



the **BLACK** *bitch*

Linlithgow's news by Linlithgow's people

LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY MAGAZINE ISSUE 78 NOVEMBER 2020

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CHRISTMAS ON THE LOCH

A HEART WARMING CHRISTMAS TALE
BY LOCAL AUTHOR, PAT STEWART 25

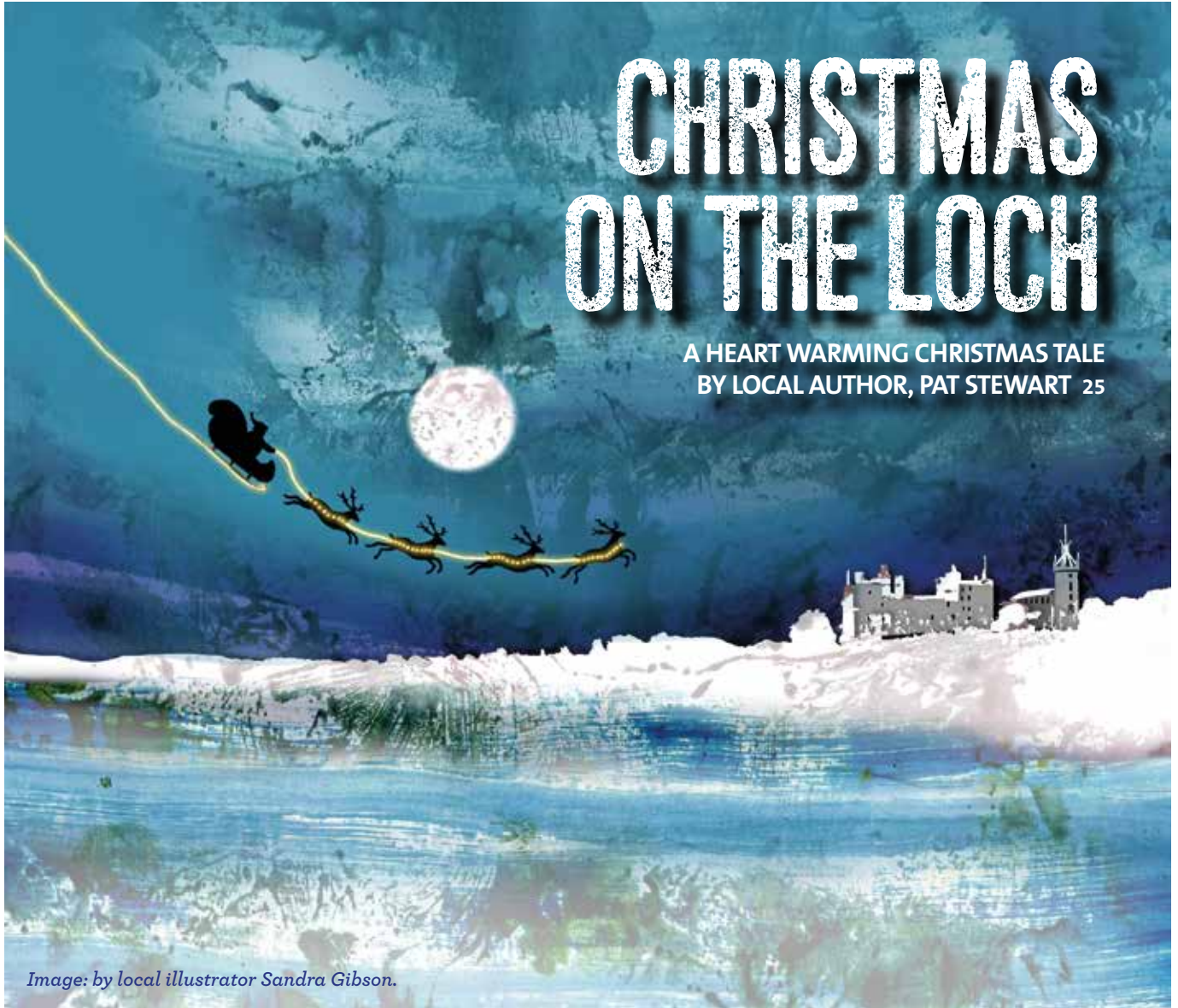


Image: by local illustrator Sandra Gibson.

