



the BLACK bitch

Linlithgow's news by Linlithgow's people

LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY MAGAZINE ISSUE 76 AUGUST 2020

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Linlithgow Peace Garden, Police Scotland, Lucy Purbrick & the local environment, Local Arts Review, Lisa's Latest Book Review, Bruce Jamieson – The Teind Barn

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PROFILES OF OUR TEAM PAT STEWART...

I've lived in Linlithgow for just over 32 years. It's a great place to live with a wonderful sense of community. Our two children grew up here and loved going to school in Linlithgow.

I have even managed to have 2 children's books published since having retired from the NHS after 35 years.

I started working for the magazine a few years ago initially as a Proofreader but latterly I have been involved in organising the articles and chasing up contributors along with keeping David in check!!

When not helping with the magazine I volunteer at the

Cancer Research shop and the Museum. Once we come out of lockdown, I hope I can go back to volunteering.



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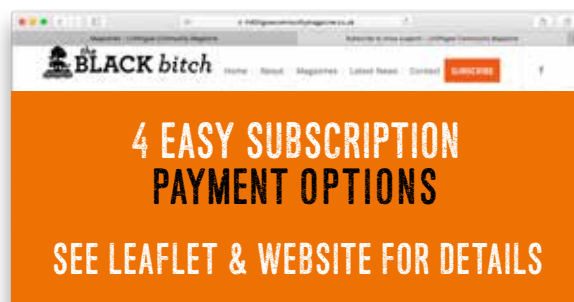
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**DAVID TAIT,
EDITOR**

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After our enforced resort to online publication only we are delighted to be back to our normal routine and looking forward to whatever the future may hold.

At this stage projections of what that may be remain largely guesswork. Getting folks safely back into school and work is the priority but with the coronavirus having some way yet to run and Brexit issues now coming fast into focus it seems certain there are turbulent times ahead.

The same cannot be said for the newspaper industry. The downward trajectory of newspaper sales has been well documented over decades, reportedly declining by around two thirds in the past twenty years alone. The effect on local news, largely dominated by multinational groups, has been catastrophic.

Where they are still being published, "local" papers are no longer local but regional. Coverage of local issues in any "local" paper is now sporadic and superficial rather than regular and detailed. The inevitable result is the distancing of people from the decisions made about their communities and the consequent loss of input of local knowledge, experience, expertise and commitment. This amounts to an erosion of the democratic process itself. Is this a one-way street?

Fortunately, there now seems to be an element of awakening to this crisis of the democratic process

with thoughtful contributions from across the political divide.

In 2019 Rory Stewart was an unsuccessful contender in the Conservative Party leadership contest. Following that and his 9 years as MP for Penrith, in December 2019 he published an article on the failings of the current crop of politicians, describing the present situation as *"the perfect ecosystem for chancers to thrive"*. He went on to encourage more engagement at community level - *"if we retreat... we become people to whom things are done ... passive and powerless"*.

In July 2020 Tribune published an article "The Future of Local Journalism Lies in Community Ownership" approaching the same issue of disconnection from a different angle. The article tackles ownership, content and influence but reaches the same conclusion *"At its best local journalism represents its patch, and helps people imagine themselves as part of a wider community..."*

These objectives, are of course, among the founding principles of the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015 now making its way slowly towards implementation. With Coronavirus acting as a catalyst in that process hopefully meaningful application will follow soon. Quote *"Scotland's communities are a rich source of energy, creativity and talent."*

The Black Bitch magazine has no

ambition to do anything other than "represent its patch" as best it can, to encourage more members of the community to engage and participate in one or other aspect of community life.

We are therefore very pleased with the ongoing support of our growing group of subscribers who see the value, and the potential, of a source of information on community activities produced and distributed free of charge within our town.

So again we thank everyone who has made a financial commitment, along with our small army of volunteers who together with the support of the business community make the project possible.

Of course we still have some way to go to be able to broaden the scope of our coverage so if you haven't already taken the plunge please give it some careful thought now. We have enclosed with this issue a hard-copy subscription form and Gift Aid agreement and online contributions can also easily be made via the instructions in the magazine.

As we go forward now there seems to be little likelihood of a return to local news as we knew it and while, in many respects, the Internet is indeed a miracle it will never be able to replace what has been lost.

The future of local news appears to be in the hands of local people – please subscribe if you can, little or large – mony a mickle maks a muckle!

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ONE LINLITHGOW

Like every community in Scotland, Linlithgow's economy has taken a pounding from the devastating consequences of the coronavirus pandemic lockdown.

A (fortunately small) number of businesses have closed - most notably size-wise **M&Co** - but many others in the Royal Burgh have demonstrated remarkable resilience, and adaptability, to survive. We'll even soon be welcoming new businesses opening up, like **Halo Beauty** (74 High Street), which we'll be featuring fully in the next issue, and Yoga-Nu-U at the Old Pavilion.

There is an optimism that Linlithgow will emerge more strongly from what has been a dark tunnel than many had thought. It has a history of having one of the lowest vacancy rates of any high street in Scotland, and this enviable record is continuing with several empty premises set to reopen under a different guise.

There have also been some business takeovers - again a reflection of the feeling of confidence that the town will maintain its attraction for locals as well as the hopefully returning hordes of visitors and tourists.

So Strawberry Café



Cafés have felt the pinch of much-reduced tourism, but are quickly getting back to normal. It hasn't been difficult for them to tempt locals back out to support their favourites: this afternoon tea from So Strawberry Café shows how they did it.



Argos is moving across the road to Sainsbury's - its parent company's premises.

It's fair to say this optimism is mirrored throughout Linlithgow - at Mill Road industrial estate, at Linlithgow Bridge, the smaller Braehead Business Units opposite Linlithgow Rose FC's ground, and Stockbridge retail park.

Evidence of this is provided by the large **Peacock's** clothing store, whose demise many had predicted, announcing its intention to stay.

Well-placed to deliver an upbeat message for the whole town is **Mark Darragh**, whose soft-play business **PlayBugs** at Mill Road is about to reopen. Mark has been an asset to One Linlithgow, acting as the company's Vice Chair since its success at ballot last year:

"The last few months have been incredibly tough for many of our local businesses. Over the last few weeks it has been really encouraging to see more and more businesses being able to

reopen their doors. I do sense a real feeling of optimism throughout the town. We would urge locals to do all they can to support the business community in Linlithgow. They have a big part to play in helping ensure the town has a bright future."

Meanwhile, **Katie Hainey**, Store Manager at **Sainsbury's**, has confirmed that Argos is not reopening at Stockbridge retail park, but moving across the road to its parent company's premises:

"The 'store-within-a-store' concept is happening nationwide. Our move will be in the run-up to Christmas and I'm really looking forward to it. At the same time as adapting the store and warehouse to accommodate our 10 colleagues from Argos, I'm delighted that we are making improvements to the store and bringing in new lines."

If proof were needed of business confidence in the town, it is provided by the decision of an experienced businesswoman, **Alison McInnes** from Falkirk, who has just taken over the long-established **Little Beau Peep** on Linlithgow High Street.

Alison said the takeover had come as a result of a "chance conversation" with a friend of the long-time owner of the children's outfitters, **Jennifer McIntosh**, who had decided to move on:

"I have always loved Linlithgow, and I feel the High Street is a special place for businesses. There is a great sense of pride and community in the town, and in these difficult times the town is providing a shopping experience that locals feel happy and safe to come to."



Little Beau Peep

The mother of two young daughters, Alison had a small shop in Newmarket Street in Falkirk before opening Cocoberry, a boutique in Glasgow which she ran for eight years. During that time, she also became an agent for a company selling ladies' and children's wear brands across Scotland.

Added Alison, *"When the first of my two daughters was born I gave up the shop, and have focused on my family and the agency ever since. I am excited at now having the chance to maintain and grow a business which has been a fixture on the High Street for many years."*



ONE LINLITHGOW UPDATE

Here at One Linlithgow, we've been kept busy supplying PPE grants and kits, sanitiser refills and posters, all of which are still available if you get in touch with us by the usual means (office@onelinlithgow.com). It's vitally important that businesses and their customers wear masks and use sanitiser, so we can avoid a potentially devastating second lockdown. Our latest poster, "don't make us ask – wear a mask" says it all!



Similarly, the importance of shopping local to support independent businesses has never been clearer. To that end, we're working with **Linlithgow Rotary Club and Linlithgow High Street Traders** to deliver a clear message under the nationwide **"Scotland Loves Local"** banner, which is supported by a national advertising campaign.



