



the BLACK bitch

Linlithgow's news by Linlithgow's people

LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY MAGAZINE ISSUE 77 OCTOBER 2020

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Local Arts Review, Lisa's Book Review, Bruce Jamieson – The Dream, Friars Brae

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CONTENTS

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>3 Magazine Subscription
<i>Why subscribe?</i></p> <p>4 One Linlithgow
<i>Open for Business and Business Spotlight</i></p> <p>6 Linlithgow Peace Garden
<i>Latest proposals reviewed</i></p> <p>8 Burgh Beautiful and 2020 Planting and Praise</p> <p>10 Linlithgow Community Development Trust
<i>The story so far</i></p> <p>12 A Taste of Italy
<i>Fruttivendolo Italian Greengrocers - fresh produce on our high street</i></p> <p>13 Linlithgow Rose
<i>Interview with Jonathan Mahoney, Club President</i></p> <p>14 Linlithgow Athletic Club
<i>A positive impact across our community</i></p> | <p>15 Linlithgow Players
<i>Armchair Theatre presents 'award winning' monologues</i></p> <p>16 2nd Linlithgow Boys Brigade
<i>Heading back on Track - and Covid ready</i></p> <p>17 Linlithgow Police News
<i>Parents and Teenagers, Neighbourhood Watch, Quad and 'off road' Bikes</i></p> <p>18 The Dream
<i>Bruce Jamieson</i></p> <p>20 New Hopetoun Gardens
<i>Time to explore our Scottish Trees</i></p> <p>21 Linlithgow Planning Forum
<i>Information on planning issues within the town</i></p> <p>22 The Arts
<i>Interview with Clara Melville, aged 8, book author</i></p> | <p>25 Book Week Scotland, Book Review
<i>Bad Debt, William McIntyre</i></p> <p>26 Virtue Money
<i>Woman & Retirement. Preparing for retirement</i></p> <p>27 Linlithgow and District Allotment Society
<i>A good growing season down at the allotments</i></p> <p>28 Paul Rolfe September Property Commentary
<i>Property prices and sales advice</i></p> <p>29 Kirk Gates
<i>Ghostly 'goings on' at the Friary</i></p> <p>31 Meet Coco, a 'Cavapoo' King Charles Cavalier Spaniel and Poodle mix.
<i>Westport Veterinary</i></p> |
|---|--|---|



PROFILES OF OUR TEAM CHRIS HAMILTON...



I moved up to Linlithgow with my wife Val over 20 years ago from London. We were looking to enjoy a new life in a greener space and feel part of a really strong community.

I was able to continue my profession as an experienced graphic designer specialising in brochure design, logotypes, branding, exhibition graphics and website creation.

After 10 years working for a design company based in Leith I was keen to consider working for myself and eventually established my

design company CGH Creative here in Linlithgow.

One day in 2013 I received a call from David Tait enquiring if I would be able to produce the magazine and work with the fantastic people who make up the Black Bitch community magazine team.

It's been really fulfilling and helped me strongly connect with the town. We have created a magazine that places a spotlight on local business, our community and all its groups.



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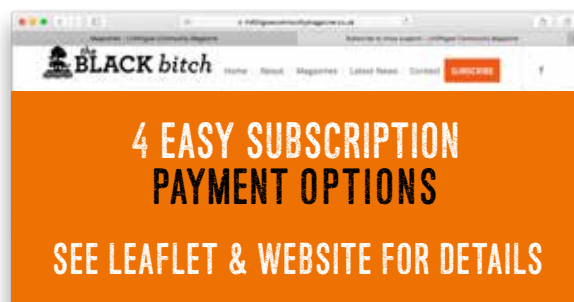
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**DAVID TAIT,
EDITOR**

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The Coronavirus has been a hammer blow for 'local rags' so says a Sunday Telegraph headline of 20th September 2020.

With the newspaper industry already in steep decline with no answer in sight to compensate for the hemorrhaging of advertising revenue to the Internet the coronavirus has brought further misery for the major newspaper groups, owners of many local newspapers, Linlithgow's Gazette among them.

The grim outlook for the traditional press was recognized at least 11 years ago when senior representatives of several of the major players got together in London to plan a reaction with mergers at the top of the agenda. Those early discussions failed to find a way forward and in 2018 the UK Government stepped in to commission the *Cairncross Review*, subtitled 'a sustainable future for journalism' which produced what the Telegraph article describes as a 'soft response' - with the long grass appearing on the near horizon. The Review is predictably "top down" and of its 9 recommendations the government proposes to take forward all but one, just stopping short of even more government interference.

Meanwhile for local newspapers the writing is well and truly on the wall at the stage according to one Telegraph contributor of - 'if we do not do something there will be no local news'.

It is left to the final paragraphs of the Telegraph's article to signal the only direction of travel likely to produce a long term sustainable solution when it suggests a return to the roots of "local news" which are of course in the community.

The article suggests that this solution could only happen when commercial local news goes 'toes up' and 'It would have to be funded by some form of subscription and a small amount of advertising'.

Does that sound familiar?

In again thanking our forward thinking subscribers and business advertisers you can congratulate yourselves on already being part of what may turn out to be the long term sustainable answer to the provision of local news.

The Magazine has some way yet to go so, for those who are still making up their minds about a subscription, please give it some careful thought now. Every contribution of whatever amount is greatly appreciated and helps to open the door to future possibilities.

The full Sunday Telegraph article by Ben Woods can be found here: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/>

You can read about the Cairncross Review by searching online for: "Cairncross Review"

Reflecting on the legendary Editor of The Sunday Times Sir Harold Evans (1928-2020)

"Just find out what the bloody facts are."

Not long after the Sunday Telegraph article referred to on this page was published, the passing of Sir Harold Evans at the age of 92 was reported widely.

Those in the age bracket three score years and ten will remember well the golden age of the Sunday Times when a hands-off newspaper proprietor came together with a brilliant journalist for whom the facts were all that mattered.

"Things are not what they seem on the surface. Dig deeper, dig deeper, dig deeper."

Goodness knows what he would make of today's newspapers or where the news industry goes from here. Is it yet another species whose very survival is a moot point?

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ONE LINLITHGOW

SCOTLAND LOVES LOCAL

In Linlithgow, it's hard to miss the town's wholehearted involvement with the national Scotland Loves Local campaign! It's a nationwide drive to get the nation supporting its independent businesses... and what better example of local Scottish entrepreneurship than Linlithgow?

Evelyn Noble, One Linlithgow Chair and local business owner, said: *"it's great that the town is coming back to life after lockdown and many businesses have opened their doors. With fewer tourists visiting our town this year, it is even more important to support local businesses. Many are reporting that, unsurprisingly, footfall and revenue are less than they have been in previous years. With that in mind, One Linlithgow, in conjunction with the Scottish Towns Partnership, has launched the Scotland Loves Local / Linlithgow Loves Local campaign, to encourage our residents to support our local businesses."*

To that end, One Linlithgow secured Scottish Government funding to produce a host of promotional material to drive the message home: from lamppost wraps (which also advise social distancing to avoid further temporary business closures), to bunting (both indoor and outdoor), postcards, window clings and posters. We're also applying for yet more funding to bolster it all by producing bespoke content digitally, too, all under the Scotland Loves Local banner for a consistent message.

Evelyn continued: *"Our small businesses are the lifeblood of our town, whether it's a pub, cafe, garage mechanic or hairdresser. Now is the time to support them to get back on their feet; be there for them and think local. It's about supporting the very fabric of our society and community. Whether it's a book, a pint of milk, a coffee, a meal, a gift or a pot of paint, we're asking you to take care and think local first."*



ONE LINLITHGOW UPDATE

To chat to us about anything in these articles, please contact office@onelinlithgow.com. If your business is part of One Linlithgow and you're not yet on the mailing list, please email us to be added, and avoid missing out on grants and other activity that could benefit your business.

Apart from **Scotland Loves Local**, we've been extremely busy with lots of other things too:

PPE SUPPLY AND BUSINESS GRANTS:

We've supplied over £15,000 of PPE and business grants since May, having applied successfully for the funds from **Scottish Government**. Although that funding pot is now empty, we recognise the vital importance of ongoing Covid support, so we are continuing to supply PPE at no charge, to all businesses across Linlithgow. We are also continuing to offer grants (subject to final approval), mitigating the costs associated with keeping your business open safely.

TOWN CENTRE CCTV:

It's no secret that the town centre CCTV system has been a long time coming, but engineers are now calibrating cameras on a live, super-speed broadband connection. Although it will still be a while before all cameras are operational, coverage from West Port to The Cross is scheduled to be fully operational in 2020.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DAY:

It's always a fine line between mentioning Christmas so early that people roll their eyes... and leaving it too late to get businesses involved! For obvious reasons, there will be no major events in 2020, but we're delighted to report that the perennial favourite formerly known as "festive late shopping night" will be expanded across the entire day of Thursday 26th

November. Since we'll be unable to repeat last year's Mill Road event, we'll be in touch with town centre businesses directly to provide more details. If you're not on the mailing list, please just email us!

FESTIVE LIGHTING:

As ever, One Linlithgow will be subsidising Linlithgow's festive tree lights along the High Street, the Regent Centre icicle lights, and motifs along the High Street, as well as lighting the Burgh Halls for the festive season. This, of course, complements the Christmas tree at The Cross, by West Lothian Council. Credit in particular to the PubWatch group, which is reinvesting proceeds straight back to the community, this year in the form of 24 brand new motif lights to ensure every lamppost sparkles!

DIGITAL EVENTS:

Always trying to bolster budgets with external funding, we have applied – in partnership with West Lothian Council – for funding to host a digital Christmas market in the absence of the 2020 Advent Fayre. This would invite local businesses and producers to list items on the digital marketplace, with special offers for the day. Another aspect of the application is for equipment to produce promotional content for businesses, and capability to stream festive performances. This aspect depends of course on Covid regulations at the time, as well as the funding being approved, but we feel the application is strong and will have lasting benefit to business in Linlithgow.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT



Halo Beauty

Halo Beauty on Linlithgow High Street is the fulfilment of a long-held dream for beautician Hayley Millar - and it's living up to all her expectations.

Originally from Nairn, Hayley worked in the business for eight years in Aberdeen before she and her husband Paul decided on a

move to the Central Belt with their three-year-old son, Harry.

"Paul was working in Edinburgh – Health and Safety for the offshore wind industry – and commuting was becoming a bit too much. After we looked around, we decided Linlithgow was very much the place for us. For several years, I've had an ambition to open my own beauty business, and when I saw the buzz around Linlithgow High Street I started looking for premises."

Hayley heard that M74, the high-quality bespoke wooden furniture maker, was concentrating business at its studio at Beecraigs country park, she agreed a deal to take over.

