnes Smith of Garlogie at the end of 2021, on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council, to mark their 70th wedding anniversary. Dod and Agnes married at the Station Hotel in Stonehaven on 1st December 1951. It was great to catch up with the couple and some of their lovely family. Deputy Lieutenant Miranda McHardy also attended on behalf of Her Majesty to mark this amazing milestone.



Thank You

As council elections loom and I reflect on the last five years of highs and lows, it has again been a joy and privilege to serve as a local representative. I am seeking re-election on May 5th as there is always much more to be done. I would like to thank all community groups and individuals for the work they do collaboratively with us as local councillors to help keep our community a great place to live and work.

As always I can be contacted by phone 07876 475272, email cllr.i.walker@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or Facebook and face to face consultation surgeries can be arranged to suit.



Councillor Iris Walker – Westhill and District

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Councillor Alistair McKelvie

Winter – As we slowly head out of the winter season, we have experienced one of the worst storm periods in recent years. This has caused considerable devastation around our rural district, with thousands of trees uprooted, resulting in damaged power supplies and many roads blocked.

We have been fortunate in Westhill, that there has been far less damage than in other settlements, not that there hasn't been power outages and damage to small business premises and/or vehicles, and trees in the Shopping Centre and Golf Course. Council services and SSEN are working together in very difficult circumstances, to provide hot food, phone charging facilities and accommodation where it has been needed.

Schools – Our 5 schools in the Westhill Academy cluster have also continued to manage in very difficult conditions, adapting to the ever-changing Covid impact and restrictions. Pupil and Staff absences have impacted on the academic year, particularly in our Academies, where pupils are either facing the 'prelims' or being assessed on their work throughout the year, using the alternative certification model of last year. Westhill Academy has been able to continue its Prelim programme across S4-S6 in all subjects and levels. Pupils and staff follow the Covid mitigations in the exam spaces, and pupils who miss an exam are accommodated with an alternative date, etc.

It is reassuring that the issues that have plagued the Education SQA results and processes in recent years are currently being examined, as a National Review of Education is underway, being led by Sir Kenneth Muir.

Roads – I have had several enquiries as to the condition of our drains and gullies, and when they will be cleared. Some areas have already been treated by the roads vehicle, as part of the two year cycle of planned gully clearance. There are large areas of our streets where there is a heavy build-up of winter detritus and storm damaged twigs/branches. I have recently been in dialogue with the Roads team to ascertain what is planned for the town over the next few months, before the resultant weeds take root. As above, the cleaning vehicle works on a 2 year cycle, covering all of our roads, over a split of 6 areas. Over the 2020 to 2021 period, the gullies were cleared in parts of West, North and Central Westhill. In early February this year it was on Westhill Drive and Hays Way. I have however requested that some priority is given to both Hillside Road and Westhill Road, where the build-up is particularly heavy.



Retiring – This will be my last Community Council Report as a Councillor for Ward 13, Westhill and District, as I have decided to step down into retirement. It has been a real pleasure and an honour to represent our great town and its rural communities, as one of your Elected Members in Aberdeenshire Council. There have been many successes along the way, and of course what some would consider to be, not so successful outcomes. Unfortunately, over the last 5 years, as the Council has a legal obligation to 'balance the budget', we were required to make very substantial annual cuts to budgets. That in turn has greatly reduced the Council's resources to address the many issues raised by you, our constituents, which we would ordinarily seek to remedy.

Our Community – It would be remiss of me not to congratulate our Community Council on its community projects. Over the last two years or so they have achieved many project

successes, from the excellent Orbital Trail, to its Festive programme, and its many volunteer groups, which all help to keep our town and community in a clean and safe environment.

I would also thank our School Heads and their management teams, and all of their staff, for keeping our youngest residents in our nurseries and schools as safe as they possibly could whilst still delivering the education programme. Also to our school dinner teams who have actively supported the Councils effort to provide hot food to those unfortunate enough, to have suffered loss of energy supplies and heating facilities, over the winter storms.

Alistair McKelvie

Telephone 07850 329179



Councillor David Aitchison

In my last Bulletin contribution I commented on the A944 Active Travel Route Study. The aim of this project is to encourage a shift towards active travel for commuting and leisure.

The proposals developed as part of this study enhance and improve sustainable modes of travel and support the drive towards net zero carbon emissions.

The Strategic Transport Review 2 was published in December and has similar aims. At the heart of the Strategy is the recognition that we need to deliver a step-change in behaviour and provide attractive, affordable, accessible and sustainable travel options.

The STPR2 recommends that Transport Scotland continues to work with local partners in developing plans for Aberdeen Rapid Transit. A bus based rapid transit system for the region would provide a more competitive and efficient public transport into and around the Aberdeen City region. This would improve region-wide connectivity and encourage a switch from car to public transport and other more sustainable travel options. The system would focus on key corridors of demand as well as where congestion impacts on bus services. A switch from car to public transport for many would reduce the congestion impacts on bus services.

What is proposed would prioritise buses and connect key destinations on the outskirts of Aberdeen to the city centre via busy radial corridors, including the A944, A96 and A956.

The section of A944 from Westhill to Aberdeen is one of the busiest stretches of road in our region with high volumes of traffic travelling both east and westbound. It is clear that the stated aims of the strategy mean that as a key destination any Rapid Transit system should include Westhill.

Your feedback is important given STPR2 recommendations will influence the transport options and the transport choices we make for the next 20 years.

The public consultation is available at the Scottish Government consultation portal www.consult.gov and printed versions are available on request.

I can be consulted at any time by telephone or email on any issue and also hold surgeries at Westhill Library. Check www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk for a full list of surgery dates.

Councillor David Aitchison

Mobile 07876 475227

cllr.d.aitchison@aberdeenshire.gov.uk  [@aitchisondavid](https://twitter.com/aitchisondavid)



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Ron McKail, Councillor for Westhill and District

Tree Planting at Elrick School

Elrick School are commemorating their 40th birthday and I was more than delighted to be invited by the school's ECO Committee to help plant some fruit trees. It was a very enjoyable afternoon being with the ECO group and I thank them for their hospitality. There was plenty of enthusiasm and a sense of excitement in the tree planting exercise. What was



also very clear is that the intention of the children is to maintain and protect the new trees as they grow and flourish and in turn protect the school environment.

New Businesses Open Up in the Westhill Shopping Centre

During 2021 two new businesses, namely Nisa and The Key, moved into Westhill Shopping Centre. We now have Nisa Local which, having moved into what was the Co-op in December, are now well established and as you'd expect, providing the retail shopping experience which from my visits is customer friendly, well stocked shelves, has retained the post office and is an asset to our shopping centre.



The second and very popular is The Key – Health Cafe which opened in July replacing what was Cones and Candy. Great place to 'grab a bite', food is very enjoyable, wide choice of menu to suit all tastes and service is excellent. If you have not tried The Key suggest you do.

Inter Linked Fire Alarms

Previous editions of the Bulletin have made reference to inter linked smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms having to be installed before 1st February. Clearly this linked fire alarm system is geared to make your home fire safe. If you have not installed this new alarms may I suggest you contact your home insurance company and confirm what the implications are if there were a fire in your property. Knowing whether or not your policy is valid or invalid if linked alarms are not installed is worth investigating.

Local Council Elections

For the council elections on 5th May 2022 I have been selected to stand as a candidate for the Westhill and District ward. If I'm elected I'll be pleased and delighted. However as the outcome of an election is unpredictable and in the event I fail to get elected I wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you. I've enjoyed being an Aberdeenshire councillor and it has been a privilege and an honour to represent all the constituents in Westhill and District.

Councillor Ron McKail

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WESTHILL AND DISTRICT MEN'S SHED

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Scottish Men's Shed Association's shed of the year

Here is the trophy being presented to Westhill Mens Shed. **Hooo-Raah!**

New roof

We have had the 'old library' roof refurbished with a new roof membrane and added more insulation. This has proved so far that we don't have to suffer roof leaks on a regular basis, should be good for 15 years and save money on heating.