Keep an eye also on our social media for an announcement of the winners, who took part in the July Loyalty Lottery draw and the Grand Reopening Hamper draw!

As many are by now aware, the town centre security CCTV project has been beset by multiple delays, but please be assured we're doing all we can to get it operational as soon as we can. We are advised that Virgin Media engineers have completed works to supply power and broadband to the system, after which we can activate it from The Vennel to High Port. The second phase will be to undertake further civil works outside County Buildings to get the other half of the system (down to Low Port/Regent Centre) operational, which we will be dealing with as an absolute priority once the first phase is operational.

Linlithgow's Christmas celebrations will look a bit different in 2020. We're usually proud to subsidise the Torchlight Procession, but unfortunately circumstances dictate that it won't be going ahead this year, nor indeed will there be any encouragement of people to gather in public places at all.

That doesn't mean it's not going to be a Christmas to remember! We're working with **the Council and PubWatch** to make sure the lights are more spectacular than ever (watch this space for further announcements), looking to digital means of keeping events going, potentially an outdoor market, and of course...

Late-night Christmas shopping! Over the last couple of years, it's an event that's really built up a head of steam, and thankfully it's also resilient to social distancing measures, so we'll be expanding it to become **Christmas Shopping Day in 2020**. This is partly to avoid crowds in the evening, but also because businesses reported excellent sales over the whole day of last year's event, so it would make sense in any case. We apologise for mentioning Christmas so early in the year, but if plans didn't begin now, it wouldn't happen!

Plans are also afoot to give the Loyalty Lottery a makeover. Customers love it, but it can be a pain for businesses to administer. We're working on a more straightforward iteration and a resultant increase in participation, as an additional part of our efforts to keep Linlithgow shopping local.

As ever, we continue to support **Burgh Beautiful** and the wonderful work they do, often in the face of adversity, so we thought you might like a peek at the Low Port flowerbed, if you haven't yet seen it in real life!





COLIN LOWIE, PAINTER & DECORATOR

I first discovered my passion for decorating in 1986 when I started working for my dad James Lowie Painter and Decorator, based near Broxburn. He was a member of the Master Guild Craftsmen, and the federation of Painters and Decorators.

It was during this time he taught me a wide range of traditional and specialist painting and decorating methods, resulting in me developing highly skilled techniques which now allows me to provide my customers with a unique, high quality and top of the range decorating services. Working with my dad allowed me to develop and expand my skills which led to a career working for Roland Decorators, where I went on to become their foreman and was responsible for a small team who carried out work within a number of well known high end venues, such as Gleneagles and Archerfield.

In 2004 I decided to follow in my father's footsteps and set up my own decorating business based in Linlithgow, employing a small team of decorators, the most recent being my son James who has just completed his 1st year at Telford college and is now learning all the family tricks of the trade, and providing once again a highly experienced local family run business, covering Edinburgh, Lothians, Central and Fife regions.

We offer a range of decorating services internally and externally, and provide a number of traditional and modern methods and effects, such as Rag Rolling (dulux duette), graining, clouding, stippling, liming and lincrusta.

We are also highly experienced in commercial work, any type and size of commercial property, shop fronts, offices will be considered, and we are prepared to work unsocial hours, out-with the regular opening hours of the business to reduce the amount of disruption to the client as much as possible.

All types of wall coverings are catered for to a very high standard, designer high end coverings also available such as harlequin, Shand Kydd, and Coale & Son offering a very wide range and unique offering to suit every style and budget. We can also cater for commercial properties, and offer a number of modern

and contract vinyl options to provide the best results and finish for each job.

We also provide a highly experienced and top quality plastering and Silicone sealing service, should this be required. We will also provide artex removal and skimming, and can provide full room plastering if necessary.

No job too big or small, we aim to provide a top quality, stress free service that will be unique and tailored to each individual customer's needs, offering a widely diverse variety of traditional and modern methods that will allow us to provide a high quality finish.

Sarah Wardlaw at SarahCreates has created a new professional website that complements the services I provide perfectly. I am now able to have examples of previous work I have carried out, and the site will hopefully help generate additional business. I would recommend anyone looking at designing a website to check out the services she offers.

www.colinlowiedecorating.co.uk



LETTER FROM AMERICA

*From Linlithgow to
New York City*

'Boiling in Brooklyn'

Having grown-up in Scotland I can handle the cold. Horizontal rain, temperatures below zero and a biting wind? No problem. I've got the kit. Bring on the snow. When we moved to New York countless people warned us about the cold winters, with polar vortexes and snow covered streets. Instead of making me worried I was excited! I was looking forward to living somewhere again that would have a proper winter and real snow!

But that thinking didn't quite reach the other end of the year. A proper winter means proper weather all year, which eventually means... a proper summer. 33 degrees every day. The tall buildings block any chance of a breeze and stagnate the air, making it feel unbearably stifling. At midday the sun beats down and feels more Barbados than Brooklyn.

About once a week, when even the weather system can't stand the heat, we are treated to a spectacular thunderstorm. These storms wouldn't feel out of place in the tropics. They bring huge drops of water that soak you if you're out in it for a couple of seconds, lighting shows with forked flashes hitting buildings, trees and even the Statue of Liberty. As long as

you're inside they are amazing to watch.

Since we can't actually go to Barbados we are trying to be more creative with ways to get out of the city during the summer. Unlike, seemingly quite a few New Yorkers, we don't have a house in the Hamptons or a cabin in the Catskills so are finding day trips and weekend breaks. It seems like the new marker for having money in New York is no longer just a multimillion dollar apartment, now it is the ability to escape the city during a global pandemic and heatwave to your second home: ideally by helicopter.

For us mere mortals there are a surprising number of options. Coney Island is only one subway train away and delivers you right to the boardwalk. The freezing Atlantic is a welcome shock on a hot day, but thanks to Corona none of the rides or attractions are open this summer. The beach stretches along the southernmost tip of Brooklyn, and at the weekend is busy with groups of people playing music, games and eating pizza. Towards the Western end is the amusement park with the famous boardwalk recognisable from Big and Brooklyn (although Brooklyn was set in the 1950s, all that has changed are the prices), where bars and restaurants blast pop music and sell cocktails, hotdogs, burgers and t-shirts. This year the New Look on the boardwalk is a bikini and mask, slightly strange, but at least people are wearing their masks!

One thing we have noticed is that Americans like music. I don't mean in a Party at the Palace kind of way, or anything else so organised. What they like is to set up their own picnic at the beach or in a local park, and along with the sandwiches and football they bring a boombox. Yes, the classic 90s stereo, the size of a Ryanair appropriate wheely bag and blast their music. But everyone does this. So when we go to the beach we often find ourselves in the crossfire of various types of music, R&B, hiphop, reggaeton, and sometimes even jazz. It can get very hectic.

Closer to home, the recently opened Governors Island is a perfect escape from the city heat, with less sand and no speakers allowed. Just off the southern tip of Manhattan 172 acres of greenery is cut-off from normal New York life by quick hop on the ferry. A former military base, the island still has some beautiful old buildings, but it is mainly a green park with views back into the city. But most importantly, there are lots of big trees for shade! We recently got the 5 minute ferry from Brooklyn, arrived at the island and set up camp for the afternoon at the seafood restaurant under a yellow umbrella next to the water. It could have been Spain! (without the quarantine on return).

Further afield there are a lot more places to explore. We have heard the Jersey Shore isn't actually like the TV show at all and instead is full of beautiful beaches. There are state parks to visit for weekends of hiking and swimming in lakes. Although there aren't any Munro equivalents anywhere near New York City, there are hills to climb for spectacular views. Personally as long as there is shade and some water to swim in, I will be happy.



Elizabeth Hill
*is from Linlithgow
but now finds
herself living in
New York. Her*

*Mum knows some of the magazine
team and has introduced her to
the magazine.*

*In normal circumstances, Elizabeth
works in marketing, but she is
currently spending her time
exploring New York and doing
some freelance writing.*

LINLITHGOW PEACE GARDEN BIRDSONG, NATURE AND GARDENS



As I look back over the past four months, I think of the horror and uncertainty that covid-19 has brought to us all. However there are a number of aspects of 'lockdown life' that I will miss as we slowly emerge, from this situation and back to a life that we hope will be more 'normal'.

I already miss the quiet without the noise of traffic and people so we could hear the bird song that sang out to us in our isolation. And then there was nature to watch; almost before our eyes late winter gently journeyed into spring in the wonderful unseasonably warm and sunny weather.