"The place was beautiful, and the owners Marisa and Callum were very welcoming and encouraging. My new neighbours on the High Street have been the same."

Hayley said that she had been "pleasantly surprised" that business was so steady in the few weeks since she opened.

"My clients are women of all ages. I think many have wanted the lift that beauty treatment gives after such a long period of not being able to have it done. I'm working on my own by appointment, so there are no issues with social distancing, and I'm adhering closely to all the guidelines for my industry. I'm doing the whole range of hand and foot treatments, and waxing. I'll be carrying out facials and massage when the restrictions allow."

Added Hayley, *"What is proving very popular are lash lifts, which create masses of length, volume and lift with your own lashes. In these days of face masks, women want to enhance the one part of their face that is visible!"*

As we do with all new businesses, we visited Hayley for an interview to promote Halo Beauty, and she was pleased to receive the **One Linlithgow welcome pack**. It contains lots of business essentials at no charge, and includes:

- >> Bottomless supply of hand sanitiser gel and spray
- >> Disposable masks >> Distancing posters
- >> Indoor/outdoor "please keep your distance" ground stickers
- >> "DNA" marking theft deterrent and "thieves beware" stickers

>> UV fake note detector lamp and "we scan bank notes" stickers

>> One Linlithgow Business Plan (and of course latest copy of the Black Bitch magazine).

>> Information about current One Linlithgow projects/grants, as well as local maps and guides

Whether you're established or new to Linlithgow, your One Linlithgow member business should be fully stocked with all of these items and there's no charge... please let us know if you need anything!

The Granary

Why change a winning formula? As an experienced businessman, David Stein wasn't going to make the mistake made by so many of disregarding that philosophy.

When the **Granary** café next door to his successful Cafébar 1807 cocktail bar and café at Linlithgow Cross became available, it was a no-brainer for David, and he has now acquired what he describes as "my favourite café in Linlithgow - with due apologies to my staff at 1807!"

"Gillian and her staff created something wonderful, and were always fantastic neighbours. It was a perfect foil for the 1807, and between us we provided a cosmopolitan feel for both locals and visitors alike."

David said that while he had hoped to help Gillian keep going until she gave birth to her second child, ***** **Stop Press!! "Sebastian Andrew was born just before the magazine went to press"******* he completely understood her reasons for giving it up. He and his manager **Kieran Conner**, who would be running the Granary, were grateful for the chance to keep it going.

"Nothing is changing", he pledged, "we will still have the same Glen Lyon coffee, the famous Buddha bowls, and of course the baked eggs and homemade cakes. Our enhanced takeaway offering is already doing well."

David praised **Kieran, Melanie**, and "Portuguese kitchen goddess" **Lia** for all their hard work to get the Granary back up and running, and they all looked forward to welcoming Gillian's old customers back.

Kieran said that he had been a customer of the Granary since it opened, and "loved its vibes and what it was about".

Added Kieran, *"Its values were very similar to 1807 - we both believed in good wholesome food cooked well, outstanding drinks, and great customer service. It adds to Linlithgow's beautiful High Street, and we are proud to be part of the community and create that city café right here."*

Gillian said that she wanted to thank her customers for their support over the last three years, and her incredibly hard-working and loyal team. It had been with "great sadness" that she had decided to sell the Granary.

"I am delighted that David has bought the Granary to add to his portfolio of businesses. I know he and his team will take this already very successful business to the next level. I look forward to being a customer!" Since our interview, Gillian gave birth to her bouncing baby boy – congratulations to the whole family!



LINLITHGOW PEACE GARDEN

for the improvement of the rose garden

We hope that this article helps to answer at least some of the questions that members of our community have raised about the project to date. And a huge thank you to those who have engaged with us.

On March 4th a consultation event was held in the Burgh Halls. The Landscape Architects 'rankinfraser landscape architecture' had prepared information about the history of the Garden to the east of the Burgh Halls. Feedback was sought from the community about their views of the current status of the area and the Rose garden in particular. Input to include the potential for improvement, thoughts on the name, the trees, variety of planting, adequacy of access and any other ideas for the garden.

Following this session rankinfraser analysed the information gathered from that evening and the subsequent questionnaires that were completed by local people. They then prepared three different options for the layout of the garden ranging from a conservation/restoration approach to a more radical redesign. The proposals also included the option to include the site of the former curling area, between the Burgh Halls and the Rose Garden and an idea for a Pergola along the west edge of the Rose Garden. The Pergola was suggested as a 'frame' for the Rose Garden area as well as giving more space for suitable climbing plants including roses and giving a focus to the view from the Burgh Halls café when looking east.

All those who left contact details on the 4th of March were invited to participate in ZOOM sessions to discuss the

options although some preferred to respond by e-mail. The overall response from the consultation and the March 4th feedback, although relatively small because of the COVID crisis, gave rankinfraser confidence to propose a revised single design for the hard surfacing and structure of the garden. This proposal incorporates the key messages from the consultations; that radical redesign was not required; that improvements to access, planting and seating would be welcomed and that the connection of the Rose Garden to the Burgh Hall via a simple garden treatment was also welcomed. The revised proposal therefore largely retains the sunken form of the existing Rose Garden but significantly improves the access for all abilities. It also includes the idea of the Pergola running north south just to the west of the sunken area. All hard surfaces and paths will be widened and improved.

The proposal includes ideas for the area past the Green Man, between the old Rose Garden and the Burgh Halls inclusion of which had gained favour among the consultees.

At this point there is no specific planting for the garden, but it is intended to select planting which will minimise maintenance work but maximise year-round colour and form. It will encourage biodiversity and recognise the heritage of the garden area including maximum use of roses and the heritage plants that used to be grown in Annet House Garden.

This proposal is made as the next stage of the improvement programme for the garden and it is hoped that it will answer many of the questions and challenges that have been put to the Peace Garden team. However, there are others which need to be considered.





THE NAME

It was clear during the consultation and speaking to other town residents that the eastern end of the area is very well known as the 'Rose Garden' and changing this would be both difficult and unnecessary.

The idea of the 'Peace Garden' was to create something different for Linlithgow and its visitors and provide a new attraction for the centre of the town. Initial discussions have indicated that the whole garden east of the Burgh Halls could be themed as Linlithgow's Peace Garden with the eastern sunken area continuing to be known as the Rose Garden although the roses may well be moved to better places than the current locations to maximise their impact.

The key task for the designers is now to put some 'flesh on the bones' and prepare the detail of the scheme for approval and present some ideas for planting.

WHAT ELSE?

The proposal for management of the Garden.

The garden is currently owned by the Council, having been gifted by a number of Linlithgow residents in 1903. Sadly, over the past 10 years Council funding to maintain the area has dried up and there seems little chance of any change especially in the next few years.

How can the community do it differently?

The proposal is for the SCIO set up by the Peace Garden group to negotiate with the council and arrange a lease for the area. With such a lease for the garden, which will incorporate all the conditions of the original gift, the project believes that they will be able to apply for grants to fund the capital costs of the new garden.

Future maintenance of the garden.

Once the upgrade is underway it will be essential to form a support group similar to and perhaps in partnership with, the existing Friends of the Rose Garden, to finalise the details of



the garden and become involved in the selection of planting with the aim of creating a space that can be maintained as the town wishes.

There will obviously be work associated with running the garden as a community space and this will require either voluntary work to carry it out or to raise funds for employment of people and equipment to maintain the garden.

The SCIO which has been set up to organise this garden currently has 5 trustees working under the rules set by OSCR. There will obviously be work associated with running the garden as a community space. This will require either volunteers to carry it out or to fundraise for paid staff. Opportunities for possible partnerships will be explored with other groups in the town, recognising the value of nurturing inclusive, ongoing community involvement, both in the enjoyment, and maintenance, of the garden.

Note: The three proposals which were discussed in the ZOOM sessions were summarised in the Black Bitch in July 2020, Issue 75, available online at www.linlithgowcommunitymagazine.co.uk if anyone wants to see them.

If there are further questions or any reader wishes to make any further proposals or submit any further ideas, please e-mail the SCIO secretary.

Chris Gunstone Secretary
Linlithgowpeacegarden@gmail.com
 SCIO SC048583

BURGH BEAUTIFUL AND 2020



2020 has a ring to it but it has proved a tricky year so far, here and worldwide. Despite the constraints imposed by coronavirus, Burgh Beautiful volunteers have managed to carry out nearly all their usual planting in the town. Our planting season, which started just after the more severe lockdown restrictions had been eased, began with remarkably good weather but has deteriorated into a rather wet summer. In August, a Burgh Beautiful colleague and I were working on the Binny bed at West Port and became thoroughly soaked, right to the skin. But we persevered and completed what we had set out to do. However, as I write, the sun is shining and the temperature is very pleasant. That is a Scottish summer for you.

Burgh Beautiful has received many complimentary remarks about our planting, especially through numerous comments on social media, so I do hope that you, as the reader of this piece, are in agreement with that. The hanging baskets seem to have performed well this year and have

attracted particular praise. I do think that the flowers throughout the town add colour, help to raise folks' spirits in these difficult times, make Linlithgow look cared for and promote pride in our town. The sheer amount of rain has reduced the demand for watering but much weeding has been necessary, with chickweed proving remarkably tenacious.

Now we are planning the autumn planting with our end of year hanging baskets being planted at the beginning of September and our planters and beds will be planted up in October.

As ever, our volunteers have been key to our success, despite the difficulties this year has thrown at us. In addition, we are once again most grateful to the individuals, businesses and organisations which sponsor beds, planters and hanging baskets. The names of sponsors are generally displayed at each site and are listed in our 'Floral Trails' booklet, which we hope will soon be, once again, available free of charge from local outlets.



Although not being able to hold our normal fund-raising activities, we have had two innovative sources of help. The first came from **Jane Thomson of West Lothian Plants** who offered to sell and deliver from her website the plants Burgh Beautiful had prepared for its plant sale.



That proved to be a most successful venture. The next was from a Linlithgow based artist, **Elaine Woo MacGregor**, who offered to paint three pictures using Burgh Beautiful's plants as her inspiration and with 50% of revenue being donated to Burgh Beautiful. Her pictures were displayed on our Facebook page which generated sales immediately and where all three may be viewed. But there is still one picture ready for a buyer and it is 'Portrait of Scarlet Flax'; if interested please email us at bbl@lbt.scot.



In addition to these fund-raising activities, one of the two benches which Burgh Beautiful had inherited from the Annet House garden was handsomely refurbished by a volunteer and sold to a Linlithgow resident via our Facebook page.

Although we were unable to plant up the Serpentine bed this year, we did plant up a bed nearby in association with the new 'Black Bitch' sculpture.

We used perennials chosen by Burgh Beautiful's planting team and the plants selected may be viewed on our website by going to <https://www.lbt.scot/burgh-beautiful> and following the link.