Shed open again.

We had a longer than usual shutdown for the holiday period. We normally close only for Xmas Day and New Year's Day at the request of members. This time it was two weeks off due to the combined effects of Covid and the storms.

Our opening times are Monday 10am-4pm, Wednesday 2pm-8pm and Friday 10am-4pm. To join, drop in during these times and we will show you around.

SheShed is every 2 weeks on a Monday evening 6.00pm-8.30pm, next date is 7th March. Again just drop in.

*If you want a tool or other item you can always email us contact@westhillmensshed.co.uk, **phone (01224 917345)** during opening hours or drop in if you want to see if we have what you want. We don't bite.*

Recruiting!

We have been recruiting steadily since we opened again. This time the new members have been mostly ex-oil industry engineers.

Commissions: if you want something made to measure...

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This trolley was made for the Choi Kwang Do Black Belt Academy in Kingswells to carry their equipment and to fit under the stage in the hall.



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Saturday 9am–1pm

ATMs IN WESTHILL

- Inside Nisa store
- Outside Tesco store
- Inside Costco store
- Westhill Service Station shop in Elrick

Travel is Taking Off

It's great to be back doing what I enjoy most, researching and booking holidays. Over the last month there has been a distinct change in customers feeling more confident to plan a holiday, as more and more restrictions lift.

I thought I would put together a few ideas if you are looking to escape the winter weather in the next few months.

MEXICO – Virtually no rain between December and April and temperatures around 30 degrees. Perfect for a spring get away. White sand, tropical beaches, and luxurious hotels along the Caribbean coastline. Away from the beach there are Mayan ruins to explore, Chichen Itza being the most popular. Cenotes to discover, natural swimming holes or caves. There's a good range of resorts too, from the bright lights of Cancun to a gentler pace of life in Tulum.

MADRID – Springtime is a great time to visit, before it gets too hot, in the summer months. Spain's capital is a beautiful city to wander around. Home to the Prado and Reina Sofia museums, bursting at the seams with masterpieces. Stroll around Retiro Park or take a rowing boat out on the lake. Go tapas bar hopping or take a self-guided tour of the Bernabau Stadium. Dip churros in hot chocolate like the locals and visit the Mercado de San Miguel, sample local produce from the market stalls with a glass of wine or cava.

MAURITIUS – Surrounded by the crystal-clear waters of the Indian Ocean, this island nation has a lot to offer. Beautiful hotels set on stunning beaches offer a wide range of water sports and spa treatments. The western coastline benefits from great weather from late April onwards. If you can drag yourself away from the beach, there is plenty to explore. For the adventurous, Black River Gorges national park offers hiking trails through the rainforest and past waterfalls. A great destination to suit the whole family.

MADEIRA – Spring in Madeira sees the temperatures beginning to rise and the island in full bloom, it's a great time to visit. Famous the world over for the parks and gardens. There's a whole host of things to keep you busy, strolling around the streets of Funchal, hiking in the mountains, playing golf, or sampling the food and wine. Take a cable car ride up to Monte and take an adrenalin fuelled ride down in a wicker toboggan, not for the faint hearted. The hotels are all a good standard and are mainly dotted around Funchal.

As always if you would like my help with you travel plans, I'd be only too happy to help. Please see my advert on page 75 for contact details, you can also follow me on Facebook or Instagram.

Heather Reynolds, Travel Counsellors

JUDY MURRAY VISITS WESTHILL PRIMARY



On Thursday 9th December it was Game, Set and Match when Judy Murray visited Westhill Primary School! With Sir Andy Murray and Jamie Murray playing in the Battle of the Brits competition, Judy Murray was making it her mission to “Tennisfy” as many children and staff across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, via her community coaching sessions. Class teacher Leza Paterson, was extremely excited when she won a schools competition and Westhill Primary was selected! The coaching workshop was a HUGE hit! Everyone thoroughly enjoyed all the tennis top tips and fun games that Judy served up! In Judy’s own words, “You can tell when it’s been a good session, because the kids all want a high-five before they leave!” Judy commented about the positive attitudes and talent in Westhill Primary School.

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Rotary Out & About



As we slowly ease into 2022 it gives us a chance to look back at the latter part of 2021, which despite various lockdowns and restrictions, proved to be a busy time for us here at Rotary in Westhill and District. Our weekly meetings restarted and then were put on hold but we were able to be involved in many local activities.

RotaKids is a fun and exciting way for children aged 7-12 to make friends and get involved with important activities in the community, all while having a great time in the process.

47 pupils from Westhill Primary were involved with recent meetings and have agreed to focus their activities on the local environment. Our members are looking forward to supporting them in their interesting RotaKids programme of activities including litter picks, fence painting and improving the green spaces around the school.

Our Rotarians and partners were also around Westhill and within the Bon Accord centre assisting with car raffle ticket sales on behalf of Charlie House. The total raised this year for Charlie House and other local charities was just over £30,000, a fantastic result in these covid restricted times.

With help from pupils at 3 of our local schools and input from our own members we were able to provide 200 Shoeboxes for the annual Shoebox charity appeal, which were filled with gifts and distributed to families in poorer Eastern European countries at Christmas.

We were delighted to have been able to welcome our Senior Citizens back this year to the Ashdale Hall for their Christmas Party. With social distancing requirements in place there was a smaller crowd of only around 80 participants at this year's event. They all enjoyed the afternoon, however, with entertainment provided by the Dark Island Ceilidh Band, Pam Dignan's Dancers, Rhonda Pirie leading the Carol singing and our own inimitable Ian Duncan acting as a couthy compere.



We've also been busy around Westhill with crocus planting, maintaining the area around the Westhill entrance stone and litter picks when weather and covid restrictions allowed.

As we go to press the Covid restrictions are lifting and we are now able to get back to face to face meetings in The Holiday Inn so we can look forward to being more active with our local and international projects during the year. If you would like to find out more about Rotary and give something back to the community either by becoming a Rotary member or simply to lend a hand with some of our projects, then please get in touch – john.glascodine@gmail.com.



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ASHDALE HALL (WESTHILL DRIVE)

Welcome to Ashdale Hall. In these difficult times Government restrictions have relaxed and there is no social distancing or cap on event numbers, so we can book a full range of parties and events.

We are desperate for more local involvement in the Hall and wish to recruit more local volunteers.

FUNDRAISING

Anyone interested in joining the fundraising committee should contact the hall as we plan to do more fundraising for Hall improvements. Possible ideas include a local cinema night, car boots, bingo, quizzes, talent nights, booze and burger tastings, ceilidh. But we need people to help.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

We are looking for extra local people for the Committee. Please contact the Hall if you are interested.

AVAILABLE FOR HIRE

We have various time slots available during the week for let, please email the Hall if you are interested in making a regular booking or for parties/events. Contact ashdalehall@hotmail.co.uk.

Monthly Tea Dances are on the 2nd Friday of every month 1.30-3.30pm.

WESTHILL MARKET (9am–1pm, 1st Saturday every month)

Our monthly market is held at the Hall and we have stallholders selling fish, bread, cakes, local fresh meat, pies, vegetables, jams, fudge, eggs, bespoke cards, crafts, jewellery and more.

We really need the support of the local community for the Market to be able to continue and to expand as stalls will only come back if more local people come.

Most of the products at the Market are locally sourced and made, with little or no food miles involved. Come along to see the fantastic quality and choice of the goods on offer and help the environment.

HALL CLASSES AND BOOKINGS

We also offer a wide program of exercise classes, martial arts, children's dance classes and toddler/baby classes, for full details please see our online timetable: <http://ashdalehall.co.uk/current-timetable> – these are also displayed on the Hall noticeboards.