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**FIRE BRIGADE
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**LRC CELEBRATING
50TH ANNIVERSARY 22**



PLUS

Linlithgow Distillery Competition, Police Scotland, Burgh Beautiful, Planning Updates,
Local Arts Review & Competition, Book Review, Bruce Jamieson – Hunting Witches

See our website to download a pdf of this magazine: www.linlithgowcommunitymagazine.co.uk

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MEET THE TEAM MOIRA GOLL



My husband and I moved to Linlithgow in 1968 shortly after our marriage. We chose Linlithgow as my husband worked nearby and I worked in Edinburgh. We have never regretted our decision as Linlithgow is fairly central from a travelling perspective and with many good areas for walking etc.

Our two daughters have lived in Linlithgow all their lives, attending Low Port Primary School then Linlithgow Academy.

A few years after I retired, the magazine was looking for volunteers and I chose to

offer to deliver and do some proofreading if that was required. Firstly I delivered round the estate where we live (79 houses). A couple of months or so thereafter I received a frantic phone call asking if I could possibly proofread some articles which had arrived very close to the printing deadline. I have been involved in proofreading (along with Pat Stewart) ever since.

Later, I was invited to become a member of the editorial team and became a Trustee at the magazine's AGM in September 2019.



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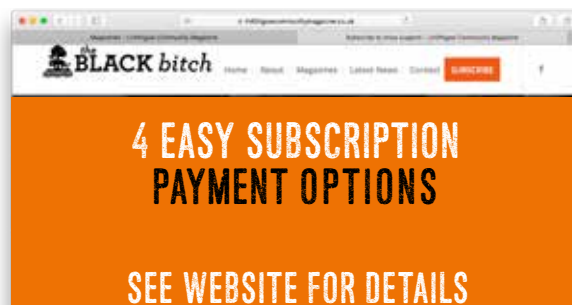
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LINLITHGOW

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**DAVID TAIT,
EDITOR**

SUBSCRIBE TO THE BLACK BITCH MAGAZINE



Magazine Subscriptions continue to grow at a highly satisfactory rate from a start at the end of 2019. Considering the circumstances in a year that will long be remembered for all the wrong reasons this has been quite an achievement and we again express our thanks to all who have subscribed to date.

With little sign of an early easing of virus restrictions or a return to a "normal" life for communities and businesses both large and small the next 6 to 12 months will continue to be a testing time for all.

We touched last time on the Cairncross Review into "a sustainable future for journalism". One follow up to that work was a further research project by Plum Consulting for the Westminster Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport commissioned in part to assess the relationship between local news consumption and democratic engagement.

A few extracts from the Executive Summary of that report give a good indication of the direction of travel:

Local journalism has a key role to play in civil society.

...the absence of journalism (is) potentially catastrophic. The impact on communities by the removal or reduction of local newspaper coverage can be profound.

The closure of local and regional news titles has led to underreporting and less scrutiny of democratic functions.

the Covid-19 crisis.....will continue to have a significant impactparticularly for the local newspaper market and its ability to maintain the presence of local journalism

As we have previously made clear the magazine cannot expect to reproduce the range and depth of reporting produced by local newspapers in better times. We can though, with your help, keep a little

candle burning for the coverage of some aspects of community life. With residential development, much of it ill thought out, at a level not seen since the late sixties Linlithgow is in the early stages of fundamental change. Now is the time to support the magazine and help it make the case for a better planned approach with the long term in mind...

Please subscribe using the links in the magazine, if you can; all amounts large or small are greatly appreciated and will help us make the case for the town.