At Low Port, concerns that planting would not be possible because of delays in the installation of the concrete foundation for the forthcoming St Michael statue were dispelled, and we were able to replant all the perennials which had been displaced back in March and restore the summer planting originally planned. It has also been possible to arrange the removal, repainting/repair and re-installation of eleven High Street planters. This work will be done in October between the summer and winter floral displays.

Our Environment Working Group intends to continue planting at the 'Triangle Wood' to the west of Linlithgow Leisure Centre and has marked 22 November as a planting day. You may wish to note that date in your diary. Two local families have kindly donated young trees which will form part of the Triangle project. These include oaks, birches, rowan, hawthorn and other native species.



So, we have not been idle. If you would like to volunteer with Burgh Beautiful, please email us at bbl@lbt.scot or, if you would like to sponsor planting, please email bbl.sponsorship@lbt.scot. Mid-September is the time for annual sponsorship renewals and we hope that as many as possible of our existing public-spirited sponsors will be prepared to continue their support. Donations can also be made through our website at <https://www.lbt.scot/sponsorship>.

Jean Long
Burgh Beautiful



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LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST – THE STORY SO FAR



Linlithgow Community Development Trust (LCDT) was established in 2012. Our aim is quite simply “to make Linlithgow a wonderful place to live, work and visit.”

We currently have ten Directors on the Board, all Linlithgow locals who are committed to improving the town. The key to our success is the leadership provided by the Board. We are committed to succession planning and anticipate that we will require additional skills in the next few years. So, if you are an experienced fundraiser, passionate about getting the most out of digital, or committed to the Green Recovery including renewable energy, please get in touch with us for a chat.

Community Response to Covid-19

Earlier this year, LCDT successfully applied for £32K from the Scottish Government Covid-19 Investing in Communities Fund. This enabled us to financially support and help co-ordinate the great work being done by many organisations and volunteers in the community. This includes the Linlithgow Coronavirus Support Group run by Linlithgow Churches, 1st Step's foodbank deliveries and keyworker bike scheme, Linlithgow Link and Linlithgow Young People's Project.

Pamela Barnes, LCDT Community Co-ordinator, said: *“It has been incredible to see the fantastic achievements of our local organisations and everyone working together. The funding has been essential in helping support older, isolated and infirm people, and families and households in need in our area.”*

We are also promoting good communication across the whole community. Have you seen our weekly Community News Bulletin? www.mylinlithgow.com/community-news/ Even better you can receive it direct to your mailbox! Sign up now at www.trust-linlithgow.org.uk/news/newsletter-subscription/. It contains useful local news, Covid-19 updates from Scottish Government and features local businesses and community groups each week.

Current funding runs out at the end of October. We are applying to the Scottish Government Covid-19 Communities Recovery Fund so we can carry on with this work as we hopefully navigate out of the coronavirus pandemic.

Beyond this recent work there is much more that LCDT has been busy with over the last few years.

West Lothian Cycle Circuit

Our flagship project is the West Lothian Cycle Circuit. Since 2014 this has been a labour of love over the years with challenges along the way.

The vision is for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy cycling and increase their cycling confidence. To do this we are creating a 1km tarmac traffic-free circuit made up of four loops, for drop-in sessions, club use and organised activities.

Planning permission is in place and £572k of funding is secured to deliver the first phase (a 0.5km two loop circuit), thanks no less to the incredible support of our local community!

At the start of the year our successful crowdfunding campaign raised over £30k. This covers the costs of floodlighting, creating a facility to be

enjoyed all year round. Thank you to all our supporters and volunteers who made this happen.

We also have to say a big thanks to our supporters and funding partners, **West Lothian Council, SportScotland, Scottish Cycling, Benzies Foundation, Barr's Charitable Trust, the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund and West Lothian Leisure**. Many local (and not so local!) cycling clubs have also given very generously, most notably our own West Lothian Clarion.

On next steps **Matt Ball**, LCDT Director and Cycle Circuit lead volunteer, says *“It's been amazing to see the wide-ranging support to make this happen. We are delighted to be working closely in partnership with the Council to progress this project and deliver a fantastic facility for Linlithgow.”*

Linlith-Go-Solar

Our community energy enterprise project aims to make solar work for the benefit of the whole town. A year and half ago Phase 1 pilot successfully raised £17k in Community Bonds to install a Solar PV panel system at Linlithgow Rugby Club, and show the appetite and support for green energy within the town.

Success of this pilot led to Phase 2 last year. A grant from **Scottish Power Energy Networks Green Economy Fund** and another successful Community Bond Offer (raising an incredible £25k) allowed us to install additional panels at the Rugby Club, plus panels at Linlithgow Golf Club and Linlithgow Sports Club just before lockdown.

These solar panels are now producing cheap electricity for the clubs and paying back bond holders, not to mention being eco-friendly. Over the years ahead as the initiative generates a surplus, this will allow LCDT to reinvest back into the community to support local projects.

Responding to Scotland's Green Recovery opportunities and the climate crisis, we are now looking to accelerate our Phase 3 plans and ambitions. Our vision is for a Linlithgow that is sustainable in energy, creating local jobs, business opportunities, community benefits, as well as young people's opportunities, who are at the heart of this developing social enterprise.

Neil Barnes, LCDT Director and Linlith-Go-Solar lead volunteer, says

"We are very proud to be working with local people, business leaders and groups to make our ambitions a reality. Our Young Energy Enterprise Group in particular is working enthusiastically on several developments, including a solar design app to help size future solar pv systems. We want education, training, work experience and jobs to be at the core of our ambitions."

The Community

The community is at the heart of all we do, and LCDT would like to thank all the wonderful volunteers in our town. Linlithgow is full of amazing local groups run by volunteers, over 120 the last time we checked! These groups only exist thanks to volunteers' time and effort put in to make them happen.

Our community groups' consultation in 2017 led us to develop a number of priorities. We piloted the EH49 Hub, a twice weekly co-working space at the Star & Garter Café. The pilot evidenced demand and we learnt a lot about the amenities that a successful co-working space needs.

We also ran learning events for groups and businesses, a virtual business network and set up our popular Community Cake events, which now run online. We've had brilliant feedback that Community Cake events are a great way to learn more, meet people from other groups and do some friendly networking.

Our biggest achievement is www.MyLinlithgow.com launched last year. It is truly a one-stop-shop for all the information you will need about Linlithgow, with directories of local businesses, community groups, venues, and a 'what's on' calendar of local (and virtual!) events, activities and classes. The site contains tourist information, the town's history and local volunteering opportunities. We also keep everyone updated via our social media channels.

Chris Horne, LCDT Director and MyLinlithgow lead volunteer says *"MyLinlithgow.com is at the centre of communications within the town and surrounding areas to 'build back better' now and after COVID times. We look forward to working closely with the Business Improvement District and others to ensure MyLinlithgow.com continues to help bolster a strong community, with people using local businesses, supporting community organisations and helping each other."*

Where next?

The future holds many potential opportunities to do more for the town. For example we are revisiting the creation of a new co-working hub/community space for the town. Would you be interested in using a co-working space in the town? If so please let us know!

We recently held a Board strategy session focussing on our future direction, community development priorities and opportunities. We look forward to discussing this at our Annual General Meeting on 12th November.

LCDT Chair, Fraser Falconer, notes *"LCDT has achieved a great deal of important work in the community over the years. To continue what we do we need your help! We want to engage local people to become more involved. In these very challenging times, many of us believe in the strength of the talent and resources within the town and surrounding areas. We would be delighted to see you at our AGM."*

Keep informed – Get involved Subscribe to our weekly newsletter for all the latest Community News and AGM details: <http://trust-linlithgow.org.uk/newsletter-subscription/> don't miss out!

For an informal chat about joining the Board email hello@trust-linlithgow.org.uk



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Martine Stead



A TASTE OF ITALY COMES TO TOWN.

Tuesday September 15th saw the launch of an exciting new venture in Linlithgow, with the opening of the **Fruttivendolo Italian Greengrocer** at 211 High Street (next to QWorth).

The shop offers a wonderful selection of fresh fruit and vegetables sourced from Italy, and has a range of loose herbs and different kinds of delicious Focaccia bread. The already wide range of stock will be expanded in the coming weeks with the arrival of other items, such as red oranges and white peaches, long courgettes, and black cabbages, as well as varieties of pasta. Customers have already discovered many items which were previously unavailable in local supermarkets, including purple cauliflower and Datterino tomatoes. The shop has been very busy since opening day and the people behind the project are delighted at the positive response they have had so far.

Co-owner, **Davide Scucatto**, is no stranger to the Linlithgow retail scene. Many readers may remember him as the man who was responsible for the opening of the From Italy to Scotland (FITS) restaurant, which operated at the Regent Centre. He is involved in supplying fresh produce to Italian eateries in the Edinburgh area and saw a gap in the

market in Linlithgow for a shop selling similar products.

I have been a regular visitor to the shop since it first opened and have been amazed, not only at the range of items, but also the size of some of the fruit and vegetables. I don't think I have ever seen such big apples, onions and peppers, for example!

Davide told me:

"Everything is from Italy, but more specifically Sicily. We will be extending our range to include parmesan and pasta and are also planning to offer home deliveries. At the moment, only two customers are allowed in the shop at one time and we are providing paper bags for them to take away their purchases."

Fruttivendolo is managed by **Mharie Crawford**, who has lived all her life in Linlithgow and worked in various retail establishments. She told me:

"Business has been absolutely brilliant and everybody that has been coming in has been so nice. The compliments have been wonderful, both in the shop and on our Facebook page. People have been so happy to see something different on the High Street and lots of them are really enthusiastic about having a greengrocer. The fact that you can get as little as you need, instead of having to buy a pack of something has been really well received."



Mharie has already responded to customer requests.

"We can offer smaller pieces of Focaccia", she said, "as well as a whole bread, and a box containing all the ingredients for minestrone soup. We hope to do something similar for pizza when we are fully stocked. Offering recipes is another area we are looking at."



Fruttivendolo is open from 10am to 5pm Monday to Saturday. Further information can be found on the Facebook page and by phoning 01506 238618.

Murdoch Kennedy



LINLITHGOW ROSE LOOK FORWARD...



Photography Andrew West



Nothing is normal this year – that’s certainly the view at Linlithgow Rose, where the club is still awaiting clarity on whether there will be a football season, what shape it will take and whether anyone will see the team if they do play. I put a few questions to the club President, Jonathan Mahoney:-

What is the current state of play?