See next page for March timetable

ENQUIRIES

For enquiries or to book the hall/meeting rooms or badminton courts, please e-mail Adrian Hidalgo [Facilities Manager] at: ashdalehall@hotmail.co.uk or call the Hall on **01224 740137**.

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ASHDALE HALL MARCH CLASS TIMETABLE

Monday

0930 to 1015 – Matwork Pilates – Main Hall – Block booking required**
1030 to 1115 – Matwork Pilates – Main Hall – Block booking required**
1230 to 1430 – Abribeats (1 to 4 years) – Main Hall
1500 to 1800 – **Free to book for classes or badminton**
1830 to 1930 – Jazzercise – Main Hall – Online booking with Jazzercise
1945 to 2045 – Badminton (private term time) – Main Hall

Tuesday

0945 to 1045 – Jazzercise – Main Hall – Online booking with Jazzercise
1100 to 1200 – Spear Pilates – Main Hall – Block booking required++
1215 to 1400 – **Free to book for classes or badminton**
1420 to 1800 – Baby Ballet – Main Hall
1545 to 1745 – Penny's Art Group – Meeting Room 1
1815 to 1915 – Choi Kwang Do – Main Hall – hello@westhillckd.org
1930 to 2030 – Badminton (private) – Main Hall

Wednesday

0800 to 1300 – **Free to book for classes or badminton**
1330 to 1430 – Badminton (private)
1600 to 1730 – Pre School and Tap/Ballroom/Latin – Main Hall
1745 to 1845 – WCIS (private booking) – MR1
1800 to 1900 – Spear Pilates – Main Hall – Block booking required++
1915 to 2045 – Line Dancing – Main Hall – (term time)

Thursday

0800 to 1000 – **Free to book for classes or badminton**
1100 to 1700 – Footstars – Main Hall – 11–12pm, 1–3pm, 4–5pm –
<https://www.footstars.co.uk>
1800 to 1900 – Choi Kwang Do – Main Hall – hello@westhillckd.org
1915 to 2045 – Badminton (private) – Main Hall

Friday

0830 to 0915 – Matwork Pilates – block booking required**
0930 to 1015 – Matwork Pilates – block booking required**
1030 to 1115 – Matwork Pilates – block booking required**
1130 to 1230 – Nada's Pilatone – Main Hall – Nada – 07375 933186
1300 to 1600 – **Free to book classes or badminton. Free from 1pm for parties/ events. Except the 2nd Friday of every month due to Monthly Tea Dance 1.30-3.30pm.**

Saturday

0800 to 1100 – **Free to book for classes or badminton**
1230 to 1730 – Script to Screen Drama Classes – J. Ogilvie – 07989 484315
Free from 1800 for parties and events

Sunday

Free to book for parties and events all day

All Matwork Pilates Classes marked with an asterisk need to be block booked in advance, contact Annette on annette.macpherson@ymail.com or **07817 736525, or website www.westhill.physiotherapy.co.uk

++ Spear Pilates Classes marked with a cross need to be block booked in advance, contact pilates@spearphysiotherapy.co.uk

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Skene Parish Church

It is incredible the things that stick in our minds. I have a distinct memory of sitting at my desk, looking out over Kirkton of Skene, writing my first ever magazine article as minister of Skene Parish Church. The topic was promises.

That was 10 years ago. I know, I'm not sure I believe that either, but it's true. The congregation recently helped me celebrate my tenth anniversary as parish minister. Thank you for all the wonderful messages of congratulations that have come in since.



A lot of water has flowed under the bridge during those ten years, not least with the pandemic. Our community has grown and changed. And yet, recent adversities have revealed a depth of bond across our town and the villages outwith, which continues to make this a wonderful parish in which to serve. I am so thankful for the opportunities which exist to come alongside those in our sheltered housing and care home and to be involved in our school communities. I appreciate the support and encouragement I have received from so many people, not least the kids.

When someone is ordained into ministry, they are asked to make promises, which are, in some ways, similar to the vows of a wedding ceremony. The final question asked of me, in January 2012, was:

Do you accept and close with the call to be pastor of this charge, and promise through grace to study to approve yourself a faithful minister of the Gospel among this people?

In it, there is the promise to care for and guide a people.

There is the promise, through grace, to grow and mature – to realise that you are not the finished article (by some distance) and studying is essential to the task of ministering. And there is the promise to be faithful in sharing the Gospel, which means the good news of Jesus Christ.

That final promise is one I share with every follower of Jesus. We are all called to tell others about who Jesus is and about what he has done for us. As Paul reminds us, how can people discover life-changing faith in Jesus, if no one tells them about him. And why would you want to keep such good news to yourself?

In our congregation, we have a desire to share the gospel with every generation. But we recognise that whilst it takes only a moment to make a promise, it requires a lot more time and effort to keep it. We're seeking to overcome the barriers that exist (in our minds as well as in reality) and learn from one another the best ways to communicate the wonderful truth of God's love, as revealed in Jesus.

If you want to know more, why not come and join us, in person or online. As we enter Lent and prepare ourselves to celebrate Easter, there'll be lots of opportunity to discover what it means to say that Jesus in whom all God's promises are yes and amen. Check out our website www.skeneparish.com for more details, particularly our Holy Week and Easter services.

"A promise is a cloud, fulfilment is rain."

Blessings, Rev Stella



Girlguiding Westhill District

Well done to our Westhill Ranger unit (14-18 years), who were again awarded the Heather Bisset Challenge – a

competition run in Girlguiding Gordon to do something to help in their local community. The Rangers prepared pots for the garden at Blackhills Court and would like to thank Fox Lane Garden Centre and Tesco for their kind donations of plants for this worthy cause.

Our Guide units (10-14 years) have been meeting fortnightly since summer but with some new volunteers, both units are now back to meeting weekly and many of the girls are signed up for the Grampian Regional Camp Escape 2022 this summer, as well as looking forward to international experiences in Holland and Switzerland in the summer of 2023.

Our Brownie Units (7-10 years) have also been busy working through the programme, keeping the Brownie Guide Law by “thinking of others before ourselves and doing a good turn every day”, e.g. fundraising for Children in Need by doing a danceathon in partnership with Girlguiding UK.



Our Rainbow Units (5-7 years) have also been busy, thanks to 1st Rainbows who collected donations for Northsound's Cash for Kids Mission Christmas appeal.

Well done to Morven Rapson, 2nd Guides for being awarded her 10 year Long Service Award – thank you Morven and all other volunteers in Girlguiding Westhill for the opportunities you give our young members.

Happy World Thinking Day for 22nd February when it comes! The WAGGGS World Thinking Day resource is focussing on the environment and gender equality.

Caroline Gray and Alison Smith, District Commissioners
westhilldc@gmail.com



Christmas Lights storage

The Westhill & Elrick Community Council has been putting up the festive street lights in Westhill & Elrick since 2005. Around 40 lights are now put up each year.

For a number of years a farmer near Westhill has allowed us to store the lights in his barn but he is going to be selling the farm and we need to find a new storage location.

We would be delighted if a resident with space in a garage or shed could allow us to store some or all the lights there. If you can help, please contact the WECC secretary David Ritchie at weccsecretx@gmail.com or phone **07989 637461**.

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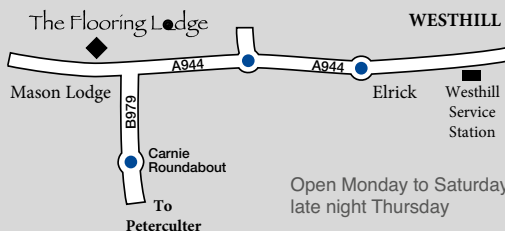
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Hello Westhill! Happy New Year!