What a bonus for us all at that time of huge restrictions on our lives as it brought colour and hope, and a reminder that the rhythm of the seasons was ongoing in spite of the invisible global threat to our lives. Those connections of sound and nature that I watched from my windows or when out for the daily permitted walk.

And freed from many aspects of my daily routine I was able to stop and watch the fresh new leaves unfurl on the trees. They start so delicately and then, in a matter of days, they had matured in the sunlight, oh what joy.

For me this had the effect of calming my thoughts and worries, of giving me a sense of peace in my heart as my attention was drawn away from the 'what ifs' to the steady rhythm that pulses through nature even when our lives are in turmoil.

And oh, the gardens. Chelsea Flower Show was a casualty of the pandemic but with more time to spare than many would have liked, gardens were a blessing for some. And we, passing by on our walks, could admire the rich array of many spectacular displays which were the results of the labours of love lavished by gardeners this glorious spring.



The garden in my own home was created by my father almost 50 years ago, he built interesting curved walls and steps and crazy paving paths and planted dozens of trees to form a hedge. Nearly 30 years ago my parents moved to a bungalow and I moved my young family in. Sadly, over the years there was neither enough time or space in my head to do more than maintain what my father had created, and even then, not really adequately but we have all enjoyed it as home.

Last autumn project revamp began but it paused as covid-19 arrived but slowly it now begins to take shape and with the guidance of a creative landscape gardener new life is being breathed into our much loved space so full of family memories.

And it feels good, a very appropriate development for a living garden for my family in memory of my father who passed away at Christmas. Our old memories will now be added to by the younger generation in the years to come as we marvel at those curved walls still standing which now support new planting.

I share this very personal reflection for it in many ways mirrors, for me anyway, the Linlithgow Peace Garden Project with the much loved garden behind the Burgh Halls that incorporates the Rose Garden. It too is a garden that has many precious memories, memories for so many citizens of Linlithgow, where I am sure many will have spent time during recent months, appreciating the quiet and the space and yes, the roses have flourished this summer. As I am sure most of us recognise; It does need work to upgrade the 70 year old surfaces, steps, paths and planting. The Peace Garden proposal was to create a space that could be dedicated to a theme of Peace after visits to Korea and the Middle East but continue to recognise the heritage of the Rose Garden and the town.

Importantly it would move the care of the garden from the council who have so many calls on their funding, to the people of the town as a true 'Community Garden' supported and run by the people of the town.

An initial public consultation was held just before lockdown facilitated by **Rankin Fraser Landscape Architects**, to gauge feeling and ideas from the folk of Linlithgow about a revamping of the garden. Feedback confirmed that this is indeed a much loved space

but that it would benefit from some new life being breathed into it. New life that would not detract from the old, rather it would link the past and the present. It is a unique tranquil space where one can clearly hear the birds sing among the leaves gently rustling in the wind even though it is only a stone's throw from the High Street. It is a place to lose oneself in for a while, perhaps to remember past times, or a place to just be, to stop and watch nature at work and listen to golden silence as the butterflies dance.

I am still pretty new to the town, only 8 years in residence in our church house, but I know from others how much hard work has gone into maintaining this space in recent years firstly by Burgh Beautiful and more recently by The Friends of the Rose Garden. This will continue as our hard pressed council haven't had, and aren't likely to have, the resources to mow the grass more often or to make more 'Maintenance visits' to care for the plants.

Might this garden that already offers tranquillity, beauty and interest be made even more special with new paths and all year-round planting colour and bio-diversity. Can it be garden that is accessible for all and be even more of a wonderful asset for our town of Linlithgow that we can share with those who will surely come again to visit our historic burgh in the years ahead?



Our Landscape Architects are very keen to hear from anyone who would like to take part in the next stage of the consultation exercise. Unfortunately due to the current covid-19 restrictions these are being carried out online via Zoom. But groups are small to give opportunities for discussion after Chris Rankin has given his presentation and the sessions last no longer than one hour. Please do contact chris.gunstone@btinternet.com if you could spare some time to give us your thoughts and suggestions.

Christine Barclay

Chair of Linlithgow
Peace Garden Project



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Where the Crawdads Sing

Delia Owens

"Autumn leaves don't fall; they fly. They take their time and wander on this, their only chance to soar. Reflecting sunlight, they swirled and sailed and fluttered on the wind drafts."

"Where the Crawdads Sing" is the debut novel by Delia Owens, an American wildlife scientist turned author. Set in the rural, coastal marshes of North Carolina, America, it spans decades of Kya Clark's life starting from when she is six years old, through her teenage years and on into adulthood. Events in the story jump back and forth through the time periods of Kya's life, effortlessly building new layers into the story and heightening the plot tensions. There are two plot strands which interweave throughout the story, making this simultaneously a story about a young girl and her connections to the natural world and also a compelling crime drama. We know from the outset that a murder has been committed and as we read, Owens invites us to piece together the events which have brought about such a grisly demise for one of the characters.

Owens' use of descriptive language throughout the novel is wonderfully achieved and adds to the reader's pleasure. Within the novel, Owens writes "I wasn't aware that words could hold so much. I didn't know a sentence could be so full" and this is certainly true of her own narrative style. Owens manages to encapsulate a sense of place, understanding of characters and description of the natural world in an effortless, easy to read style. Kya is a child of the marsh lands which she inhabits and all of her learning – about people and place – comes from her environment. She understands the populated world only as it relates to the natural flora and fauna that surrounds her.

"Most of what she knew, she'd learned from the wild. Nature had nurtured, tutored, and protected her when no one else would."

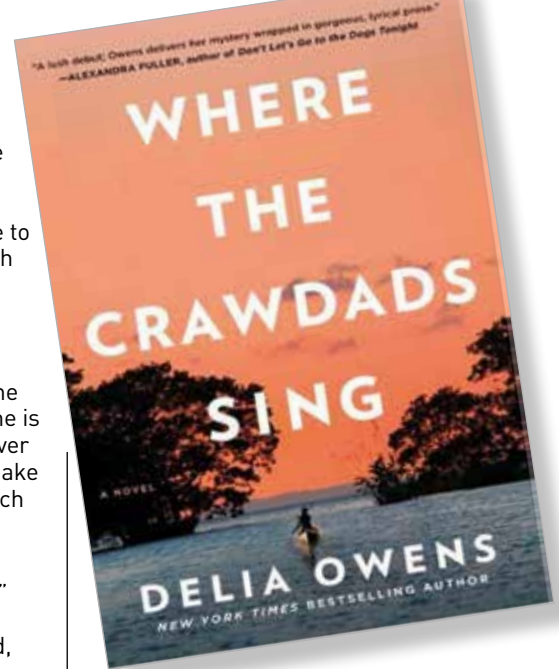
Kya is named 'The Marsh Girl' by the residents of the nearby town close to her isolated home on the marsh. She is abandoned gradually by her family who, in their efforts to escape her alcoholic father, leave her one by one to seek a better life elsewhere. Although admittedly an improbable situation, Owens makes this novel captivating reading. Kya's strength is that she is an observer of people and of nature. She learns how to survive using all the materials she has at her disposal. She is honest, hardworking, adaptable – never complaining and always looking to make the best out of a situation – all of which endears her fellow characters and readers alike.

Although "Where the Crawdads Sing" is set in a different decade, around a different socio-economic background, many of the main themes of race, prejudice, gender equality and abuse still strike a chord in today's society. So too will the themes surrounding nature, environment and conservation.

"Time is no more fixed than the stars. Time speeds and bends around planets and suns, is different in the mountains than in the valleys, and is part of the same fabric as space, which curves and swells as does the sea."

I found this an uplifting novel to read, unexpectedly so, especially at this current point in our lives, as we find ourselves living through this enormously challenging time in our own history. I found the tenacity, imagination and resilience of Kya uplifting as was her unwavering, often innocent, belief that her life situation could be improved. She was not interested in material gain, nor in senseless pursuit of possessions, only in making meaningful, healthy connections with others. Kya believed in the strength of family and friends, and looked for the goodness in people even when they did not freely show this side of themselves to her.

Perhaps, as we tentatively emerge from our period of lockdown, having found ourselves isolated from family, friends, colleagues, I felt connected on some



level to Kya and the impossibility of her situation. Whatever the reason, I enjoyed this novel enormously and took much from its pages. I enjoyed the crime drama that unfolded. I enjoyed the passages about wildlife behaviours and habitats. I enjoyed the awakening of Kya and the personal connections she made with others in the nearby village. Most of all though, I enjoyed the messages of hope, perseverance and triumph of human spirit – the 'never give up' aspect – that I feel will carry me onwards to the latter half of this tumultuous year.