“The uncertainty of this year has been very difficult to deal with. Over the summer, we watched the effects of Covid-19 receding from the high points of the spring so, although we knew the season would start later than normal, we had to try to prepare as we would for any other season. That means building a competitive squad to challenge for the league title and undertaking all the work to keep the stadium in good order. We had a disappointing campaign last season except for our run in the Scottish Cup, which culminated in a live broadcast tie against Falkirk at Prestonfield. Our manager, Brown Ferguson, has been diligent in the way he’s re-shaped the squad and we are really excited by the players he’s been able to attract to Linlithgow. All we need now is the green light to get going – and of course to see our supporters inside Prestonfield once more.”

And is that likely to happen any time soon?

“That’s the million-dollar question. Just as we dared to hope, Covid-19 has hit the country again. It’s our

view that we can accommodate our supporters safely but the decision on whether we can test that is out of our hands. There is an appetite among clubs to play the season out – even if it is behind closed doors. But it’s a massive ask for any business to continue to trade normally and incur normal expenditure whilst unable to generate anything like the revenue that it would normally expect. Like most clubs, we can draw on some reserves, but we don’t have the capacity to go through a season with such a revenue drop. We would need to secure government or governing body support, rely on individual generosity within our support or borrow enough to enable us to trade through the season. For those reasons, we want our supporters in the stadium and backing the team in every way that they can. We’ll have fundraising initiatives running, but there’s no question we need people to get behind the club both in spirit and financially to make sure we have a club to support for the next 130 years.”



And how are the players dealing with the situation?

“The players have been first class. They haven’t kicked a ball competitively for over 6 months and it’s to their credit that they’ve

come back to training in great shape (for the most part!). They’ve been very understanding, and they know we’re no different to any other club operating below the Scottish Premiership. I’ve been so impressed with their approach to pre-season training and I just can’t wait to see how that translates into results on the pitch. I just hope they get the chance to show us what they can do. I know some people reading this will say that football isn’t anyone’s first priority but these lads live for football and there are thousands like them – there could easily be a spike in mental health issues among these young men which we should do everything to avoid.”

What else is new at Prestonfield this season?

“We’ve teamed up with The Soccer Shop and Umbro and have launched our new kit which we think looks great with a slightly retro collar. The sponsor on the front of the playing kit has also changed after several years in partnership with ACL and latterly AVIS. Billy and Jim Harris who built up ACL have stayed loyal to us along with Stephen Cairns at MV Commercial and we’re massively grateful to them all – they’re first class sponsors and first-class people. We’ve also benefitted from ongoing partnerships with other local companies and I want to give a shout out to Alan Steel who has been a terrific support to us in his own quiet way over a long period of time.”

Final thoughts?

“In football you need to be an eternal optimist – that’s not changed. I want Linlithgow Rose to be a club its community can be proud of. I want a successful Linlithgow Rose and everyone who works within the club feels the same way. Whatever is thrown at us, we will work tirelessly to get through it. But we’re never going to be too proud to accept any offers of help from individuals or business in the community as there is always more to be done. I just hope we get to play this season and that everyone gets the chance to watch us when they can.”

Thank you Jonathan and HAIL THE GALLANT!!

Sandy Macpherson



LINLITHGOW ATHLETIC CLUB: MAKING AN IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY

Last November Linlithgow's local athletic Club was a runner-up for the prestigious **Impact Club of the Year** at the Scottish Athletics Annual Awards in Glasgow - a proud moment for the Club in its 40th year. Fast forward 10 months, and the Club is facing the challenges of an extraordinary year head on but once again is on the shortlist for the same award.

It would've been easy for a community Club like Linlithgow AC to slow things down during the Covid-19 pandemic and go into hiatus. But far from it. The Club saw it as an opportunity to further strengthen its relationships within the community and help encourage the increasing number of local runners to get involved with the Club; it's been pleasing to see our membership increase during this time too.

Fresh from its recent transition to becoming a charity in its own right, protecting it for future generations of local athletes, the Club adapted its focus and increased engagement with its existing membership during the pandemic. Helping to keep members motivated and connected during a difficult time. From the early stages of lockdown, the Club kicked-off a series of weekly and monthly

training plans for members to use in their own time. It has used the Club Facebook and Strava pages along with its own website to share stories and achievements past and present in a bid to keep the community spirit of the Club alive and well.

As the various lockdown phases unfolded, the Club's dedicated group of volunteers formed a 'Covid' sub-committee and appointed a 'Covid Co-ordinator'. Meeting virtually, this has helped the Club to respond accordingly to the ever-changing guidelines to support its members. Our Junior coaching sessions were the first to return along with **Jog Scotland groups**, including our **Lets Go Linlithgow group** which aims to help local people get started with running in a supportive and inclusive setting. For our adult members, we initially started with small training groups for those who could meet within the current guidelines. With one eye on the future, we've also worked in partnership with a range of local organisations including **Xcite Linlithgow**, **Xcite Craigswood** and **Linlithgow Rugby Club** to secure suitable training venues, as well as pledging our support, including a donation, for the new cycle track planned for Kettlestoun.

Last year we introduced '5k paced run' sessions to cater for both new and experienced runners. To allow us to restart these we will be organising Jog Scotland leadership badges to increase our number of 'pacers' and meet the new test & trace guidelines. We also continue to plan for a re-start of our full adult coached programme. Most recently we've made a return to track at Xcite

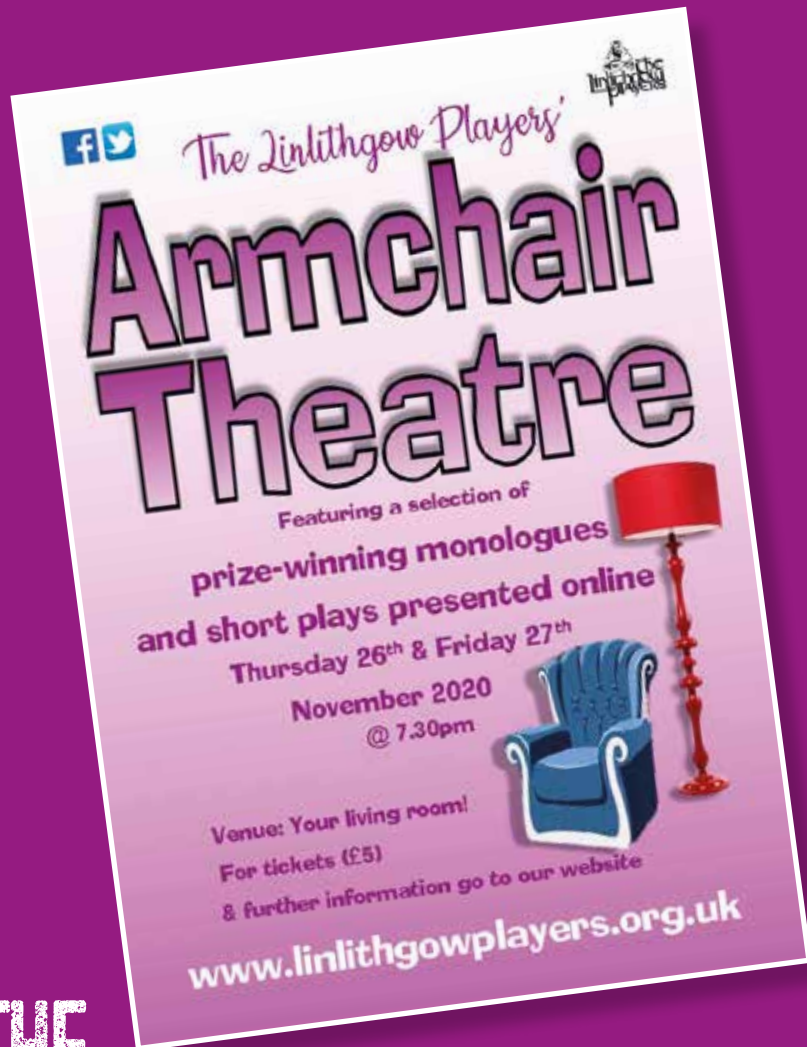
Craigswood introducing a new booking system, again to meet the test & trace guidelines and demonstrate the Club's commitment to ensuring the safety of those taking part.

For existing members the loss of competitive events threatened to sap motivation. In response to this, a small group of members got together to create its very own 'virtual' Club Championship, with monthly races for members to complete safely in their own time. These have ranged from the classic 1 mile distance to the familiar 5k. It has also taken the opportunity to reinstate the Cocklehill Race - a precursor to the town's hugely successful 10k race. With nearly half the membership registered for the virtual races, it has been a popular addition to the Club's offering. Again, the Club's website and social media presence have been invaluable, allowing members to register, log their times and keep up to date on race results.

Although there are many reasons to forget this year, for Linlithgow Athletic Club we hope to look back on another year of making a positive impact on its members and the local running community.

We are a welcoming and inclusive Club. We have runners of all abilities, shapes, ages and sizes! Whatever your running or athletic ability, we can cater for your needs. Why not come and join us? Find out more at www.linlithgowathletics.org.





THE LINLITHGOW PLAYERS

Keeping the Arts alive over the last 6 months has had its challenges. But the Linlithgow Players have kept the creative juices flowing over the Summer, by launching their first ever monologue writing competition. Involving the community has always been at the heart of The Players' endeavours, so the idea of an event that would inspire the town's imagination and promote writing for local performance really fitted the bill. Budding writers were invited to submit a monologue, with the aim of seeing their piece performed by the group. And what a response they had, with over 50 entries across both the adult and junior categories.

"We were delighted by the interest in the competition," said the Players' chairman, Alasdair MacIver. "As well as entries from members of the group, many of whom had never written for the stage before, we had a lot of local pieces but also some national and international entries! We were really spoilt for choice. So many people commented on how much they had enjoyed the challenge too."

The task of selecting the winners fell to Linlithgow based professional writer Malcolm McGonigle (The Crown, The Dog Ate My Homework), who selected 6 monologues for performance. *"The standard of work was really high and it gave me great pleasure to sit back and get immersed in all these created realities" said Malcolm. He is confident that he's selected a good mix of pieces, with both comedy and drama, adding "my favourite stories featured an engaging character who drew me into a vivid situation which had a dramatic turning point or a reversal of my expectations. This makes the audience sit up and we are instantly engaged."*

The Players have now started working on bringing the pieces to life in performance, as the monologues will form part of their Armchair Theatre event on 26th and 27th November. *"When we were planning our next event, there was still uncertainty about theatres opening, so we made a*

decision early on to take to the screen" said Alasdair. *"Our Armchair Theatre event will be presented online and will feature a mixture of the chosen monologues plus some short plays (with small and socially distanced casts!) either performed live or recorded."*

.....

The winning adult writers will need to wait until opening night to find out who the overall winner of their category is. Meanwhile, 16 year old Michael Campbell, (pictured) has already received his prize of a voucher and selection of books as winner of the junior category. All prizes were generously donated by Far From the Madding Crowd bookshop.