We are already a couple of weeks past the first month! How time does fly! Time, that precious and very limited resource we have on this side of eternity. 12 hours in the day; seven days of the week; 365 days and 52 weeks of every year. Limited. Finite. Sparse. Which is one more reason to make the very most of every opportunity we have in this life – with our children, our parents, loved ones, our neighbours, and our friends. Events of the last two years have brought to the fore, the fleeting nature of life; its pleasures and much of what we treasure about it. Many of us are waking up to this truth and adjusting our values accordingly. Others still need some help with such a paradigm shift. All in all, deep existential questions are being pondered more and more, not just by the ailing and the dying, but by the young and strong; the aging, the rich, and the poor. Whether obviously or sublimely, the search for meaning continues.

At Vinespring Church, we have continued this exploration through the words of that ancient and eternal book – the Bible. We have come to believe and accept that life's true worth is found in a surrendered relationship with Christ, who is the author of life itself. He is a faithful anchor through the boisterous storms that the world has been enduring, and a guiding light through the darkness and confusion all around us. We have tested God's promises and examined His instructions. And we have found them to be true to our deepest needs, helpful for our highest aspirations, and necessary for our sustained victory in the battles of this life. God is good. And He means no evil for anyone. Rather He has put a plan in place for our rescue, redemption and restoration. That plan was unfolded in His Son Jesus Christ, when He died on the cross of Calvary for the sins of everyone; with a promise of eternal life for all who will trust in Him and repent of their sins. He promises not only to save, but to guide. Hence why the Psalmist declared: ***'The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear?'*** – ***Psalm 27:1 NIV***

This scripture has never been more needed than at such a time as we are now in. A time of great fear, confusion and worry for many. The scripture is also the basis of our theme this year at Vinespring Church. It is our year of 'Light and Glory', and throughout this year, we will be open to His light, His exposure, His divine development of our character, our faith and our walk with Him. Until we fully turn the page on every fear, anxiety and doubt, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It's a process that we are willing to submit to because of the incomparable riches of the reward He offers. Clarity, confidence, and Peace that passes human comprehension; regardless of the storms, uncertainties, and darkness we may be facing. In the search for meaning, these are definitely worth pursuing and worth holding on to.

For anyone who may feel like they are in a flux right now, and needing some assurance of something strong and stable. God is. Feel free to reach out, or to come along to any of our meetings on Sundays at the Holiday Inn Hotel or Wednesday via Zoom. For details please visit www.vinespringchurch.co.uk. Or follow us on social media at facebook.com/vinespringchurch. It would be our pleasure and privilege to journey alongside you till faith and light dawns.

Once again, happy new year. And make every moment count.

Team Vinespring

Milne Hall, Kirkton of Skene

The hall is open subject to Covid restrictions. The hall is busy most evenings but we have a large hall, small hall and meeting room available for hire mostly during the day. These are suitable for exercise classes, baby and toddler groups, craft groups etc. Please see our Facebook Page. Our hall can also be booked for children's parties, funeral teas, etc. To enquire about hiring, please email the booking secretary – milnehallbookings@gmail.com.

Future Events: See Facebook page for further and more up to date details.

Regular Activities: As Covid Restrictions Allow

- Jazzercise, every Wednesday 9.45-10.45am and 6.30-7.30pm.
- Westhill Sooyang Do martial art group hold classes for children and adults on Monday evenings. Phone Chief Instructor Dave Bremner: 07970 188825.
- Skene Youth Club for Primary 1-7, Thursday evenings 6-7pm during term time.
- Alba Black Belt Academies – age 3 to adult. Call 07818 200371 for details.
- Baby Sensory – Thursday mornings.
- Westhill Guitar Club – every second Tuesday 6.30-8pm. See Westhill Guitar Club Facebook Page for more details.

Milne Hall Management Committee is registered as a charity (SC045034).

Help wanted – if you feel you could contribute in any way in looking after and improving the hall, you will be made most welcome. Please contact 01224 742804.



Westhill Golf Club

The 2021/2022 winter season has brought about a whole new set of challenges for the Golf Club. These are primarily related to recent storms – Arwen, Corrie & Malik. The first storm (Arwen) saw us lose around 200 trees. Thanks to a monumental effort from our Greens team and a band of fantastic volunteers we had been able to complete the tidy up in early January 2022. However, storm Corrie and Malik have brought a further group of trees down so the remedial work is set to continue.

It's not all bad news though... thanks to the support of the Woodland Trust, we are expecting delivery of several hundred tree saplings in the spring so we will be able to replant some of what was lost (as well as introduce some new golfing hazards). In other winter work, we have been able to renovate and redesign our second tee, so we are looking forward to the spring to see how that plays.

Following our AGM in January 2022 we have now finalised our membership fees for 2022 – please see www.westhillgolfclub.co.uk for details if interested. This means we can turn our attention to getting ready for the new golfing season and plans for another very successful season are well underway. Junior Golf is an important part of our club and we are thrilled that our junior membership levels reached unprecedented levels in 2021. We will be running our popular 10-week Junior Coaching Programme starting in April 2022. It is open to all local P5 children. Our coaches are all PGA trained. Clubs and balls are supplied. For more information, please email westhilljunorgolf@gmail.com.

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Most of the time, when people do not fill out a tax return for a property, it is because they are making a financial loss and think a return doesn't need done. This unfortunately isn't the case and it may be that a taxable event still occurs. There are many common misunderstandings about what can be claimed. Even in the case where no tax is due because of a loss a return should be filed so you are able to utilise or/and record those losses. Filing can also prevent an HMRC inspection as they will know a property is being let but don't know if it's profitable or not.

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Environment and Litter Projects in Westhill

2021 ended and 2022 started with wild weather, and we experienced much damage at Carnie Woods, Arnhall Moss and Denman Park, where the storms felled many trees. We must thank Aberdeenshire Council for their response in making safe and clearing the many walkways, working under overwhelmingly difficult conditions. Plans have been drawn up to respond to the damage to our environment created by the storms.

The 2022 Queen's Platinum Jubilee and "Plant a tree for Jubilee" takes on a special meaning for our group. Our Chair, Mervyn Barr, will outline our plans in the next Bulletin.

We are planning to put up 20 more hanging baskets at the living wall, opposite the Holiday Inn. Plants have been ordered for the barrels and the hanging baskets. We are keen to continue with the "Bee Bomb" initiative and thanks go to Tesco Community Champion Mo Burrows, who arranged for the very kind donation of wild flower seed boxes.

We would desire to extend our planting plans throughout Westhill and Elrick, but we would require volunteers to help with setting up and watering the plants. Without such help, we must restrict our efforts to the centre of Westhill, where we have the facilities to water and feed the plants. We prepared the ground and planted "Bee Bombs" on the land between Tesco and the Medical Centre, but lugging 60 to 80 gallons of water on a weekly basis proved an exhausting and back breaking task.

We have had meetings with David Dent and his Westhill Rotary team and are very pleased that they are again standing by with help. We very much appreciate their un-wavering support. These offers and those of assistance from other residents all help to make a difference to our town Westhill. Could you consider helping us to do more?

No doubt we will all be starting to enjoy the longer light and the appearance of bulbs as they emerge from the ground, to brighten our lives. It all gives us hints of the more comforting, colourful seasons to look forward to. Spring weather also means that we will be able to restart our regular litter picking program, which we organise to help ensure Westhill is an attractive place to enjoy the environment. You too could contribute to our efforts, either by encouraging better littering behaviour in the youngsters you may know, or by joining our small group of Litter Pickers in some of our fortnightly Litter Picks. Details are listed below. If you know of a particularly littered area, you can contact us and we can try to send a team to clear it.

Our dates for Litter Picks up to August 2022 are: 12th and 26th March, 9th and 23rd April, 14th and 28th May, 11th and 25th June, 9th and 23rd July, 13th and 27th August.

All our picks start at 10.00 and last one hour. All kit, apart from gloves will be supplied and all are welcome to join in.