"Please don't talk to me about isolation. No one has to tell me how it changes a person. I have lived it. I am isolation," Kya whispered."

"Out here, in the real remote, she was free to wander, collect at will, read the words, read the wild. Not waiting for the sounds of someone was a release. And a strength."

Lisa Nettleton

Lisa Nettleton is a teacher and enjoys reading on her daily rail commute into Edinburgh.



Bruce Jamieson's latest book, "LINLITHGOW LIVES" is available from Far From the Madding Crowd.

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Constable Andrew Murray and Constable Peter Robertson are the community officers based in Linlithgow Police station, which is now located within the newly refurbished [Tam Dalyell House at Linlithgow Partnership Centre, High Street, Linlithgow](#).

There is also a public assistance desk at the station, which is open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Alternatively if you want to discuss an issue, which may require more privacy, arrangements can be made to speak with you at another time at a police station, by telephone or your home address.

Alternatively you can email the Constables at: westlothiancommunityeast@Scotland.pnn.police.uk

BOGUS CALLERS / WORKMEN IN LINLITHGOW AREA

Bogus Callers & Rogue Traders will pretend to be someone they're not, claiming to be Council staff, meter readers and even Police Officers. In reality, they are criminals who are trying to steal your cash and valuables.

"Rogue traders" usually cold call, claiming to be workers offering to make repairs or carry out work on your house, garden or driveway. They will charge over inflated prices for work that is often of poor quality or completely unnecessary. Whilst bogus callers can be very deceitful, there are a few simple precautions you can do to stop yourself becoming a victim

- Be on guard if someone turns up unexpectedly.
- Use a door chain or bar and keep it on whilst talking to callers. If you don't have a door chain, check on the person from the window.
- Don't feel embarrassed - genuine callers expect you to be careful.
- If you're not sure about the person, don't answer the door.
- Always ask for identification.
- Do not feel pressurised into agreeing immediate work. Never listen to scare stories and beware of traders who suddenly appear after storms, floods or even snow and avoid claims



that a low price is only available if you sign up right away.

- Do not agree to buy from the first person who calls. Ask yourself if you really want these goods or services.
- Do not pay cash up front. Never pay for work before it is completed and don't hand over large sums of money.
- Do shop around if you decide you need work done. Get a minimum of three quotes from reputable traders. Why not consider the council's Trusted Trader Scheme - which is administered by the Trading Standards Department and can provide details of reliable local traders to carry out work around your home or garden.

Do report them. Don't ever feel embarrassed if you feel you have been the victim of doorstep crime. If you feel threatened, unsafe or suspicious of a caller then contact police immediately.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCOTLAND

This system allows users to receive alerts from Neighbourhood Watch and Police Scotland. The idea being that if there has been a recent crime trend, then officers from Police Scotland can send an alert to all users who may be affected or who may have an interest in the crime.

- >> Crime Trends - recent crimes that have occurred in their area, housebreakings etc.
- >> Missing Persons - Details of High Risk missing persons can be broadcast to specific areas.

Members of the public can register online and the registration process is very simple. You can register as an individual or an association such as a residents association or community council / community group.... Or both!!!!

The key to the Neighbourhood Watch Alert system being a success is YOU, we require the public to register online; the more people who register the better.

You can register at <https://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk>



COVID 19 & EXERCISE

The COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in many people now taking to the canal towpath and around Linlithgow Loch exercising either cycling, jogging, walking or exercising their dogs.

- >> Please when out exercising keep your distance
- >> Be courteous to other users
- >> Cyclists slow down and warn pedestrians of your approach
- >> If walking your dog keep it on a lead
- >> Be aware of other persons around you

Stay Safe and look after each other

TO CONTACT THE POLICE...

101 101 is the new number to contact the police when it's less urgent than 999.

Alternatively you can email westlothiancommunityeast@scotland.pnn.police.uk or pop into the police station at the library (Partnership Centre) and ask to speak to our Community officers, PC's Murray and Hunter.

Your Local Community
Police - Linlithgow
Website: www.scotland.police.uk
Twitter: @policescotland
Facebook: www.facebook.com/policescotland

THE TEIND BARN

Bruce Jamieson



The Teind Barn is shown on the 1856 OS map.

I've always been fascinated by the existence, on early OS maps of Linlithgow, of the Teind Barn. A teind is the Scots version of a tithe – a tax amounting to a one tenth part of agricultural produce usually paid to a religious organisation. Tradition has it that the Linlithgow tithe barn was where the monks from the nearby Carmelite Monastery stored the grain and other produce collected from all those obliged to contribute to the establishment, in obedience to the Book of Leviticus which states, "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord."



The Teind Barn before its demolition.

Claiming the Lord's share were the Carmelite monks whose Linlithgow Friary stood in what is now the grounds of Nether Parkley, off Manse Road, its dominance over the area

south of the town still recorded in street names like Priory Road, Friars Brae and Preston – the name given to a monastic farmstead, a corruption of 'Priest's town'.

It used to be claimed that the monastic establishment was founded in the late 13th century but there is no evidence to back up this assertion. The earliest existing documents date from the early 15th century, for example: "a grant to the Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel of eight shillings" from Mary of Guelders, wife of King James II.



Queen Mary of Guelders from the Seton Armorial.

The monks, or White Friars as they were also called, were well liked by the Linlithgow townsfolk who called them "the Brethren aboune the toune." Being a mendicant order, the monks were dedicated to helping

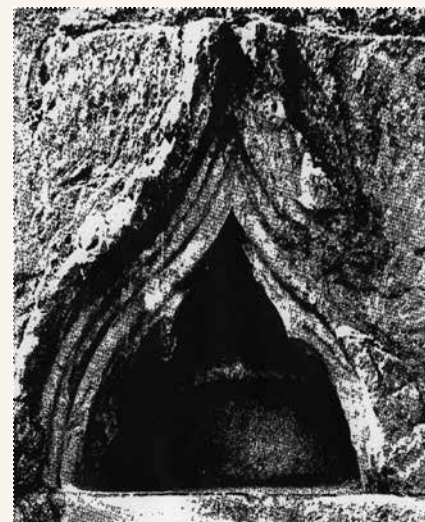
others - especially the poorest members of society. The friars were also well lettered and their literacy was used by the more influential members of medieval Linlithgow to settle legal disputes and to validate judicial oaths. The last head of the establishment, Prior Hopper, for example, witnessed a sasine, a registration of a deed transferring ownership of property to Alexander Livingston – the Guardian of Mary Queen of Scots. For his work in the community, Prior Hopper was created a burgess of the town.



Carmelite monks.

The monastery thrived and by the mid 16th century its holdings were recorded as being "a church, a burial ground, several houses and other buildings, greens (areas of grassland), orchards and crofts", all on a large estate stretching from Riccarton Road in the south to Kettlestoun in the west, to Bareshanks Park (now Clarendon) in the east and the burgage plots (the High Street riggs) to the north.

After the Reformation and the disbanding of the Order, the monastic lands were sold off or leased by the town. The lands of Laverockmure (now Laverock Park) were sold to Sir John Bruce who later sold them to Nicholas Bell, baker burgess. In 1624 Alexander, 2nd Earl of Linlithgow, obtained the rights to the actual monastery, the stones of which he sold off for various building purposes.



Previous image: This feature, built into Nether Parkley, is probably from the monastery.

Very little of the monastery now remains although archaeological excavations have uncovered the foundations of the chapel, the cloisters, the monks' dormitory, a refectory, a latrine and a burial ground.



There have been several archaeological excavations since 1900. This photo shows the 1983/4 'dig' in which I participated.



The outline of the Carmelite Friary. Sadly, the information plaque has been removed from the concrete plinth.

Right: The Whitekirk tithe barn.

The monastic teind barn probably went the same way as the monastery and was gradually demolished. A later building on the site, doubtless using some of the stones from the original, followed the original footprint and took the form of a long, barn like structure. In 1856, the replacement building (still called the Teind Barn) was owned by Robert Meikle who lived over the road in Gowan Cottage and leased the building out to several families for what must have been pretty rudimentary accommodation.



The Teind Barn before demolition and a comparative view today.

This building appears in OS maps into the mid 20th Century but eventually it was demolished and new properties built – one of which was lived in by local bookmaker John Barrett who named his house, 'Teind Barn'. A keen curler, he donated a trophy to the Linlithgow Curling Club and this prize is still keenly contested for under the name 'Teind Barn Trophy'.