"We hope our audiences will enjoy seeing local talent from the comfort of their armchairs", concluded Alasdair. "This is a new venture for us all, so our website (www.linlithgowplayers.org.uk) has all the information you need to buy a ticket and be part of our audience."



WINNING MONOLOGUES:

Mr Crumble and Lady Gaga
by Ian Stewart

Seline's Christmas
by Eric McFarlane

Losing Faith by Liz Drewett

Death is a Release
by Tricia Golledge

Drama Queen by
Marie-Therese Kielty

Ah, Mr Bond
by Michael Campbell

2ND LINLITHGOW BOYS BRIGADE HEADING BACK ON TRACK



It has been a difficult year for everyone, but at 2nd Linlithgow Boys Brigade we are determined to get back on track with a few COVIDREADY changes along the way.

The Boys Brigade is one of the biggest Christian Youth Organisations in the UK and republic of Ireland. We have 40,000 children and young people.

The Boys' Brigade was founded in Glasgow on the 4th October 1883 by Sir William Alexander Smith, and was the first voluntary uniformed youth movement in the world and many of today's organisations for young people can trace their roots back through history to The Boys' Brigade.

We have faith in young people and provide opportunities for children and young people to learn, grow and discover in a safe, fun and caring environment.

What we do enables children and young people to engage with the needs of others (especially other young people) locally, nationally and globally and encouraging them to participate in activities and projects in which they can make a difference.

Members develop skills, build confidence, make friends, take responsibility and are encouraged to make a real difference in their communities – sharing the values that make us who we are.

At 2nd Linlithgow, we currently have 68 boys registered. We have no waiting list, and are always excited to meet new members.

We believe that we are fantastic value for money, at only £40 for the year, and you do not need to be a member of a Church in order to join.

Our young people participate in a wide range of age-related activities from 5 to 18 years.

None of this would be possible without our fantastic Leaders and Officers. Across the UK and the Republic of Ireland, The Boys' Brigade is dependent on over 11,500 volunteer leaders who come from all walks of life to share their time, skills, passion and faith.

Volunteers work across a variety of different roles within the Company, most directly supporting children and young people, with others working behind the scenes. Our leaders have access to a range of training modules to equip them to work effectively with children and young people. Local support networks exist to provide opportunities for volunteers to meet together and share.

Whilst we were on lockdown we were in the fortunate position that we were still able to engage with the boys. We had weekly zoom meetings for each section, along with sending out #BBATHOME.



Boys Brigade headquarters supplied us with a Home Programme for each section, within one week of Lockdown being announced. This gave the boys weekly challenges and activities, even some of our Leaders and helpers joined in. We then had great fun sharing these on facebook for everyone to enjoy.

Our new session has started via zoom, and we are thrilled to already have several new members.

We have 4 sections:

Anchor Boys (P2&P3)
6.30-7.30pm

Junior Section (P4-P6)
7.00-8.15pm

Company Section (P7-S3)
7.45-9.30pm

Seniors (S4-S6) 7.45-9.30pm

**times may currently vary*

We are recruiting now for new boys and volunteers. For further information please contact us on facebook or email us at 2linlithgow@boys-brigade.org.uk.

We look forward to hearing from You!
#StrongerISaferIStronger

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. **101 is the new number to contact the police when it's less urgent than 999. In an emergency always dial 999.**

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

CALLING ALL PARENTS

In September there have been numerous complaints from local residents in various areas of Linlithgow regarding large groups of youths congregating.

Unfortunately some of these groups have been involved in the consumption of alcohol, drugs, setting fires, littering, damaging property and other anti-social behaviour.

Police and other partners are aware of these issues and will be conducting patrols in the area.

This behaviour is having a negative impact on the local communities and there are also concerns regarding the personal safety of those involved in this conduct.

The police would encourage parents in Linlithgow to have an open discussion with their teenage children, as to where they are going and what they are doing when out with friends in the evenings and check the contents of their rucksacks.

Also make them aware of the current Covid Government Guideline in relation to gatherings.

Their reckless behaviour is putting themselves, friends and family members in danger.

Active parenting skills are required, to challenge and check on their children's whereabouts and encourage young people to make good decisions, focusing on keeping young people and communities safe.



Stay Safe and look after each other

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>



OFF ROAD BIKES AND QUADS

We are seeing a marked increase in the use of off road bikes and quad bikes in and around the West Lothian area. We would like to remind residents of the legal standing when it comes to the use of these types of vehicles.

All vehicles that are being ridden on the road must comply with the usual regulations and legislation:

1. Must be registered and have their registration plates on display.
2. They must have insurance that covers the rider for at least third party risk.
3. They must have a valid MOT certificate if the vehicle is over 3 years old.
4. The rider must hold a valid drivers license for the type of vehicle being ridden.
5. The vehicle must conform to all current construction and use regulations.

Failure to comply with any of these will result in the rider being charged with relevant offences and, in the case of no insurance or no driver's license, the bike will be seized by the police. This could lead to points and or disqualification.

We often see people riding off road bikes or quads on public footpaths, playing fields, shale bings, canal towpath and other public areas. Apart from the obvious dangers this presents to pedestrians walking in these areas.

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 DREAM

Bruce Jamieson



The "Dream Plaque" on Friars Brae.

I am often asked about the significance of the engraved stone set into a wall on Friars Brae - just up from the entrance to Rivaldsgreen Crescent. It's covered in lichen but it can be made out to read: W. J. D. THE DREAM 8th DEC 1888. It records a remarkable feat of horsemanship achieved by both a rider and his mount.

It was just beginning to get dark on December 8th, 1888 when W. J. (Jack) Dryborough, on his grey hunter, The Dream, approached the March Wall that ran round the Preston Estate. Jack was a member of the Linlithgow and Stirlingshire Hunt which regularly met outside the Star and Garter Hotel at Linlithgow's Low Port. The Hunt dated back to the mid 18th century and at one time had kennels at the entrance to Bonnytown House and stables at the rear of West Port House.

The December 1888 foregathering did not, however, take place in Linlithgow. The huntsmen and their hounds congregated at Wallhouse, near Torphichen and, setting off into the surrounding area, they soon raised several foxes.



The Hunt assembled at Wallhouse.

One particular wily creature headed into the Bathgate Hills and from Cockleroy it headed down to the Preston Estate, just outside Linlithgow. The fox then made a dash for Manse Road - running across open country, as there was, in those days, no housing development in that area, other than some large residences such as Rivaldsgreen and Westerlea.



Open countryside shown on this late 19th century map. Friars Brae was the name of a wooded hillside. The lane we now call Friars Brae was then called Cadger Road.

Jack Dryborough set off in pursuit and came across a high, stone wall, topped with large coping stones. Dryborough was an expert horseman - one who hunted regularly and who played polo at a very high level. He urged his horse on, shouting at an onlooker, "What's on the other side?" The open-mouthed bystander began to reply, "Ye canna jump here", but it was too late. With three huge bounds, the horse leapt at the six-foot obstacle and, despite the fact that he was carrying a 16 stone rider, cleared the wall.

The only problem was that, at the other side, the ground dropped away steeply, (in my opinion, the side where Friars Brae roadway is now). A drop of fourteen feet was too much for the brave steed. It landed on its front legs and head and fell, spilling its red-clad huntsman.

The horse quickly got to its feet - apparently none the worse. Mr Dryborough was shaken but able to remount and follow the other horses and hounds all the way to Ochiltree and eventually back into the Bathgate Hills where the poor, exhausted quarry was despatched. In tribute to the remarkable leap, on the instigation of Jack's brother, Tom, who had been on the same hunt, a plaque was hastily carved and installed just a week after the event. It is situated six feet above ground level - at the height which The Dream cleared and on the side of the wall where the horse fell.



The plaque set in to the wall - with a bicycle to show scale.

I was told this tale not long after I arrived to teach in Linlithgow. The elderly raconteur went on to say that in his youth, before he learned the truth, the story went that both Jack Dryborough and The Dream had been killed and that every December 8th, at midnight, the phantom pair reappeared to attempt the jump once more! This, of course, is false - but there was indeed a death connected to the event.

In the Memoirs of H. C. Dale, Jack Dryborough's valet, it is recorded that just eight months later, following a collision with another horse, his master fell from his polo pony while



The Edinburgh Team ready to play at the Rugby Polo Tournament. Jack Dryborough is on the left riding "Lord Dalmahoy".

playing in a competition at Rugby in England. He was carried unconscious from the field and died the next morning.

The horse-riding community turned out in force for the funeral, lamenting the premature death of a man who lived for horsemanship – the owner of an establishment at Eastlands in Warwickshire where he kept forty-nine hunters and polo ponies.

The eulogy was given by Tom, Jack's brother and fellow member of the Linlithgow and Stirlingshire Hunt, who lived in the family's Edinburgh home at 23-25 Grosvenor Street (now a listed building). He was also the person who established the Edinburgh Polo Club on a large 17 acre site at Murrayfield, complete with a 300 X 175 yard playing surface, a viewing pavilion, dressing rooms, stalls for 32 ponies, a band stand, a refreshment shed and a manège for schooling the animals.

At their October 1889 meet, beginning outside the Star and Garter, a tribute was paid to their late member and toasts were drunk in his honour. A sad end but it left behind a great local story.



T. B. Dryborough dressed for polo.



The Hunt meeting outside the Star and Garter – a sight we will no longer witness.

Fox hunting is now illegal in Scotland and the Linlithgow and Stirlingshire Hunt has disbanded.



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EXPLORE SCOTLAND'S TREES THIS AUTUMN

Discover Scottish Gardens are running the Tree Festival in conjunction with Visit Scotland during October and November. The festival is a celebration of Scotland's wonderful trees, their contribution to our landscapes and the part they play in our lives. (Find details of events going on at www.discoverscottishgardens.org/tree-festival)



Here at New Hopetoun Gardens we are featuring our Fairy Gardens in the Woods during the Tree Festival this autumn. You can explore the different fairy gardens and learn about some of the lore of the different trees along our woodland walk. A short walk in the autumn is always a great activity and the added attraction of our fairies will entertain all the family! If you come on a cold day there is always the promise of a hot drink and a piece of cake in the Orangery Tearoom to warm you up.



Our fairy gardens have inspired many folk to create their own miniature gardens at home. Lots of grandmothers have told us that their grandchildren have encouraged them to create a miniature fairy garden that the young ones can enjoy when they visit. Indeed this is a great way to encourage children to get excited in gardening and to have a great project to do when visiting grandparents. But it does remind us of the various cactus



collections that have been inherited by parents when the owners go off to university!

We have fairies living up trees, in old whisky barrels, on living roofs, and making homes in borders and under bushes. You will have to look very carefully, and quietly, to see them. They tend to hide away when there are folk around but you will be able to spot their wee houses amongst the miniature trees and plants.