For further information, on planting volunteering, or if your group may be interested in borrowing our Litter Picking Kit, please contact: Raymond Swaffield, email swaffies@talktalk.net or Ken Stewart, email kennethstewart@talktalk.net.



Pam Dignan Dancers

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Saturday 30 April (evening) • Sunday 1 May (afternoon)

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Contact pamdignan.dancers@btinternet.com

Westhill Senior Citizens Group

Hopefully we are beginning to see an easing in the Covid restrictions and hoping that we can get back to some sort of normality this year.

We were sorry that we had to cancel our Christmas Party on 16th December and didn't get restarted until 27th January but hopefully we will be permitted to run our full programme until June 2022.

On 27th January we had Jim and Marisha Addison who are well known. They have been playing in the entertainment business for a number of years. They have been heavily involved with the jazz scene at the Blue Lamp. A lively and varied programme was enjoyed by all. It was great to be back!

On 10th February we had a visit from the Critter Keeper who keeps a wide variety of interesting and unusual creatures.

Our Christmas Lunch was re-scheduled for 17th February in the Holiday Inn – we had a lovely afternoon, with entertainment by the singer Roy Rhodes.

24th February – we were entertained by Bob Dunlop and his accordion.

10th March – The Melting Pot; 24th March – Bingo & Health Talk; 7th April – Mika's Choir; 21st April – Finzean Ukelele Group

We hope to have an Afternoon tea in April.

Numbers attending have been between 30 and 42 – which has been good to see. We have had quite a few new members.

We take a register of all attendees, ask members to wear masks when entering and leaving the building and if they wish to sing along with the entertainer. We have gel and wipes on the tables and the cakes/biscuits for refreshments are now individually wrapped. Although not compulsory, it is good to take a lateral flow test before meetings.

We are very grateful to Tesco (via Mo the Community Champion) and Nisa (Jean Paul and Elaine) in Westhill for their welcome and continuing support with supplies of cakes and biscuits for our meetings. Much appreciated.

We meet in the Hall at the back of Trinity Church from 2pm until approximately 3.45pm every fortnight.

Contact Heather Cook for further information – heathercook@tiscali.co.uk telephone 01224 741194.



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- ✓ Outdoor work including creating no-dig
beds, harvesting, composting, weeding etc.
- ✓ Indoor work with stripping out of facades
- ✓ Professional-led workshops
i.e. dry stone walling sessions
- ✓ Produce Pop-Ups

Find out more & get involved:

www.camphillwellbeing.org.uk/compass

Follow us: [@CWTCcompass](https://www.facebook.com/CWTCcompass)



Compass
Craigton Rd, Cults
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Compass is a project of local charity, **Camphill Wellbeing Trust**. The Trust provides
medical and therapeutic services to help patients and their families **address illness,**
build resilience and maintain wellbeing.



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*The Blue Door raises money for Camphill Wellbeing Trust -
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Compass: setting the direction for 2022

Local medical charity, Camphill Wellbeing Trust (CWT) launched Compass in September 2020 to transform the former Waldorf School site on Craigton Road. The project has made great progress towards demonstrating practical solutions for healthy and sustainable lifestyles thanks to the support of our **local community**.



Compass has received a fantastic **2101 hours of volunteer support** which recently helped us plant 40 raspberry canes and clear space for fruit trees. In preparation for the next growing season, we are re-designing the layout of our **no-dig beds** to accommodate further fruit bushes and vegetable plants. These will increase the selection of organically-grown produce that will be available to the local community through our **Produce Pop-Ups** later this year.



Funding Success

We are delighted to have secured funding from various sources to develop our outdoor garden areas for the local community. This includes funds for a **composting toilet**, gardening equipment and 3-years costs for an outdoor areas manager. This places Compass in a strong position to support our volunteers with improved facilities onsite as they help develop the garden areas and get the project off to a great start for 2022! We have also been able to purchase an Avant Loader from Angus Chain Saws, which has already been put to good use for some of the heavier outdoor work.

Looking ahead

To start the New Year, we invite you to tell us how you would like to see Compass develop. Simply fill out our **questionnaire** (available by emailing compass@cwt.scot) and send it back to us. We are also seeking members for a **Compass steering group** to help the project continue to move in the right direction. Register your interest by emailing: compass@cwt.scot. We look forward to hearing from you!

Can you lend a hand?

Come along to our Saturday volunteer days and blow away the cobwebs with some outdoor volunteering fun! There will be indoor activities if the weather is bad. Find the next dates on our website or Facebook event page (@CWTCompass), or emailing us on: compass@cwt.scot.

To find out more visit: www.camphillwellbeing.org.uk/compass. You can also support us online: <https://localgiving.org/charity/CWT/project/CWTCompass/>.

About Camphill Wellbeing Trust:

CWT is a medical charity providing an extended and integrative approach to health and wellbeing. It aims to address illness, build resilience and maintain wellbeing.



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Storm damage at Carnie Woods

Money is to be made available immediately from Aberdeen City Council's general fund contingency budget to deal with storm damage to trees caused by Storms Arwen, Malik, and Corrie.

The council's city growth and resources committee on 3rd February unanimously approved the move after a motion to committee by Convener Councillor Ryan Houghton. Cllr Houghton said: "There was a tremendous amount of work carried out by our tree squad and other council services over the three storms and we appreciate all that was done. It is clear it will take a considerable amount of time to remove trees and branches along with other remedial work so additional money from the general fund contingency budget is appropriate at this time."



The committee agreed that the money is to be quantified and immediately set aside after discussions between the Chief Officer of Finance and the Chief Officer of Operations and Protective Services. It was agreed that at the financial year end, any unused portion of that sum would continue into the next financial year to enable the work and also to pursue any Scottish Government or external funding that may become available to assist local authorities with the additional pressures brought on them by the storms.

During clean-up work Council staff have been alarmed to see that people have been cutting fallen trees to clear paths through blocked routes. This has been seen in places such as Carnie Woods, Scotstown Moor Local Nature Reserve and Hazlehead Woods. While the well-meaning intent behind these actions is understandable, only well-trained and highly experienced professionals should be working on storm damaged trees. Please do not attempt to cut paths through fallen or hanging trees; you may not notice the danger to which you are exposed and might be making the route more dangerous than it was prior to your activity. Discourage anyone who may be thinking of cutting storm-damaged trees!

Storms are a natural part of life, and though it's upsetting to see the death of so many wonderful trees, we should remember that such destruction brings a myriad opportunity to the natural world. Red squirrels still spiral round pine trees at Carnie Woods, pursuing each other in territorial squabbles. Blackbirds, robins and other songbirds peck the ground, searching for seeds and insects dislodged by stormy winds. Dead trees provide new habitats and food for insect larvae, which in turn could be eaten by woodpeckers hammering holes to probe for food.

New trees will grow to replace those felled by the storms, and it's easy to feel the excitement that spring will soon bring to the woods. Places devastated by the recent storms will take a long time to recover, but that journey will be vibrant and vivacious, and one we can all take pleasure in being part of.

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The Playgroup is committed to offering children a well-supported first step away from home to begin their educational journey with daily sessions of over 3 hours. We have limited places still available for children in their anti-preschool year and may be able to accommodate some younger children too.

For further information please contact us at: Scouthallplaygroup@gmail.com



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HOMEOWNERS – IMPORTANT NOTICE

In February 2019 the Legislation relating to smoke detection in your home changed. All domestic properties in Westhill could be affected.

You need to have the following:

- One smoke alarm installed in the room most frequently used for general daytime living purposes.
- One smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallway and landing.
- One heat alarm installed in every kitchen.
- All fire alarms are to be ceiling mounted and must be **interlinked**.
- Carbon monoxide detectors are to be fitted where there are carbon fuelled appliances (such as boilers, fires, open fires, heaters, stoves or a flue).

The Regulations come into effect in February 2022.