What a shame the building was not retained and modernised along the lines of the successful conversion of the Teind Barn standing on a hill above Whitekirk Church in East Lothian.



HOW HAS YOUR GARDEN CHANGED THIS SUMMER?

Customers have been telling us about the various projects they've undertaken in their gardens over the lockdown in late spring and early summer. Borders have been rejuvenated with pruning, removal of shrubs now past their best and planting lovely new choices, raised beds built for growing their own fresh produce, new garden furniture on the patio, set off with smart new planters full of delightful hardy perennials and so on. We have been busy here at New Hopetoun Gardens although most of us were furloughed until the end of May.

We decided to replace the 20 year old temporary structures up by The Bird House and had bought a couple of new temporary buildings at the beginning of March.

Frustratingly they had to remain unbuilt, in bits, on their pallets until the end of July! The old buildings were from two show gardens that we rebuilt here. **Chic in the city** featured a basement garden for 35 year olds and **Tartan Tuscan** promoted Tuscan style in Scotland. The picture shows our team removing the original structures which have now been replaced by **Tartan Tuscan (reborn!)**. We will be promoting indoor/ outdoor lifestyle to you - taking indoors outside and bringing the garden into the house.



As we won't be able to have socially distanced gatherings inside for our **Tea'n a Talks or Customer evenings** this autumn we are making short videos so you can watch them in the comfort of your own homes. Amy, who graduated with a 1st Class degree from Stirling this summer, has made one about our **Indestructible Houseplant Collection**, watch it on our website, as well as **Autumn Bulb Magic** which shares some of our own spring flowering bulb suggestions to plant at this time.

'Amy with her pet Monkey Mask plant, just one of 80 houseplants living in her flat!'



Clematis scrambling through cherry tree.



Our friends at the 'Caley' created a lovely winter garden at their new base in Saughton Park last year.

We were delighted that they asked us to donate a few plants for this project. Lesley and I had donated a **winter flowering cherry (*Prunus sub. Autumnalis Rosea*)** and a Clematis viticella Etoile Violette to scramble up it for the replanting of Geoff Hamilton's Winter Garden at Barnsdale, the one-time home of Gardeners World TV programme. We thought this would make a great combination to give to the 'Caley' and in August they sent us this picture of the combination. The pink cherry blossom had a wonderful flowering season as well during the winter.

Dougal Philip and Lesley Watson,
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THE ARTS

“ARTS FOR OLDER PEOPLE... BETTER THAN MEDICINE?”

Pat Swan patswan@virginmedia.com.



At the risk of repeating myself, I'm highlighting again in this article the well-being benefits of Art and Creativity! I hope many of you have found a new love for being creative in the last few difficult months.



Generation Arts

Generation Arts is an arts and well-being

charity run by a board of retired professionals living in West Lothian. Their strapline is “arts for older people...better than medicine”, which is food for thought. They are reaching out to help people who are continuing to stay mainly at home with some new projects, and aim to bring some colour and relief to anyone feeling lonely or isolated. Visit their website - generationarts.co.uk - for more info on the new **Boundless** projects, and indeed on their ongoing work.

Taking part in Boundless is free, there's no need to live in West Lothian and you most definitely do not need the internet or a smart phone to take part. Their artists and volunteers will guide you along the way, and local lady **Joanne Brown**, Director of the charity, can help explain more if you are interested.

The Arts projects aim for people to create and connect with each other in new ways. They've been named Boundless, as even in times of isolation our imaginations have no limits, and we can still be part of making something new together. Boundless is supported by Foundation Scotland.

The first projects are described on the website as follows and you can take part in just one, or as many as you like.

Holler - make a postcard, send a postcard, receive a postcard. Create whatever takes your fancy on the back; maybe a poem, drawing, doodle, short story, stitch, collage, or print? There is no limit and definitely no wrong response.

Cookbook - stuffed with recipes and your memories and responses to these favourite dishes. Beautifully printed, all participants will receive their own copy.

Flickerbook - with guidance from us take just one photo. We will merge the photos from participants in a flip

book that, when seen together, create a dance.

Record Collection - a gather up of songs that lift us, bring comfort, joy or kinship, and your associations with them. Keeping music making in our lives this collection will create a lockdown songbook, playlist and hopefully some recordings of you too.

If you'd like to take part you should write, call, email or text to be put on the mailing list. As each project begins you will receive an invite to take part. Contact details are as follows: email generationarts.coordinator@gmail.com, write to Generation Arts, Craigsfarm Community Hub, Maree Walk, Livingston EH54 5BP or call or text on 07521 358 239.

As I write 75 people have already signed up. The projects will run from September for at least a year and you can join in at any time.

Competition

You may have seen on the Black Bitch Facebook page that we are running another competition. We are asking for children aged up to 11 to record some of their thoughts or experiences on coronavirus and lockdown. They can paint, draw, stitch or collage their feelings and **two £10 vouchers are up for grabs, kindly donated by Bright Star Toys**. In addition, the two winning entries will be displayed in the Toyshop for all to see. They will also be published in a future copy of the magazine and we plan to set up a Gallery on the FB page.



The closing date for

entries is Friday 18 September and a photo of your entries should be emailed to me with the subject heading “Black Bitch corona competition”, providing the child's age and a few short words from them explaining their Artwork. I'll be looking for good ideas as well as an eye-catching piece of Art. Good luck!



The Written Word

At least access to this form of Art has not been restricted due to

coronavirus, although I have found it difficult at times to focus on reading in the same way I used to, and I know of others who feel the same. One of my annual Art highlights is the Edinburgh Book Festival and although it isn't running as normal, there is an online version, “Keep the Conversation Going”, which might be a good way of enjoying the written word, without the concentration required to read.

Running till the end of August, more than 140 events are available for FREE via their website, including authors such as Matt Haig, Elif Shafak, Ali Smith and David Mitchell. There will be discussions, readings, live conversation, draw-alongs, online book signings and digital chatrooms and events will be beamed from more than 30 countries. Set some time aside and imagine you are waiting in a sunny Charlotte Square for an event to begin, perhaps sitting with a G&T catching up with a friend you haven't seen for 6 months... Many of the events will be available online afterwards so you can catch up at your leisure.

You may also wish to look at the online offerings from **Far From the Madding Crowd** who have joined up with two other independent bookshops to form Wee Three Indies. They have teamed up to bring you some fantastic live virtual author events that you can enjoy from the comfort of your own home. Follow them on Facebook.



I'm still looking for more local

artists to write about, so please get in touch if you'd like to be included - patswan@virginmedia.com. I hope you have time to experience some ART over the next few weeks, perhaps at **The Line Gallery** where a local favourite Ruth Brownlee will exhibit from 10 September.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“art simply makes me feel better”



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IS LASER HAIR REMOVAL PAINFUL?

You do feel a slight sensation of heat, but the laser has a tip cooled at -8°C to make the treatment comfortable, it is not described as painful. Some areas of the

face and body are more sensitive, and clients refer to this discomfort as an elastic band snapping on their skin but then the immediate sensation is gone.

WHY ARE MULTIPLE SESSIONS OF LASER HAIR REMOVAL REQUIRED?

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- > **Telogen** – Shedding phase

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HALL OF FAME HONOUR FOR NORA DEVINE



The 'Hands Up for Trad' organisation has announced that Linlithgow's Nora Devine will be inducted into the Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame at the 2020 Scots Trad Music Awards in the Caird Hall, Dundee on Saturday 5th December.

She will be included in the 'Services to Community' section, where the nominees are all individuals who have worked tirelessly to help their community and enrich the lives of others through selfless service or charitable work. This section of the Hall of Fame started in 2015.

From the mid-1960s, Nora ran the famous Linlithgow Folk Club, which started at the 'Football and Cricketers' Arms' and welcomed some of the biggest names in traditional music at that time. The club was also credited with giving an early performing opportunity to young musicians and singers who went on to greater things. Included among these were people like Aly Bain, Barbara Dickson and the McCalmans.

Nora acted as an adviser to the steering group which set up the Linlithgow Folk Festival, but sadly passed away just two weeks before the first event in September 1999. A memorial concert, featuring many of Nora's musical friends and associates, took place in 2000 and among those taking part was the acclaimed singer and songwriter, **Ian Walker**. Ian was closely involved with Linlithgow Folk Club in the early part of his career and knew Nora well. He was delighted to hear about the Hall of Fame announcement, and he told me:

"Nora Devine was the warm hearted, unassuming host at Linlithgow Folk Club.