If you are inspired to create a home for fairies in your garden, or even just to create your own miniature garden in a pot or a trough (perhaps you don't believe in fairies?) then we can help. We have a free purple piglet project recipe card for miniature gardens with full instructions and lists of miniature plants to try.

Dougal Philip and Lesley Watson,
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SEE LINLITHGOW "PLAN FOR THE FUTURE 2020-35".



PLANS IN THE PIPELINE...

Linlithgow Planning Forum* continues to keep you updated on planning matters whilst trying to offer more insight into the ongoing planning issues facing the town and the workings of the planning process. There continue to be a number of major projects on the go, although not a lot happening on the ground.

An exception is the Cala site at Blackness Road, opposite Oracle, where work is now well underway to construct 40 four and five bed detached houses for sale and 14 housing association units comprising semi-detached, terraced housing and cottage flats. The efforts by the Community Council to achieve an access for the development from a roundabout at the junction of Springfield Road with the Blackness Road were unsuccessful. However, the argument for a widened road with a dedicated turn right lane protected by lit traffic islands was accepted by Cala. This should make the turn right lane more obvious and assist in speed reduction at this point.

Elsewhere, on the housing front, a proposal to construct up to 180 houses on a site at Wilcoxholm Farm, off Edinburgh Road, has been submitted to the Scottish Government's appeals directorate, on grounds that West Lothian Council failed to make a decision on the application.

The application site is the long narrow field between the railway line and the canal east of Maidlands. Numerous objections were made to this proposal, which included concerns about road access and safety, and worries about flood management; heightened by the recent canal breach near Whitecross.

Another recent housing application is the proposed conversion to housing of the former police station in Court Square to form eight flats with an additional six new build residences to the rear. Although concern has been expressed about some of the detail, we appreciate the overall quality of the proposal which will bring welcome new life to our High Street.

The long-awaited planning application for housing at Preston Farm, off Preston Road and Deanburn Drive, has yet to be submitted nor have we received notification of proposals for the former quarry site at Kettilstoun Mains.

All housing proposals have implications for Linlithgow's already overstretched secondary education and road network infrastructure. Whilst housing which increases choice, range, type and price is to be welcomed, it is vitally important that necessary infrastructure keeps pace with new development if the town is not to be overwhelmed. Planning for housing in Linlithgow must examine and take cognisance of the community's needs as a whole, rather than reacting to individual planning applications. To date the West Lothian Local Development plan process has failed to incorporate proper community consultation resulting in poor place planning. It seems that Linlithgow, perhaps because of its relative affluence compared to some other communities in West Lothian, does not receive the attention warranted by its position as

West Lothian's third largest town. There are several examples of West Lothian Council neglect including the ongoing saga of the ugly gap sites at Templar's Court and the Victoria Hall, and the ongoing uncertainties about the possible redevelopment of the Vennel.

Readers may recall that the Planning Forum produced its 'Linlithgow Plan for the Future 2015-30' following consultation with the community. The document, which considers the unique needs of the town in a holistic and comprehensive manner has been revised, and the Forum hopes to consult on its new plan in the future. Of particular interest is how the town might go forward in a post-Covid era and what changes may be introduced to cater for e.g. increased home working, more active travel etc.

The Planning Forum is keen to encourage wider community discussion on the above matters and any others.

**In 2013 the Community Council together with Linlithgow Civic Trust formed the Linlithgow Planning Forum, constituted as a sub-committee of the Community Council with representatives of Linlithgow organisations with an interest in planning matters.*

A draft of Linlithgow, A Plan for the Future 2020-35 can be found here: <https://llbcc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Plan-for-Future-JAN-2020-Final.pdf>

Joyce Hartley,
Chair Linlithgow Planning Forum

John Kelly, Secretary Linlithgow
Community Council

THE ARTS

“A BREATH OF FRESH AIR”

Pat Swan patswan@virginmedia.com.



Next month sees the annual celebration of books and reading that takes place across the country. Book Week Scotland brings together people of all ages and walks of life to share and enjoy books. I guess this year more will be online with live streamed events and social media challenges, but most readers I know still prefer to feel a book in their hands.



What better way to celebrate than to introduce you to local girl **Clara Melville** who at the age of 8, has published her first book! I recently heard about her, and as it sounded like a real feelgood story amongst all the recent doom and gloom, I was interested to learn more. Thankfully I managed to track her down so she could be featured in this article.

Her book, “**The Princess who didn’t know she was (and other stories)**”, which she co-wrote with friend **Heather Sharkey** was published in August.



We met on Zoom to have a chat about her publishing debut, and I have to say it was one of the livelier Zoom chats I’ve had lately!

Heather’s mum and Clara’s mum have known each other since school, and during lockdown **Jennifer** set up regular video calls for both her children to chat with Heather, so they had a bit of variety of people to chat with. She knew that Clara and Heather both love reading and that they are very creative, but never imagined that the result would be a book! They were sending each other snippets of their writing and ideas by text, and very quickly this developed into full stories. There are three stories in the book, one written by Clara, one written by Heather from Clara’s idea, and one written jointly. Most of the illustrations are by Clara.

The whirlwind that is Clara kept me entertained with a tour of her house, the close detail of her afternoon chocolate snack, and a quick trip outside in her Linlithgow Rose football kit to demonstrate how good the weather was! I did manage to get some information about the book in between all of this, and Clara’s co-writer Heather helped with the detail.

The stories are all about **Sophie and Mia** who meet at school and discover they look alike. Really alike. Like identical. But Sophie is a Princess and Mia lives in an orphanage so what’s going on? I haven’t been able to read the book yet, so I can’t give a lot of detail. Here is a paragraph to whet your appetite:

*“I’m very lucky, I have a pony called **Sparkle** and a pink bed with curtains on it that is so high that I need a ladder to climb up into it. It is big and fluffy and it’s like sleeping in an ice-cream float with marshmallow pillows.”*

Two of the stories involve Christmas and New year, so perhaps this would be an ideal present for your children or grandchildren?

The pictures show Clara writing during lockdown and Clara sharing the first copy of her book with her best friend **Caitlin**, who gets a thank you in the book for helping with the idea for one of the stories. Clara is also pictured with **Heather**, who unfortunately has not been able to see her since the book was published.

One of Clara’s favourite authors is **Jacqueline Wilson**, who was a favourite with my girls who are now in their mid to late 20’s. **Enid Blyton** also featured in her favourites, proving that good stories can stand the test of time, even in this digital age.

When she grows up Clara wants to be an author for a time, but also needs to fit in being a pop star and an explorer. She has started work on her next book, and Heather read me an excerpt from a story about mermaids, which involved a rather evil baby kidnapping! If her zest for life and enthusiasm continue, I think she’s got a bright future ahead of her.

It was a pleasure to meet both girls, and I wish Clara every success with your next book, and with whatever your future holds.

I hope some of you will support Clara and buy her book.

It’s available in **Far From the Madding Crowd**, or you can see a preview or buy a digital copy here: <https://www.blurb.co.uk/b/10243102-the-princess-who-didn-t-know-she-was-and-other-st>

It’s been so nice to write about this inspiring story and about something positive that’s come out of the lockdown period. Heather has a lovely bond with Clara and I imagine sharing this experience has brought them both much joy.

Far From the Madding Crowd

If you need a literary fix why not join some of the October events via Wee Three Indies:



>> October Thurs 8th, 7:30pm
Gavin Francis, *Island Dreams*

>> October Thurs 15th, 7:30pm
Helen Fry, *MI9: A History of the Secret Service for Escape and Evasion in World War Two*

>> October Mon 19th, 7:30pm - Lin Anderson and James Grieve (ticketed £5 redeemable against Lin's latest book, *The Innocent Dead*)
Murder, Mystery and the Microscope

>> October Thurs 29th, 7:30pm
Joanna Trollope, *Mum & Dad* (ticketed £5, or £8.99 with free copy of the book)

They are also soon launching a series of literary interviews, *Spoke in Mirrors*. It's the brainchild of their newest permanent staff member, published poet Ian Macartney, who will be the interviewer. Keep checking social media to see who'll be on the virtual couch.

Just as we felt things were perhaps going to get more back to normal, we are back to knowing that Arts events will be thin on the ground for a long time. If you hear of anything interesting that I could write about please get in touch - patswan@virginmedia.com.

I hope to perhaps do an article on musical tuition in the town, so if you offer these services please get in touch and we can chat about what you offer. I hope you have time to experience some ART over the next few weeks, even if it's just a book!

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"a book a day keeps reality away"

star barber

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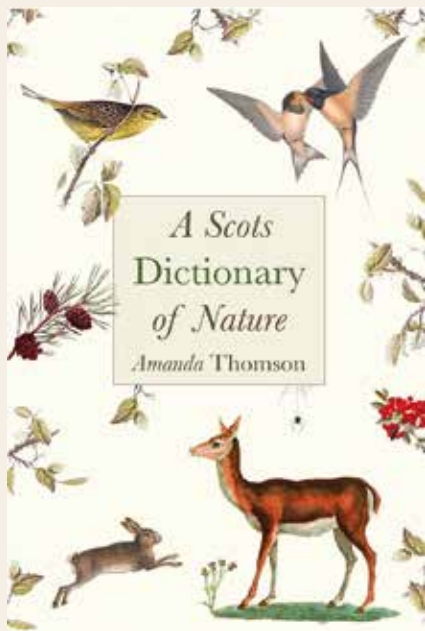
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BOOK WEEK SCOTLAND (16-22 NOVEMBER)

Kathryn Welch k.e.welch@hotmail.co.uk www.kathrynwelch.co.uk



This year, for Book Week Scotland (16-22 November), a nature-themed book trail will pop up across the outdoor spaces of Linlithgow. Featuring favourite nature books, quotes and authors, the trail will

encourage us to pause and enjoy the beautiful outdoor spaces of our town, perhaps to explore one or two new green spaces, and help us to discover some new writing to inspire us through the winter months.

Half of the trail locations will feature entries from Amanda Thomson's beautiful 'A Scots Dictionary of Nature' - and we're looking to you to help us choose the others!

"Artist **Amanda Thomson** collates and celebrates traditional Scottish words, which reveal ways of seeing and being in the world that are in danger of disappearing forever. What emerges is a vivid evocation of the nature and people of Scotland, past and present; of lives lived between the mountains and the sky".

Submit your favourite nature writing (see 'call out') to be in with an opportunity to see your favourite words featured on the trail this November. The trail is supported by the Scottish Book Trust, and delivered by Kathryn

Welch in partnership with Transition Linlithgow and Far From The Madding Crowd. The project will build on Transition Linlithgow's active travel map to encourage us to explore our local outdoor spaces on foot or by wheels. And you'll be able to browse the selection of Linlithgow's favourite nature writing in Far From The Madding Crowd this November.

LINLITHGOW'S FAVOURITE NATURE WRITING

Which nature books, authors or poems are close to your heart?