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Hope you are well and enjoying the new "SensationALL Space" inclusive playpark! The slide will be opening shortly, and thanks to Tesco Community Grants the installation of 2 new interactive play panels.

Our thanks also to Fairhurst and Nicol of Skene for their support with the project.

Thank you for respecting the space and helping us with the litter, the park is solely run and maintained by volunteers and staff so please help us keep it clean and in good order for years to come!



Team SensationALL are taking part again in this years Kiltwalk, and we would love you to join us! Every penny raised gets topped up 50% by Sir Tom Hunter - making this a vital fundraising opportunity for the charity.

Commit to fundraising £100 for us and we provide a paid place, t-shirt and our famous pink tartan socks!

Contact events@sensationall.org.uk if you'd like more information or a code to sign up!



1st Skene Girls' Brigade

We had a prolonged break during Christmas and New Year, after our Movie Night, due to restrictions, but restarted on 24th January.

We have no waiting list so if you have a girl P1-S6 who is interested please do not hesitate to call (Captain) Fiona Cumming on 07792 471199.



WESTHILL BOWLING CLUB

It's the time of year when the days are getting slightly longer, spring flowers are beginning to poke through the ground and perhaps we can dare to dream of the better days that lie ahead. My spirits are always lifted when I see that first yellow swathe of daffodils reminding me of our yellow club shirts that we will soon be wearing on the bowling green.

For the bowling club the winter, so far, has been kind. The winter storms, Arwen, Malik and Corrie have deposited small amounts of debris blown from the surrounding trees onto the green but nothing of any significance. More importantly for us was that we had no snow and frost to contend with so the grass has seemed to flourish over the winter and will soon need its first cut of the year.

All being well, Russell Milne, our president for the 2022 season, will preside over the opening of the green for play on Saturday 16th April. There after we are straight into a busy schedule of bowling. The Bon Accord fours and triples leagues start on the following Friday continuing through until August. Trials for selection for Bon Accord teams take place the same week end and on the 30th April we have a friendly challenge match against Dyce Bowling Club, the scene of our magnificent Top 10 win in 2021. It will be a pleasure to go back there again and renew old friendships.

On the subject of the Top 10, our long anticipated, Covid delayed, clash with Abbey View Bowling Club of Dunfermline, the West Fife Association champions, is on Sunday 15th May at 2pm. Feel free to come along and cheer us on from the side. We would appreciate any support that you can bring and you will be made most welcome. The way the competition draw works out, should we defeat Abbey View and progress to the next round, we would have another home game the following week and again the following week. But let us not get ahead of ourselves. One game at a time, but it is an exciting prospect.

But bowling is not just for the players interested in top competitions. It's a sport that appeals to different people for different reasons regardless of age or fitness levels. Outdoor exercise, company, friendship as well as competitive or not so competitive sport are only some of the reasons people play.

If you want to join us for the coming season please we offer an introductory membership fee for 2022 of £42.50 for adults and £7.50 for juniors (under 18). We also have special rates for people in full time education.

If anyone would like to come and join us and be part of our ongoing story of bowling in the Westhill area please do not hesitate to get in touch by e mail robert.mutch@btinternet.com or telephone 07562 696193.



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Westhill Library News

There's an app for everything these days – including your library!

Download the **Spydus Mobile** app to manage your library accounts. Search for and reserve books, renew your loans, save lists of favourite items for later and see recommendations for you. Use your phone camera to scan an ISBN when you're out and about to check if Aberdeenshire Libraries have a copy and make a reservation.

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PressReader is an international digital news stand which gives you free access to 7,000 of the world's leading newspapers and magazines from more than 100 countries. These include national and international newspapers such as The Guardian, The Washington Post, Le Monde and, of course, the Press and Journal and Evening Express! Relax with magazines and comics such as Good Food, Top Gear and The Beano.

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For details of our opening times and to see what's going on at the library visit the Live Life Aberdeenshire website or follow us on Facebook.

We hope to see you soon!



SCAFFOLD TOWER FOR HIRE

The Westhill Residents' Association purchased a scaffold tower for erecting the Christmas lights. The tower is available for hire to Westhill residents. The platform working height is 2.73m.

Charges are £15 per day for 1 to 2 days, then £5 per day for each additional day, or £45 for one week. Transportation available at £10 each way.

For more information and to book the scaffold, call/text **David Ritchie** on **07989 637461**.

WECC COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND

The current Westhill Bulletin business model has allowed WECC to generate surpluses from advertising revenues over production costs. From 2011 WECC has chosen to make some of these surplus funds available as donations to local voluntary groups as finances allow, and around £37,000 has been donated to a wide range of groups over these last 10 years.



The next round of donations for this year will be considered in May 2022. Closing date for applications is 6th May. See <https://westhillelrick.org/people-make-a-place/donations/> for Guidance Notes and the Application form or contact treasurerwecc@gmail.com.

At the February 2022 round members agreed to make donations to the Tennis Club, Scouthall Playgroup and Skene School Parent Council.

This time last year a donation was made to the Westhill Men's Shed for them to purchase a hydraulic bench. Here is a photo of it in operation with the guys working on a lawnmower.

BILL'S GARDENING CORNER

Looks like tough times ahead. What a strange winter – damaging winds, hard frosts then almost summer sunshine, but we gardeners just get on with the work in hand like making your own pots from old papers, using them to line trays and shelves; stop and think before you throw things out. What can I do with this? I bet you will find a use.

Other things to get on with are chitting your first early potatoes, raking the lawn to prepare it for fresh seed. If you have a dog, save the loose hair and put it in a flower pot on its side beside a bird feeding area, the birds will use it to line their nests. If you have an old outside table, give it a good clean then paint it with a mix of old paint, gives the table a new look. Bubble wrap is very handy for lots of things in the garden – cover a crack in the greenhouse and to cover and keep pots dry. Some fairy liquid in a spray bottle can be used for washing off greenfly on plants. So remember you don't have to buy new, just repair and make do.

Happy gardening!

Bill Loudon



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- Gutter Cleaning
- House Exterior Cleaning



Westhill Tennis Club

As the winter starts to ease off, we hope the new season will offer an interrupted spell of play on the courts at Denman Park. We have been amazed how busy the courts have been over the last two years with record membership numbers and hope many will re-join again this season.

At our AGM in November, the club appointed John Purcell as chair and John Kettle as secretary. Thanks to both for stepping up into these crucial roles.

Our 2022/23 membership will start from 1st April 2022 but we welcome membership applications at any time. The fees for the year ahead were set at the AGM:

Our early bird rate will be in place until the end of March and prices will be frozen from last year: *Family – £150; Adult – £75; Student – £35; Juniors – £28 (11-17 years); Minis – £15 (10 or under on 31st March 2022).*

From April 1, annual membership fees will be: *Family – £160; Senior – £80; Student – £40; Junior – £30 (11-17 years); Minis – £16 (10 or under on 31st March 2022).*

Benefits of membership include:

- Free court time for members with online booking sheet
- Social tennis evenings for adults on Mondays & Thursdays from 7.00pm and Saturday afternoons from 2.00pm
- Competitive tennis in the North District leagues, both men's and ladies' teams
- Opportunities to play in social leagues playing against other local clubs
- Coaching opportunities for all members and organised coaching sessions for minis and juniors from a qualified coach
- Entry to the Wimbledon Ticket Ballot
- Social events throughout the season

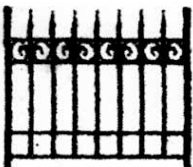
Throughout the last two years, the courts have been limited to members only due to COVID-19 and the administration of tracking court usage. This remains the policy for now so our 'Pay and Play' function will be on hold. However, we will keep monitoring the situation. If you have any questions, please get in touch:

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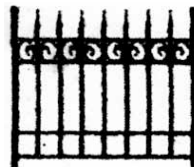
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Larg/Broadstraik Park

Open Spaces are vital in any community for a variety of reasons. For example they encourage healthy lifestyles and well-being, improve visual appearance in the community, enhance the opportunities for biodiversity and wildlife and can mitigate against the effects of climate change and reduce flooding.