In fact, Nora was Linlithgow Folk Club and Linlithgow Folk Club was Nora.

In contrast to many other clubs, there was no committee or panel to decide which acts to book or which "policies" to have - there was just Nora.

I was involved from around 1982 to 1995 when the Club was in The Star & Garter and The Black Bitch.

Nora was always located by the door and would welcome people with a genuine smile and an affectionate twinkle in her eye. She had a profound love of folk music in all its forms from traditional to contemporary and she always seemed genuinely pleased to have this love shared by all who attended.

She booked a diverse range of artists from well weathered performers, like The McCalmans and Dick Gaughan, to unknown upcoming acts for whom she unstintingly offered a platform to showcase their talents.

Nora also liked to encourage members to help in the running of the folk club. For years I (and others) compered and assisted with press publicity. I don't recall any serious squabbles, tussles or rammies about the choice of acts or the way the club was run. The ethos she engendered meant that no one grandstanded or stepped over marks as everyone recognised that Nora, in her typically benevolent way, was ultimately the first word and the last. "No airs or graces here, what you get is what you see!"

The club ran weekly throughout the year normally with a guest act. There were few breaks and very few "singers' nights". The frequently packed nights generated an entertaining and sociable buzz with, back in the day, a fairly smoke laden atmosphere!

Singers and musicians from all over the world sang at the club and usually Nora would provide overnight accommodation for them before they headed off next morning over the horizon to another venue. Nora's renowned hospitality was indeed a "Home from Home" for these troubadours.

For Nora to have been inducted into the Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame is simply fantastic. The Award "recognises individuals that work tirelessly to help their community and enrich the lives of others through

selfless or charitable work". Nora was never one for being in the limelight and would have been modestly astonished at receiving this Award.

Nora was much loved and has left us with enduring memories and with a tangible legacy in Scottish Folk music, especially in Linlithgow, where the music and songs continue to be celebrated in the current vibrant music scene and Folk Festival.

After she died, I tried to sum up Nora's legacy in a song to portray both her personality and the friendly reception she offered to the many touring artists who came to her door:

*Welcome to my room she smiled,
you're a long time gone*

*This is your "home from home"
sing us your song*

*And we will lift our voices,
blend some harmony*

*No airs or graces here what you
get is what you see.*

*How we try to catch the moments,
but they always journey on*

*Thanks for your company,
thank you for your songs*

*Take care until the next time,
you're passing by this place*

*I'll leave you with a smile she said
and an honest warm embrace..."*

Ian's song for Nora has been recorded by many artists and is always the opening number on Linlithgow Folk Festival's outdoor Nora Devine Stage at the Cross. This initiative allows young talent the opportunity to perform right at the heart of the Folk Festival and is always one of the highlights of the five-day musical extravaganza in September.

In common with other events throughout the country, the Folk Festival will not take place this year. The Festival Association continues to organise regular Sessions and other online events and full details can be found on the Facebook page and the website www.linlithgowfolk.com.

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WHY HAVING A DIVERSIFIED PORTFOLIO IS IMPORTANT!

Virtue Money

- >> Diversification can help to manage risk.
- >> You may avoid costly mistakes by adopting a risk level you can live with.

It's easy to find people with investing ideas—your hairdresser, your neighbour, or an “inside tip” from a someone “in the know”. But these kinds of well-meaning but not necessarily informed suggestions aren't a replacement for a real investment strategy.

At Virtue Money we believe that setting and maintaining your strategic asset allocation are amongst the most important ingredients in your long-term investment success. No matter what your situation, this means creating an investment mix based on your goals, risk tolerance, financial situation and timeline and being diversified both among and within different types of stocks, bonds and other investments.

Your portfolio needs a regular check-up. You should check your asset allocation at least once a year or any time your financial circumstances change significantly – things like losing your job or getting a big bonus. This is also a good time to review your existing assets and risk strategy to see if it still meets your current situation and future plans.

Why diversify?

The aim of diversification is not necessarily to improve performance – it won't ensure gains or guarantee against losses. However, once you choose to target a level of risk based on your goals, time horizon and tolerance for volatility, diversification may provide the potential

to improve returns for that level of risk.

To build a diversified portfolio, you have to look for assets – stocks, bonds, cash, or others – whose returns haven't historically moved in the same direction and to the same degree; and, ideally, assets whose returns typically move in opposite directions. This way, even if a bit of your portfolio is not performing so well, the rest of your portfolio is more likely to be growing, or at least performing better. This means that you can potentially offset some of the impact that a poorly performing asset class can have on an overall portfolio.

A diversified approach can help to manage risk, while maintaining exposure to market growth.

Why is it so important to have a risk level you can live with?

The value of a diversified portfolio usually reveals itself over time. Unfortunately, many people struggle to fully realise the

benefits of their investment strategy because when markets are on the up, they tend to chase performance and purchase higher-risk investments. When there is a market downturn they do the opposite and look to move to lower-risk investment options. These are actions which can lead to missed opportunities.

It is important to understand that the decisions that you make about how to diversify, the time you choose to get into or out of the market, as well as fees you pay for underperforming funds, can cause you to generate returns far lower than the overall market.

Having a plan that includes appropriate asset allocation tailored to your attitude to risk and reviewing your portfolio on a regular basis can help you overcome (to a certain degree) the challenge of an uncertain market.



Virtue Money

If you would like to make an appointment to speak to one of our advisers, please contact me, Susan Ralston, directly on 0345 034 3424 or email me at Susan@virtuemoney.com.

Susan Ralston

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THINGS TO DO IN YOUR FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GARDEN IN AUGUST



- >> Prune fruited summer Raspberry canes to ground level leaving this year's fresh green shoots, which will fruit next year.
- >> Sow Spring Cabbages for overwintering
- >> Plant Brassicas for autumn use or overwintering, such as Winter Cauliflowers and Kale, where Peas and Beans have been cleared.
- >> Harvest Sweetcorn, Garlic, Onions, Shallots, Beetroot, Celery, French Beans, Runner Beans.
- >> Begin to earth up Leeks this month to give long white stems
- >> Second Early Potatoes should be ready for lifting this month.

Outdoor grape vines

One of our plot holders, **Adam Jaworski**, is growing a somewhat unusual crop on his plot – grape vines. I asked Adam to tell me more about growing vines outdoors.

1. What got you interested in growing vines? A bottle of Pinot Noir, opened after ten years of resting underneath a vineyard shed and sampled with good company, while watching the sunset over mountains.

2. Have you grown vines before? I have few months experience of working in the vineyards of Germany, Switzerland and Denmark.

3. Will they do well in the Scottish climate? Time will tell, although, I know there is a hobby vineyard in Norway. I have also seen grape vines prosper in Denmark. With a bit of luck and some determination I believe we stand a good chance of success.

4. Did you have to do any special ground preparation?

One would normally dig in some compost in autumn before planting - no more than 4 to 6 inches deep. In my case, after clearing the land from debris, I went systematically through the plot with a digging fork.

5. How are the vines grown?

The vines are grown on a T-shaped trellis system. The vine trunks will grow to about 5 feet tall, dividing then sideways to form a falling 'curtain' of grape bearing branches. This is known as a Geneva Double Curtain (GDC) trellis system. It requires more work, but it is better suited for training hybrid vine varieties.

6. What variety of grapes are you growing?

I grow three red wine grape varieties. These are: Rondo, Cabernet Cortis and Marshall Joffre. They are hybrid vine varieties, which are intended for challenging climates.

7. How long will it take the vines to produce grapes?

They will be ready for the first harvest in two years' time from now.

8. What will you use the grapes for? They should blend nicely together to form good and story-telling red wine.

If you are interested in having a plot at Oakwell Allotments, please contact us on our website on <https://linlithgowallotments.org.uk> and ask to be added to the waiting list.

Paul Taylor

Chair, Linlithgow and District Allotment Society



Dial-A-Ride is back...

HcL Transport (Handicabs) is running its Dial-A-Ride service again.



All buses are fitted with wheelchair tie downs...

HcL Transport (Handicabs) is running its Dial-A-Ride service again. The first five passengers in West Lothian to book for travel for the week commencing 20 July were given a £6 discount off their journey.

The charity also gave £6 discount to the first five passengers in Edinburgh, in East Lothian and Midlothian. A small gesture to celebrate Dial-A-Ride coming back from lockdown and to welcome passengers back on to our buses!