Submit your favourite nature books, poems or quotes by the 17th October to be in with the chance to have your recommendation featured on our trail: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Y22QXCL>

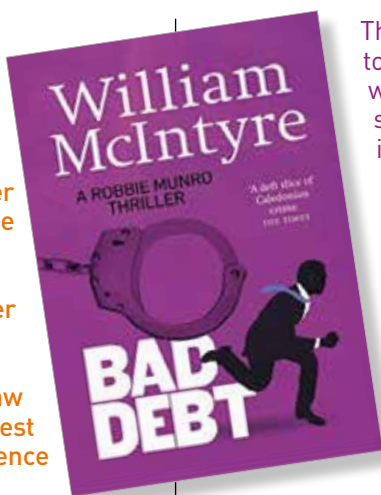
Keep an eye on the Transition Linlithgow Facebook page, or the next issue of the Black Bitch, for more information on the trail route.

Bad Debt

William McIntyre

Bad Debt is the sixth installment of William McIntyre's crime thriller series featuring defence lawyer Robbie Munro. In this novel, the tables are turned as the hunter becomes the hunted. Munro finds himself on the wrong side of the law - his name is on the latest case file - and the evidence against him is stacking up fast.

Written pre-Covid - or as McIntyre humorously notes in the preface "when Covid-19 was just a twinkle in a Wuhan bat's eye" - the beginning of the novel starts in a whirlwind of social engagements balanced against the mundane, regular aspects of normal life for Robbie and his wife Joanna. As a backdrop, the initial storyline harks back to simpler times and it is easy to get lost in a reverie about simpler social times in the world - at least before McIntyre's plot wheels really start turning.



The narrative starts to tangle and twist when Joanna is stalked by a witness in a critical case in which both she and Robbie are already unexpectedly entwined. When the witness is killed the dark shadow of suspicion falls over Robbie. In the eyes of the law, he has a strong motive and an alibi best described

as 'shoogly'. Even though his flair for creative and unorthodox defence is in full flow, and with a good proportion of Linlithgow's finest willing to testify in his favour, Robbie finds he cannot talk himself out of this impossible situation.

McIntyre's legal knowledge and skill come into their own in this novel. To the uninitiated it is interesting to gain insight into the complexities of the legal world and the processes and protocols which must be adhered to. Robbie's wife Joanna

is a steady, reasonable voice of reason by his side; a good tether for his flights of fancy. The yin to his yang, she takes a more conventional approach to his bleak situation although, admittedly, it is his maverick style that keeps readers turning pages.

An immensely enjoyable and fast paced novel, this hearty slice of Caledonian crime fiction will keep you guessing until the final pages. The enjoyment of this novel comes entirely from the creative resolutions to each plot twist and turn - and wonderment about which have elements of fact rather than fiction.

When the chips are down, we all need the help and support of our family and friends but, on this occasion, it may well be the tangled webs we weave amongst our enemies that come to be Robbie's salvation.

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



WOMEN AND RETIREMENT

Virtue Money



Both Aegon and Scottish Widows have recently conducted surveys to see where women are, regarding their pension provision.

Unfortunately, the findings of the surveys prove grim reading as both show that women are woefully under prepared for their retirement compared with men!

Aegon's study found that 15% of women have no pension provision at all compared with 11% of men and that women are half as likely as men to be confident about their ability to have a comfortable retirement.

Although, this year's Scottish Widows report findings are encouraging as they show that women are starting to save more for their retirement with auto-enrolment really helping to highlight to both women and men the need to save for retirement.

However, the report also shows that the narrowing gap is happening slowly and in part can be attributed to the fact that the number of men saving enough is in decline.

Aegon's survey findings echo a 2017 AJ Bell survey which found that on average women are retiring with a pension pot of around £59,000 which is around two fifths of the average men's pension pot of £143,000.

Here are some of the reasons for this pension gender disparity:

- >> The gap between women's and men's pay mirrors the retirement savings gap, lower pay equals lower retirement savings.
- >> Women may have breaks in their

15%

15% of women have no pension provision



careers or reduce their working hours to have or look after children

- >> Women may also take breaks or reduce their working hours to care for elderly relatives

So, how can women concerned about their lack of retirement saving go about tackling this issue?

The best way is to have a plan and ask yourself questions like :

- >> How much do I need in retirement to cover my essential expenses?
- >> Find out what your State Pension Entitlement is, you can do this by visiting the Government Pension Service website.
- >> What pensions do you have? If you've had several employers throughout your working life you might have old pension schemes with them. Have a look through your paperwork or contact your old employers directly to find out what you have and where.
- >> Do you want to consolidate all these old "pension pots" this may help you keep track of your pension savings and could save you money on charges. It is always a good idea to seek financial advice before doing this though to make sure it is actually the best option for you.

>> If you can then put a plan in place to begin increasing your pension contributions. If you are finding money tight then why not consider putting your bonus in as a one-off contribution or increase monthly contributions if you get a pay rise!

>> If you're in your employer's pension scheme then check it out, what fund is the scheme's default. Remember this is your money and you do have a say in where it is invested.

>> What other assets do you have, do you have property or savings? These together with your pension pot(s) might mean you are in a better retirement position than you think.

If you want guidance on pensions, then there are several websites you could look at: Pension Wise, The Pension Advisory Service, Unbiased

If however you feel that you would like some financial advice on your pension (or investments or protection for that matter) then please either call me on 0345 034 3424 or email me at susan@virtuemoney.com and I can make an appointment with one of our advisers. The first appointment is free of charge and no obligation, so you have nothing to lose.

Information Sources – Scottish Widows Women in Retirement 2018 – the Barriers to Savings Report, AJ Bell's The Pensions Freedoms 'Engagement Gap' & Aegon's Article Pensions - the other gender pay gap.

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

susan@virtuemoney.com. t. 0345 034 3424

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A GOOD GROWING SEASON AT OAKWELL ALLOTMENTS



Vegetable and fruit crops have done well this year at Oakwell allotments. This is almost certainly due to the favourable growing conditions over the spring and summer. We have had warm and sunny weather with periods of heavy rain which has suited our crops well. One casualty of this weather has been some varieties of potatoes, notably "Picasso", which have cracked due to the combination of dry followed by wet conditions.

Towards the end of the summer we received warnings from the Hutton Institute of Potato Blight in the Linlithgow area. This is a serious disease of potatoes which caused the Irish Famine in the 1840s. Fortunately, some varieties of potatoes have some resistance to blight.

West Lothian Council allowed Oakwell Allotments to remain open throughout the coronavirus pandemic. From the outset we put in place safety measures including leaving the main gate open, stopping the use of the community hut and the sharing of tools, social distancing, minimising the size of groups meeting and making it a requirement to sanitize our hands before and after leaving the site. Many plot holders have commented that their allotment plots have been a lifeline during this difficult time, enabling them to be out into the fresh air and get some gentle exercise.

A casualty of the pandemic has been our Harvest Celebrations, which had

to be cancelled. We have decided to cancel our Potato Day where we sell seed potatoes to the public due to be held in the Masonic Hall, Linlithgow in February next year.

Interest in growing your own fruit and vegetables is growing across the country.

We now have about 15 people on our waiting list of people who wish to have an allotment plot. We have had quite a few new plot holders this year, some very experienced, others complete beginners. To help the latter group we have put in place a mentoring scheme whereby experienced gardeners can advise them on such things as planning the work on their plot, soil preparation and planting.

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

Things to do in your fruit and vegetable garden in the autumn

1. Plant Spring Greens 6 inches apart. In the spring pick every other one as spring greens leaving the remainder to heart up for picking later in the year. Cover any Cabbage, Brussels Sprouts and Broccoli plants with netting to protect them from hungry Woodpigeons.

2. Get the soil ready for next year's sowing and planting by digging in well-rotted manure or compost or by adding a thick mulch for the worms to work in.

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.

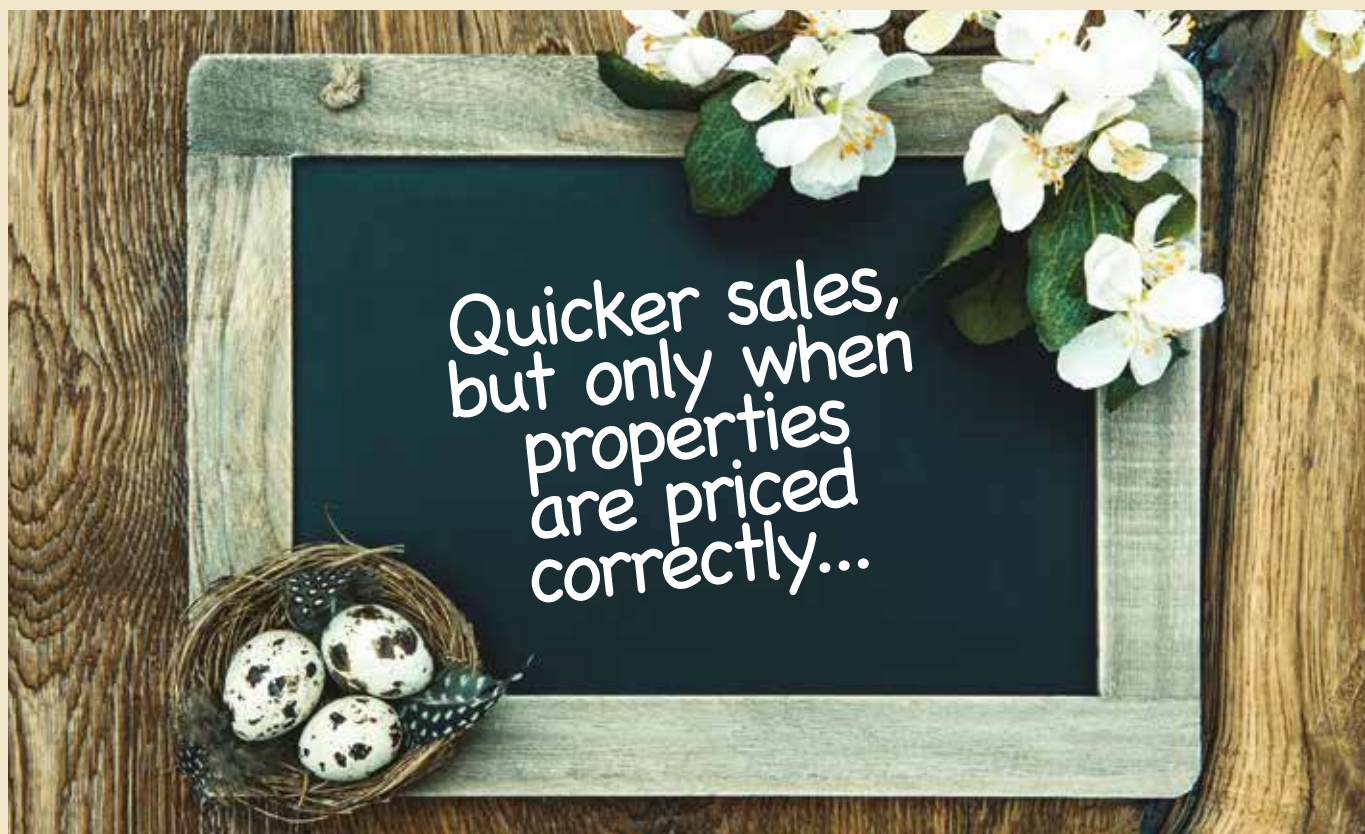
Paul Taylor
Chair, Linlithgow and District Allotment Society



3. Harvest Pumpkins and squashes.

4. We often think of Garlic as a warm weather crop because of its use in Mediterranean dishes but it is, in fact, native to the UK and grows wild here. The end of October to early autumn is the time to plant Garlic in the Linlithgow area, which is borderline for overwintering the plant. I start some Garlic cloves in pots, bringing them into shelter if it gets very cold, and then plant them out 6 inches by 12 inches apart in the early spring. Garlic needs well-drained soil if the bulbs are not to rot so dig in old manure or compost before planting them about two inches deep. The bigger the cloves you plant, the bigger the bulbs will be so only use the larger outer cloves for planting.