We are interested in how the park in Elrick, frequently referred to as Larg or Broadstraik Park, is currently being used in order that we might think about current and potential future use and influence any changes that might enhance it.

If you could spare a few minutes, we would be grateful if you could complete a short survey accessed through the link or QR code below.

This survey is undertaken by members of Westhill and Elrick Community Council and may encourage agencies associated with the park to undertake any positive changes identified.

If you think that you may be interested in contributing further or to be kept informed of progress then please leave an email address or phone number at the end of the form to allow us to contact you.

https://hutton.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0ArdFN2QkKHdVQi



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The park may be visited virtually here <https://ardstane.com/LargPark/>.

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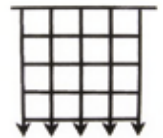
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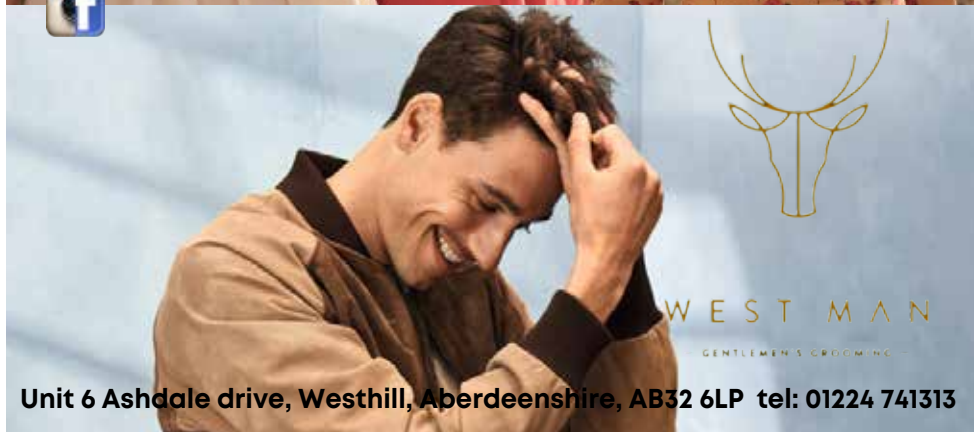
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Kindergym

An exciting, structured class for children aged 2+ to encourage co-ordination, balance, confidence, social skills, etc. A large range of stimulating and challenging equipment including beams, a climbing frame, jumping box, trampoline, parachute, etc.

Wednesday: 1.00-1.45pm, 2.00-2.45pm (crèche available)

Thursday: 9.30-10.15am, 10.30-11.15am & 1.00-1.45pm (crèche available)

Jumping Jacks

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In November 2021 after 14 years of service we wished outgoing Bureau Manager, Eveline Crossan, the best of luck for a long and happy retirement and welcomed our new Chief Officer, Heather Arni to the bureau.

December marked the start of Citizens Advice Scotland Big Energy Saving Winter campaign. Launching the campaign at Westhill Shopping Centre, our Energy Advisers spent time providing general information about saving costs and keeping warm.

Winter is a time that many of us are feeling worried about energy bills, prices have gone up but for lots of us our incomes have stayed the same or even fallen.



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- **The Gambling Support Service:** provides training to recognise gambling harms for front line staff working with families, young people and vulnerable adults, to support money advisers who are dealing with client gambling debts and to provide a pathway to help for those seeking assistance with problem gambling.
- **Budgeting:** our Budgeting Adviser will be pleased to help you maximise your income and take an independent view of your weekly/monthly/annual spend and suggest ways in which you can save money.

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JOGSCOTLAND WESTHILL

JogScotland has recently been running a promotional campaign to let people know that we have something for everyone. You might want to start running but don't know how, or are nervous about running alone. You might be someone who used to run but have lost the habit. You might have signed up for a race and need some buddies to help keep motivating you while you're training. Here at JogScotland Westhill, we have members who tick all those boxes and have groups to cater for all paces and levels of experience. We meet twice a week on a Monday and Thursday at 6:30pm and we're always ready to welcome new members.



So if this sounds like it's for you, send an email to jogscotlandwesthill@gmail.com and we'll be in touch to let you know how to join the club.

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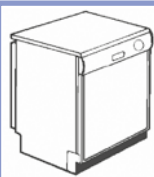
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Please join us on YouTube. Search for Westhill Community Church and you can see all of our online services plus tune in on Sunday for the latest one! We'd love to see you there!

www.westhillcommunitychurch.org



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COMMUNITY
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If you need assistance of any kind you can contact our team by calling Sandra on 07484 603593 or email sandramcgregor@westhillcommunitychurch.org

Our Food Bank is also open and you can access this by calling the team on 07379 836380 or email foodbank@westhillcommunitychurch.org

We appreciate it's hard to ask for help but please don't suffer in silence.

If you need assistance just call.

Your call will be treated in confidence with great love and care.

Youth Activities

Check on our website or get in touch with our Youth Pastor, Daniel.ferguson@westhillcommunitychurch.org to find out more!

Office Hours

Hours may vary currently. You can call our office on 01224 737380 or email office@westhillcommunitychurch.org

**GREEN PASTURES
CAFÉ**

Our café is back open 10am–3pm Wednesday to Saturday and we are so excited to see you! Please check our Facebook page for updates and exciting new additions to our menu.

Room Hire – It may be possible to hire our rooms in accordance with any Government guidelines. Please check our website or email bookings@westhillcommunitychurch.org for more information.





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Westhill Walkers

Open to all no matter what your age or ability

We finally seem to be getting back to a slightly more normal situation with our walks on alternate Sundays in that we have a published programme for the next few months. Previously the next walk was only decided a couple of weeks in advance. You will find the programme on our website www.westhillwalkers.org. Scroll down to the bottom to link to the programme. Due to the requirements of Track and Trace we still have to reserve a place rather than just turning up. The website is still a work in progress so sadly, the photos on the upcoming events page will not be locations featuring on the programme!

Recent walks have included a Boxing Day walk from Bridge of Don to Fittie and back, Barmekin Hill from Dunecht Estate, Clashmach Hill near Huntly and a circular route from Inverbervie to Gourdon, Benholm and back to Inverbervie. Many thanks to the leaders of these walks.

Sadly an attempt at a Christmas Dinner/walking weekend at Glen Prosen Hostel was sabotaged by Storm Arwen but we hope that we will soon be able to organise another of our highly popular weekends away. We also hope to have a summer solstice walk on the 19th June.

We have gained several new members and anyone interested in joining us will be made very welcome to our friendly informal group. For more information please see our web site for our programme, walks blog and contact details (westhillwalkers@gmail.com) and our Facebook page for updates and photos.





Duke of Edinburgh's Award

WESTHILL OPEN AWARD GROUP

Contact Katie, Paul and the team of volunteers at WesthillDoE@aol.co.uk or look online at www.WesthillDoE.co.uk

We are delighted to report that we will soon be offering the Youth Achievement Awards through Aberdeenshire Council. All our volunteers are already registered youth workers with the Council so that smooths the process. We are currently adapting as leaders to the YAA and plan to be up and running late April. It's likely we will limit numbers this first year and the levels we can offer but we will scale up as soon as we can.

For the YAA, participants set their own challenges – four or more each at least 10 hours activity – which is evidenced in a portfolio. There are printable booklets downloadable from: <https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/awards/youth-achievement-awards/>.

Portfolios are submitted for assessment to the SQA and feature alongside participant's school examination results. All activities follow a Plan-Do-Review cycle which our leaders will support them with along the way. This table gives an overview of the YAA Framework.