Passengers are delighted to be able to use Dial-A-Ride again:

“It will be lovely to see you all again”
a Passenger

“All the drivers are amazing; my brother would be lost without this amazing firm. The service the charity provides to my wheelchair bound brother is second to none. Without them travel to hospital visits/outings would be unbearable. The staff are all amazing, caring, attentive and cheerful.” Sharon Ainslie

Dial-A-Ride was operational during lockdown, but limited to urgent medical appointments and funerals. New enhanced cleaning procedures have been introduced both daily and between journeys with drivers wearing PPE including masks. Passengers must wear masks, unless they have medical reasons that prevent this. A maximum of 4 passengers from one household can travel at this time, accompanied by a carer.

HcL Transport is a charity that runs vital transportation services for people with mobility challenges across West Lothian. Through Dial-A-Ride and Dial-A-Bus services they help the elderly, people of any age with disabilities or additional support needs or affected by geographic remoteness that makes public transport very difficult or impossible to use.

The service is also available to those who need help short-term e.g. while waiting for and following surgery such as a knee replacement or hip replacement.

The service is not just transportation, it is a door-through-door service which means the driver helps the passenger from inside their home/ outside their home to their destination. The driver takes their shopping onto the bus and then into the passengers home (if they wish). All buses are fitted with wheelchair tie downs so can carry 2 wheelchairs on board with passengers able to remain in their wheelchair.

TO BOOK CALL
01506 633953.

NEW PASSENGERS GET £6 OFF THEIR FIRST DIAL-A-RIDE JOURNEY.

Laura Kearney
Fundraising Officer, Handicabs



REFLECTIONS

In a month I will be at University, studying zoology. I knew that this was what I needed to do ever since rediscovering my passion for birds and wildlife aged 13. But let's start at the beginning.

While both my parents like nature, somehow I ended up thoroughly obsessed. My favourite days out, books, TV programmes - everything was animals. I spent hours in the garden watching ants crawl across the patio and bees feed on the patches of white clover. When I got my first proper bird book aged 8, I remember sitting pouring over it, trying to commit all the birds in it to memory. I took it everywhere and I still have it. Each species of bird that I've seen has its name highlighted.

Even when I wanted to be an author, my birdwatching hobby persisted past the age most children were really interested in animals. My dad and I would regularly go round Linlithgow Loch, to Muiravonside, Blackness and the Bo'ness foreshore to birdwatch together. It was inevitable that one day I decided while that I enjoyed writing, my true calling was conservation.

Working in this field has given me incredible opportunities, from being involved with real scientific research on the Isle of May to speaking at a national bird conference about Linlithgow Loch's bird life. And although some of my bird watching happens in nature reserves and on pre-planned trips, the majority of it is in the everyday. Glancing out of my bedroom window in the morning to see the birds feeding in our garden. Seeing buzzards and kestrels on fence posts by the M9 motorway. Pausing on the way home from work to appreciate a bumblebee feeding on a thistle. Even my school is bursting with non-teenage life. Oystercatchers roost on the roof; swifts, swallows and house martins stay for the summer; and pied wagtails and other song birds are ever present. Of course - technically - it's not my school anymore. I'm moving on and therefore this is my final article for The Black Bitch magazine.

So what do I hope for in the future for Linlithgow's wildlife/environmental impact? Firstly, we need to acknowledge the vital part nature plays in our lives. Unless everyone - especially those in power - fully understand the devastating effects of deforestation, climate change, species extinction, wildlife crime and pollution on humans, nothing of substance will happen to reverse or halt it.

Next, I feel so encouraged by the growth of eco living and gardening for nature. After spending the past four months in extenuating circumstances and all adapting admirably, it's time to do the same for the planet. A lifestyle change that might have seemed a big deal before lockdown might seem doable now. And let's let nature into Linlithgow - allow verges to stay a little wild. For the first time ever I saw orchids growing by The Loch - that's got to be a good sign.

Lastly, I think there's a stereotype that nature is reserved to little kids and old men who resemble Bill Oddie. That's not true. Anyone can enjoy nature, you just need to take the time to look. Thanks for reading!

LUCY PURBRICK

Wildlife, conservation and eco-living.

Bumblebee on Clover



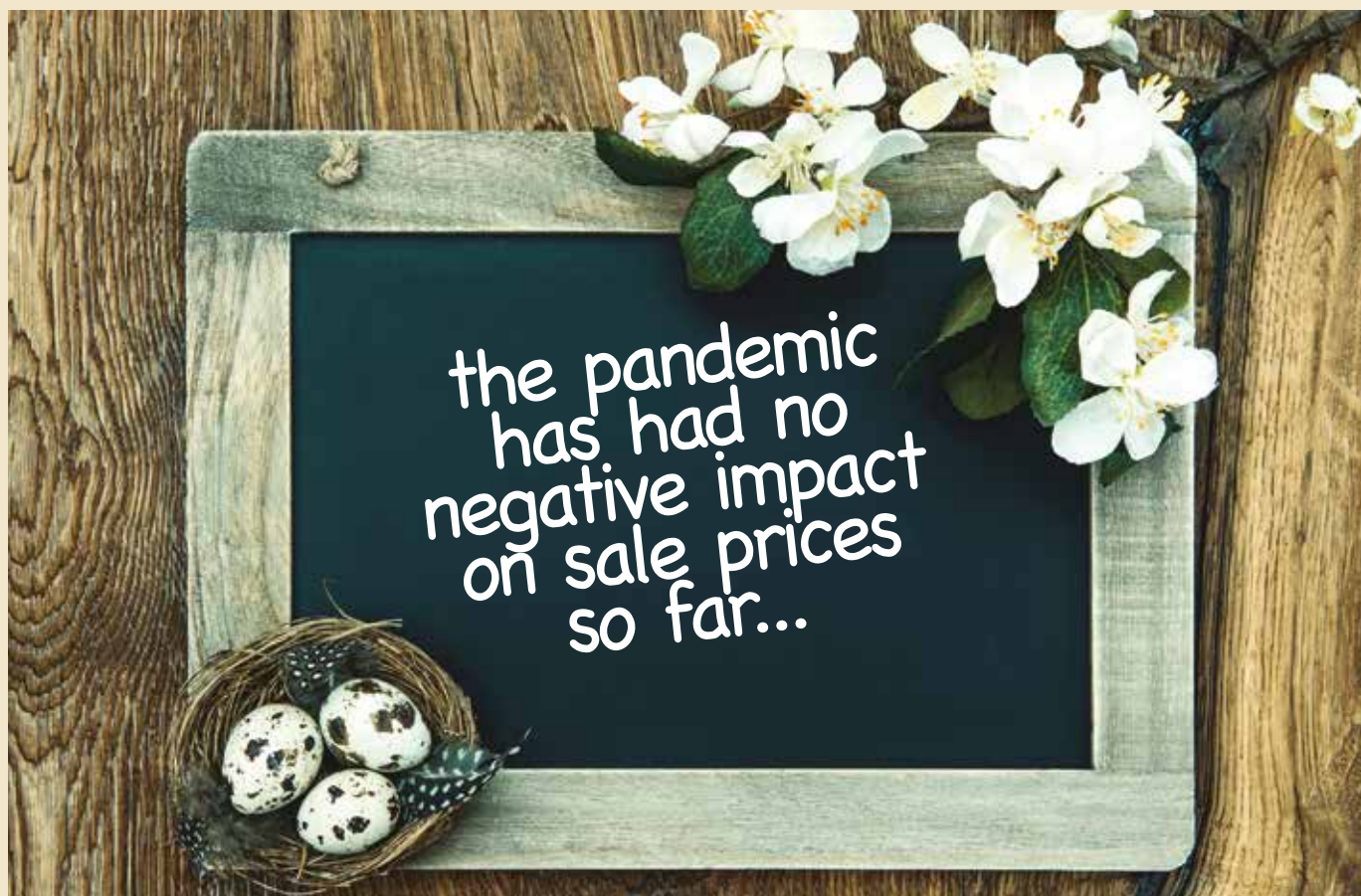
Common spotted Orchid



Birdwatching at the loch aged 9



Linlithgow Academy



We are pleased to say that the housing market has bounced back very strongly, here at Paul Rolfe we had our busiest July on record, and commentary from property professional bodies and portals across the country confirms what we are experiencing. Rightmove reported that in England the day after the Chancellors announcement regarding stamp duty breaks, that traffic to it's website was up 93% on the same day in July 2019.

Most agents are also reporting record levels for valuation requests.