So, the housing market continues to be very vibrant as we speak.

The latest available hard data for Scotland from Scottish Registers only takes us up to the end of July 2020, and it shows that the average property price in West Lothian rose by 1.9% compared to July 2019, whilst the Scottish average property price fell marginally. Understandably volumes of property sales in July 2020 were only just above half the volumes seen in July 2019, not surprising, as we were only just emerging from lockdown, during which almost all transactions were frozen.

We need to look at the very latest data available from **Rightmove** to get an accurate picture of what is going on in the property market right now.

They are telling us that more homes are securing a buyer and having an offer accepted within a week than at any point over the last decade. Across the UK between 8th July and 31st August this

year 1 in 7 properties were marked as sale agreed within a week of coming to the market, and that 30% of properties went under offer within 2 weeks, compared to only 21% in the same period in 2019.

Four bedroom detached properties saw the biggest jump of property types selling within a week jumping from 7% to 14% over the same period last year.

Rightmove are also saying that the UK's hottest market is Scotland, where a third of all three bedroom semi-detached homes sold by agents take a week or less to sell (32%), compared to 20% in 2019.

Rightmove's resident property expert, **Miles Shipside**, made the following observations explaining that despite the surge in buyer demand over the summer, sellers still need to get their homes in tip-top shape to have the best chance of selling.

He said: "Not only are more properties selling in the current market than at any time over the past ten years, but many sellers are finding that demand for homes following lockdown and the rush to beat the stamp duty deadline means they're achieving a quicker sale, but only if they've been priced correctly. Not every home sells, but those that are well presented by agents, are on at the right price, or are just lucky

enough to be in demand are among a record number of homes selling within the first week of coming to market since we started tracking this data ten years ago. There's no point rushing a home to market without carefully thinking through the best way to market it and making sure it looks its best, which is something an expert local agent can help with."

Sentiments we at Paul Rolfe have echoed in this column several times over the last few years, it is a cliché, but it is true, you only have one chance to make a good first impression.

In our opinion the temporary raising of the threshold at which LBTT tax is payable on a property purchase by a buyer, from £145,000 to £250,000 is boosting the market, but we think both potential sellers and buyers alike need to be aware that unless the Scottish Government make further announcements, this is due to end on the 31st March next year, which, as we head into Autumn, is not all that far away by the time you factor in time to prepare your property for sale, time to market it effectively and receive an acceptable offer and finally time for the conveyancing process needed before a sale completes before the 31st March. To take advantage of this, if you are thinking of moving, you need to start taking steps now.

"BUT I WAS JUST PASSING ON A BIT OF LOCAL HISTORY"...

"Well, you know how it goes sometimes," I say. "I was sitting at the Cross not thinking of anything in particular when this couple came along and sat on the bench next to mine. We soon got chatting. It felt like I'd known them for ages, though I suppose now when they think about it they wish they'd never set eyes on me."

I'm standing with Adamson by a low wall which allows us to view a bit of Linlithgow that goes back to mediaeval times. This consists of a burgage plot or rig – a grassy, attenuated finger of land that runs from the rear of premises on the High Street all the way to the Peel. I'm pretty sure it's this rare thread in the weave of the town's history that's responsible for reigniting memories of my encounter with the couple.

"So, I gathered they hadn't lived in Linlithgow for long," I tell Adamson "and when they say where their house is I'm impressed. "Oh, that's a nice bit of the town," I say. "You've got Rosemount Park close by and the old Carmelite Friary, of course, which some people regard as a bit spooky, though I take it you're quite relaxed about living so close to it?"

It was the man who reacted most. *"Spooky? What's spooky about it?" he says. "There's nothing left of it. Not a piece of it left standing. Just lines of concrete slabs showing where it used to be."*

"Ah yes" I say, "but what about the surroundings? All those bodies buried there. You probably know they discovered over two-hundred human remains around the Friary a few years ago. And personally I think there's lots more still under the ground. Dozens more!"

Adamson turns and gives me a wry smile. *"Don't tell me," he says "you told them about the possibility of lepers having lived there, right? And probably made a big thing out of that twisted skeleton of a woman who might have been caught in a fire and couldn't be straightened out enough to fit into her grave properly."*

"Well yes," I say, sounding a bit boorish "but I was just passing on a bit of local history. People living in that part of Linlithgow should know something about what might lie under their gardens." I refrain, however, from mentioning I told the couple that well over half the population at the Friary didn't live beyond 18, and two-thirds of those died before the age of six. It was that sort of place back in the 15th century. Life expectancy was very short.

"They had a mortuary chapel there which must have been busy," is all I add.

"Anyway, I hear the couple put their house on the market shortly after I spoke to them and went to live in another part of the town," I say. *"Somehow, I feel just a wee bit responsible for that happening."*

Adamson sighs and begins leading us back in the direction of the Cross. *"You should remember"* he says over his shoulder *"that big mouths are only worthwhile when you have an appointment with the dentist."*

Kirk Gates

Image: by local illustrator
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Du Vin Bouchers Wine & Whisky Bar

Following the introduction of additional restrictions
on visiting households and changes to bar and
restaurant opening hours.

I personally would like to highlight the dedicated
continual steps that me and my staff are taking to
ensure we operate in a safe and controlled manner.

Significant modifications have been made to enable
the bar to remain a home-from-home, including
reducing our opening hours

Mon - Wed Closed
Thurs - Sat 2-10pm
Sun 2-7pm

Your support during these challenging times has
been vital and we hope this will continue.

Finally, we would like to hear from you! Over the last
few months we have introduced an Offsales /
Delivery service, renewed our Wine list, added a
Whisky selection and you can now Reserve a table.

Is there something new you would like to see us try?

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Catherine

contact: catherine@duvinbouchers.co.uk

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Coco is a 3-year-old, fox red colour Cavapoo - King Charles Cavalier Spaniel and Poodle mix.

Coco's family describe this sweet and soulful girl as 'too cute for words' and Team Westport could not agree more! Her favourite thing is to play ball and she can often be found cuddling her favourite toy reindeer in her bed. Coco will always be found at her owners' feet as they cook dinner but her favourite place to be is cuddled up between her family on the sofa!

Coco has been busy over lockdown helping her human mum as she counsels teenagers with mental health issues. In particular, Coco has helped one teenager who was really struggling to talk about their problems, however with the zoom camera solely focused on Coco, this person opened up and told Coco everything they needed to share. This special relationship with Coco has profoundly changed this teenager's life. Coco offers a kind of support and comfort which has allowed individuals to feel safe and build a strong bond of trust with, some which have struggled to build with humans.

Animals have been known to offer humans companionship throughout the ages. More recently, therapy animals have been recognised by medical science for the benefits they provide. There are endless ways that animals offer therapeutic benefits and help people heal from physical as well as psychological ailments.

Service dogs are those who have been trained to aid a specific individual with a physical or emotional disability.

Certified therapy dogs belong to people who volunteer their time to help others feel better. Alliance of Therapy Dogs is an organisation that tests, certifies, registers, insures and supports these teams as they make visits to help others. Dogs, cats, horses, and birds are common healing companions that nurture a sense of well-being to reduce anxiety and depression.

Dogs are efficient at elevating mood and providing relaxation to humans, one of the key reasons therapy dogs are among the most common therapy animals.

Studies have shown that looking into the

dog's eyes boosts the production of dopamine and other neurochemicals in our body. These neurochemicals are known as natural antidepressants and effective in promoting calmness. This not only makes one compassionate about others but also aids that individual to feel less depressed.

Research has shown that the presence of a beloved pet or therapy animal can help a person control daily anxiety, regulate emotional arousals, and improve mood. Since therapy dogs are trained to be attentive to an individual person's needs, and offer unconditional love, they can often stabilise intense emotions. A report published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology claims that pet animals offer well-being benefits to their owners. Pet animals are also known to improve the immune system, endocrine, and cardiovascular functioning, and regulating blood pressure.

Animals can also have significant mental health benefits. From managing psychological health symptoms to controlling depression and PTSD, dogs and other therapy animals can help us with an array of medical conditions.

While people with pets often experience the greatest health benefits, a pet does not necessarily have to be a dog or a cat. You might have noticed fish tanks in doctor or dentist offices, care homes, or other medical facilities. Watching fish has been scientifically proven to reduce stress and calm your heart rate!

Lockdown has seen an incredible surge in the nation's pet owner community. This has been a time when many families and individuals have been at home but the long term 'normal' must remain a primary consideration when thinking about owning a pet.

Talk to other members of your household and agree on the qualities you want in a pet and those that you would prefer to avoid. Never chose a pet on looks alone and remember to consider what the animal was initially bred to do.

Knowledge and preparation are key to success! The PDSA have a fantastic tool to work through to help you work out if owning is right for you called P-E-T-S (Place, Exercise, Time & Spend). If you are planning to use additional support to care for your pet, such as a dog walker,



Hello
I'M COCO

we highly recommend you have these things organised before you get your pet.

A common misconception is that pets and children go well together. Consideration of species is vital, for example pets like hamsters or chinchillas are nocturnal; gerbils and mice can be difficult to handle, and many animals find the unpredictability of children overwhelming.

Instead support your local area and introduce children to the world of animals in places like Muiravonside farm or the Five Sisters Zoo. Zoos around the world have also had the wonderful 'live cams' set up over lockdown where we can safely enjoy seeing animals from the safety of our own home and for free!

Team Westport can help
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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.



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