Award Criteria

Level	Minimum Age	Minimum Hours	Minimum Responsibility	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Bronze	14	60	Taking Part	4	7
Silver	14	90	Assisting	5	11
Gold	14	120	Leading	6	14
Platinum	16	135	Peer Education	7	16

Meanwhile, remember we can still help you finish off your current Duke of Edinburgh's Award level so get in touch if you need any help.

Westhill and District Gardening Club

The Westhill & District Gardening Club is anticipating a full syllabus this year, subject to covid regulations and restrictions. We meet on the third Wednesday from September through to May in the Lounge at Trinity Church, Westhill Drive, starting at 7.30pm and visitors are very welcome.

The Club eventually held their postponed AGM on 16th February, those who were unable to attend are reminded that the annual subscriptions are now due.

Future Dates and Topics for your diary are:

16th March 2022 – Simon Whitworth, Aberdeen Ranger, will give a talk on Bonsai

20th April 2022 – Verity Walters, Scotland's Open Garden Scheme, will talk on the Scheme's Yellow Book and some of the gardens involved

18th May 2022 – Jim Fiddes, local historian and author, will give a talk entitled 'A Walk along the Old Skene Road'

If anyone would like more information about the club please email us at: westhillgardenclub@gmail.com

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WESTHILL - BIKE CLUB -



As our thoughts turn to spring and summer activities and more relaxing of social restrictions, what better way to enjoy the nicer weather and outdoor freedom than to cycle around the beautiful Aberdeenshire countryside right here on our doorstep.

Getting hold of a new or second-hand bike has been challenging over the last couple of years, with disruption to supply chains in the bike industry since the start of the pandemic, but there are signs of improvement and we should see more bikes reaching retail shops, but we shouldn't expect full recovery for some time yet.

With literally hundreds of different models on the market, it can be genuinely hard to know where to start looking for a new bike, whether that be your first one or to replace an ageing machine. The first question to ask yourself is, how much do you want to spend and what do you want to use the bike for? As with many sports the choice can be intimidating; do you need a Road, Mountain, Hybrid/Commuter, Cyclocross, Touring, Folding or Electric bike? The following tips should help you reach the right decision.

- **Take your time – establish what type of cycling you will be doing**
- **Set your budget**
- **Gather information and ask for advice**
- **Don't pay for features you don't need – and don't miss out on any that you do**
- **Take a test ride – getting the correct size of bike will avoid future aches and pains**



Your local bike shop can offer you help to make this decision, also, within the **Westhill Bike Club** we have many members who can share their experience of upgrading to a better model or maybe have a used bike to start you off if you're a beginner.

Club Rides – Organised club rides for all members usually start from the Westhill Community Church on Old Skene Road, full details of all rides are posted on our club Facebook page with a summary below:

- *Tuesday Evening Social – For all abilities, usually split into smaller groups*
- *Tuesday Evening Training – For those who like a bit more speed and distance*
- *Thursday Beginners – For newer cyclists and those who like a more leisurely pace*
- *Sunday Morning Social – For all abilities (no one gets left behind and always a café stop for cake)*

We also have impromptu rides, such as Saturday Social and Friday Cake Run – open to all club members. We are actively looking for new members, why not come along for a “taster” session, complete beginners and experienced cyclists welcome.

As your local cycling club, we will continue to represent the interests of cyclists to increase and improve cycling infrastructure in this area. ***If you have any suggestions or comments on local cycling, please do let us know. If you are already a club member, we look forward to welcoming you back for some social cycling, if you're not a member and would like to be, please do get in touch.***

info@westhillbikeclub.org
www.westhillbikeclub.org





Despite the rise in Omicron, plus three storms, we have been pleased that scouting activities have been able to continue over the last few months without disruption.



Our various sections have carried out community bulb planting, constructed Christmas trees out of pioneering poles, undertaken walks around Westhill including Arnhall Moss. There have been haggis hurls, Burns nights' galore, egg spaceships, armpit fudge plus a bowling night in Inverurie and an excellent evening at the newly refurbished Aberdeen Science Centre.

Lots of badges have been worked on and achieved including emergency aid, disability awareness, health badge, communicator badge plus work towards Challenge award badges.

On the run up to Christmas, families were asked to consider donating items to the local foodbanks and the Abernecessities charity in lieu of our annual fundraising Soup n Santa event. Thanks to the generosity of our families, we were able to deliver 45kg of food to the Aberdeenshire North (Trussell Trust) Food Bank, a similar volume to the Westhill Community Church Foodbank and a car full of essentials to Abernecessities. Thank you to those who contributed.



We were saddened by the passing of Mrs Carole Hall who was previously our Group Secretary, and then HQ treasurer. Our thoughts are with Norman and the family at this time.

We were delighted to receive a grant from the Jo Walters Trust. Jo Walters was a newly qualified teacher with an enthusiasm for the outdoors, who tragically died in a cycling accident. The Trust in her name supports cycling safety initiatives and helps promote outdoor education in Aberdeenshire. The grant allowed us to purchase hike stoves that use different fuels, cooking pots of different finishes and shelters that are light weight or quick-use. With our three Scout Troops and an Explorer unit, the new equipment will benefit nearly 100 youngsters to gain further **#SkillsForLife** through outdoor expeditions. Our thanks again to the Jo Walters Trust.

We are also received fantastic news that, following a rigorous selection process, two of our youngsters have been selected to attend the 25th World Scout Jamboree in South Korea in August 2023. There they will meet 40,000 Scouts from over 100 countries across the world to: *'Think big. Dream wild. Act together.'* There may be some fundraising activities held over the next 18 months and your support will be appreciated.

To keep up to date with our latest news or to apply to our waiting list, see our website www.1stwesthillscouts.co.uk.





Bothy 57's ambition is to create a welcoming outside shelter on the neighbouring site of a former garage.

We anticipate that you will enjoy a weekly home bake and coffee at this Kirkton of Skene destination, along the footpath from Westhill and Elrick. So, if you have any suggestions or comments on the idea of an outside shelter, please email us at bothy57skene@gmail.com.

Bothy 57's beverages, home-made soup, hot food, scrumptious home bakes, soft drinks and ice cream are served both from the door and inside, heated by the log burning stove. Jill and Steve look forward to sharing a warm welcome.

Open Tuesday to Sunday, 6 days a week
All are welcome

Working with the Echt and Skene Community Council, we attempt to mitigate the occasional flooding at 3 places on the footpath to Westhill. We're making some progress. However, we prioritise a result if more people can **log any flooding on** <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/apps/roadfaults/> thank you. Generally, if anyone would like to get involved with this then please email contact@echtandskenecc.co.uk.



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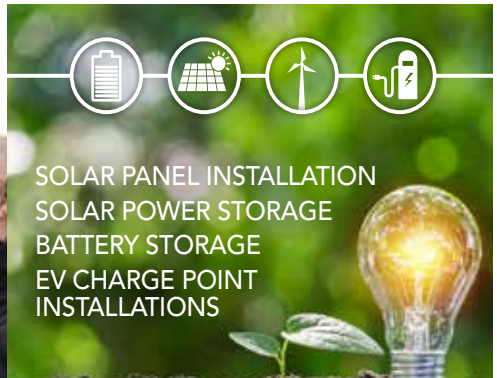
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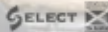
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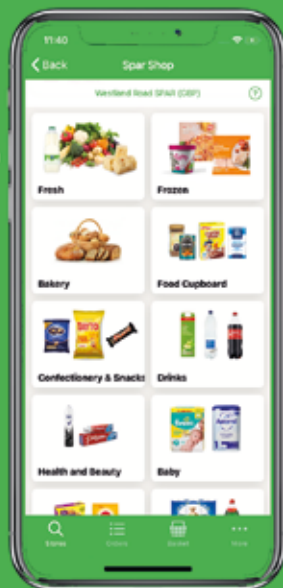
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