Not only is activity at high levels, but the pandemic has had no negative impact on sale prices so far, in fact, if anything, there is more upward pressure on prices. In the last few weeks we have had several closing dates and clients have been very pleased with the sale prices achieved.

Of course at this point in time it is hard to tell if the market conditions we are presently experiencing can be purely put down to a build up of pent up demand during the lockdown, or whether it is a combination of this and a wider more optimistic feeling about the UK's economic outlook after we have left the European Union.

One of the consequences of the lockdown and the pandemic, is a sharp rise in interest in rural and semi-rural properties, as companies and employees adjust to working from home more, the possibility exists that there will be more home working on a permanent basis as companies realise this can be an effective way of conducting business. The daily commute and need to be in reasonably easy access of the office has become less important for many people.

As part of its measures to mitigate against the economic impact of the coronavirus, on the 15th July the Scottish government introduced a temporary change to the nil band rate of the Land and buildings transaction tax, LBTT, raising the level of the price of a property on which no tax needs to be paid from £145,000 to £250,000. This will remain in place until the 31st March 2021.

It is a similar picture in the rental market, with new highs in tenant demand for quality properties for let.

Generally speaking vendors, buyers and tenants are comfortable with the PPE protocols the industry is applying to conducting valuations and viewings.

'WHAT HE'S BEEN DOING DURING LOCKDOWN'...

My old pal and former cellmate, Garibaldi Waldie, has been in touch. He wants to come round and show me what he's been doing during lockdown. Apparently, he's put together a device which measures things to a high degree of accuracy. "It can measure the distance moved by two shakes of a lamb's tail" he tells me, before repeating his request to visit me.

"Well, I'm not sure, Gari" I say. "I'm finding all these new rules about going to people's houses very confusing. I wouldn't want to step out of line and incur Nicola's wrath."

"Nonsense!" Garibaldi declares "the ease down rules are quite straightforward. You can have up to 15 people of any gender in your home, plus one dog or two cats whichever is the smaller, multiplied by the square root of 63 and divided by VAT at the rate currently prevailing. Have no fear, my visit will come well within these parameters." Unable to muster much in the way of a coherent response to this, I agree to him visiting me in the next couple of days.

When he arrives, he plonks himself down in my living room brandishing his invention, which looks to me suspiciously like the sort of tape a builder would use. But when he points it at me a display panel on one of its sides lights up with a greeny-glow. Garibaldi lifts it to his eyes. "This indicates we are sitting 124 miles apart," he declares "allowing for a correction factor, of course, of 52 pence."

"Are you absolutely sure about that?" I ask, after pausing to absorb this information. "That would mean I'm in Linlithgow and you're somewhere just short of Lancaster."

Garibaldi returns his gaze to his gizmo. "Ah yes, you have a point there" he concedes "it's 25 pence, I was reading the numbers upside down."

He stands up and gazes down at my coffee table. "This device can measure the dimensions of that with just one click." He points his invention at the table then raises it to his eyes looking puzzled. "How many furlongs are there

in a mile?" he mutters.

"I haven't a clue," I say "but I could make a pretty good guess at the numbers on furlough in Inverness, if that was any help."

Garibaldi swats away the suggestion. "According to this your table has a diameter of 16 fluid ounces, a thickness of less than one millimetre and a circumference of two kilowatts per hour." He looks over at me with raised eyebrows. "Does that satisfy you?"

He begins moving around the room searching for more things to measure. He stops in front of a chrome-plated angle poise lamp. "If you were to re-cover that" he says "would you know how much fabric to order? That's where something like this little machine comes in very handy."

I shake my head and decide I've had enough of this. I go out and stand in my garden. The air is scented with a neighbour's honeysuckle bush. I step out of my slippers and feel the soft buoyancy of the turf beneath my feet. Overhead, a squadron of tiny birds fly past chirping ecstatically at their freedom. Some things can't be measured, I tell myself. Some things have effects on the spirit that refuse being corralled by technology, or even lockdown. I look up to see Garibaldi standing in my porch. "I've just measured the area of varnish on your skirting boards," he says triumphantly "and do you know..."

"Don't tell me," I say, raising an admonitory hand. "It comes to 110 volts, plus the standard interest paid on a Stocks & Shares ISA, right?" A look of mild surprise flickers across Garibaldi's features. "You're almost spot on, except you forgot to divide by ten shillings and sixpence in old money."

I remain in my garden communing with nature, until Garibaldi departs taking his invention with him.

Kirk Gates

Image: by local illustrator Sandra Gibson.

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Linlithgow Regent Centre Tel 01506 534 484

Westport Vets Pet of The Month are cats Willow (6) and Molly (9).

They are both rescue cats with vastly different personalities!

Molly loves her attention and cuddles and if you have food, she'll love you even more! Molly picked the family rather than the other way around as she was the only one that came right up to the door to greet them.

Willow, on the other hand, is very shy and keeps to herself. She was half feral when they rescued her and had a difficult time learning to trust. For the first few months Willow lived in their spare bedroom behind the couch before venturing into the rest of the house. Today, the family say she is still very shy and gets scared easily so remains an indoor cat.

Despite their differences they love cuddling up next to each other. Both Willow and Molly keep the family entertained the way they demand attention and cuddles and are even seen sulking when they do not get cuddles on demand! Molly has also been making work colleagues smile with her frequent appearances in work video calls! Lucky Emily, 2-year-old daughter, is also blessed with their kisses and cuddles.

Both cats' favourite hobby is sleeping, closely followed by eating treats! Molly likes exploring outside (unless it is raining, windy or cold) and sitting under garden bushes on the look-out for birds and cats. Willow loves to chase things, a toy or spiders, and has a quick 10 minutes of playtime a couple of times a day, then it is back to catching up on some zzz's!

When it comes to having fun, both cats believe 6am is playtime, either sprints around the house or bringing toys to their owners! Although they have a box of toys and various scratching posts, they find the best fun is an empty box or paper bag!

Their favourite place to be in is their owner's bedroom or the window sill. When it gets cold or dark, they will sometimes go and hide in one of their little houses, where it's nice and cosy, but for the most part they sleep in the same spot on their owners' bed.

Both cats enjoy checking up on the family when they're busy working from home, and their owners say it's been quite soothing having a cat purring next to

you while you're trying to solve the challenges that come with working from home.

When lockdown is lifted, they think both cats will cope fine and go back to sleeping, but in the first couple of days and weeks the family expect them to be a bit clingier when they are home. A behaviour like their reaction when they return from holidays.

With the recent outbreak of coronavirus, restrictions have meant that pet owners have been able to spend more time at home with their pets. For most of us, this has been a welcomed aspect to a challenging period. However, the extra time spent together may result in more cats suffering from separation anxiety, once the lockdown is over and you start to return to work.

Separation anxiety is the stress felt when an animal is away from its owner – a complex and potentially serious problem for some cats in the UK.

While the symptoms of separation anxiety may differ from cat to cat, there are often some common symptoms that are displayed. Cats suffering from separation anxiety might start 'spraying' around the house, which is a common sign of stress. It can also be something in the environment that might have startled the cat or upset them or a urinary infection caused by stress.

Territory is very important to cats and not all of them are as happy living in multi-cat households as Willow and Molly.

You might notice that your cat constantly wants attention and meows if you're not giving her enough. This may be a sign of over-dependence and may mean that your cat is distressed when you are not at home. Stressed cats can also sometimes over groom, or under groom.

With any concerns about anxiety in a cat, you should first seek veterinary advice to rule out any underlying health problems in your pet.

Help keep your cat entertained when they are alone by having things your cat can interact with in their environment. Rather than giving your cat attention think about a puzzle toy to put their food in.



Hello

Pheromone sprays and plug-ins, which are a man-made version of the substance a cat deposits when they rub their cheek on your leg or furniture, can help in the home to relax an anxious pet.

The most important thing to remember with any anxious pet is that you need to be patient and understand that your cat is in distress. We must also remember that the coronavirus has not only changed the way we are living, but also the lives and routines of our pets too and that cats are incredibly intuitive and pick up on our own stress and anxiety. Whatever you do, never punish your pet for stress-related behaviour, such as scratching or spraying. Always seek professional advice.

Team Westport can help 01506 844165 or surgery@westportvets.com.

The Linlithgow Community Magazine (aka The Black Bitch) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO): SCO42542 Find us on Facebook, Follow us on Twitter.



The paper we are using is FSC approved.
Images: A big thank you to all our photographers who support the magazine throughout the year.



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