The full Plum Consulting report can be accessed via this link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-into-recent-dynamics-of-the-press-sector-in-the-uk-and-globally>



WIN A PRIZE

LOCAL ARTIST MEG WALLACE HAS OFFERED A PRIZE BUNDLE AS A THANK YOU FOR BEING FEATURED IN THE ARTS COLUMN. READ ABOUT HER LOVE OF DRAWING WITH PASTELS ON PAGE 26 OF THE MAGAZINE.

To enter the competition to win a 2021 Linlithgow in Pastels calendar, 4 coasters and the brand new colouring book for children, please email patswan@virginmedia.com by December 5th, with your suggestion of a Linlithgow scene that you would like to see Meg paint. You might want to check on social media or go and see her calendar in Mannerstons or A Wee Mindin' to see the ones she has already completed. **Goodluck!**



>>> For details and events visit **what's on** www.mylinlithgow.com <<<

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ONE LINLITHGOW

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DAY

Thursday 26th November is the date to mark in your calendar! Over 25 businesses have already confirmed that they will keep their doors open until 8pm on the day, with special offers all round and £300 in Linlithgow vouchers to be won!

This is no normal year, of course, so the usual mulled wine and mince pies will only be offered at venues able to do so safely, but this has not deterred participating businesses from offering sealed mince pies, shortbread and mulled wine. We don't mean to make light of an awful situation for many... but it takes more than a global pandemic to dampen Linlithgow's Christmas spirit!

It has become a tradition for St. John's Hospital's very own **Radio Grapevine** to blast out the Christmas classics throughout the evening, and we're delighted to report that this year will be no different. If you're driving past the Vennel in the evening, give us a honk and a wave!

Of course, all of this is subject to lockdown restrictions on the day, but we hope to welcome you for some leisurely Christmas shopping and festive cheer on the day! Christmas shop windows will be at their most beautiful for the annual Christmas Window Competition, so it's worth a wander along the High Street, even if you just fancy a stroll!

Please note that, although shops will be opening late, you can take part in the **£300 prize giveaway** at any time throughout the day. When you're visiting your favourite retailers and services, please be sure to respect distancing measures, use sanitiser, and wear your mask!



THUR 26

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DAY

£300 PRIZE GIVEAWAY

DIGITAL CHRISTMAS MARKET

Undeterred by the cancellation of the 2020 Advent Fayre, One Linlithgow put out the call to the usual stallholders, as well as all local businesses, to take part in our **Digital Christmas Market: Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th November!**

It will be hosted on **MyLinlithgow.com** and we encourage you to check both the site and the "One Linlithgow" Facebook page for updates.

Shoppers will be able to grab themselves a fantastic Christmas shopping deal, or even snaffle a discount on beauty treatments and much more!

Although we plan to run many more markets in future, the Digital Christmas Market will only run for the weekend that would usually be the Advent Fayre. If it's the success we're sure it will be, then we'll set about the next one in short order, so please show your support by making a purchase at the digital market on Advent Fayre weekend!



LINLITHGOW LOVES LOCAL

One Linlithgow has applied for yet more Government funding, via Scotland's Towns Partnership, for "Linlithgow Loves Local" branded PPE (reusable face masks), and other promotional materials.

Following successful funding applications to two separate "resilience funds", and the effective delivery of those projects, we now hope to bolster the "shop local" message all over town.

If successful, this will bring our 2020 funding tally to £30,000. We're still offering PPE and acrylic screen grants to all businesses, and will soon be helping businesses produce their own professional content for social media. The "Linlithgow Loves Local" funding will be in addition to the extensive promotional campaign already running across town.





BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Bella Bridal Boutique

Linlithgow has established a well-deserved reputation over the years for the range of speciality outlets it boasts on its attractive High Street.

In yet another enhancement it now has a wedding retail specialist, Bella Bridal, which has had a very encouraging start, despite the severe buffeting the industry has suffered from the effects of the pandemic.

For owner **Erin Roff**, who is continuing to operate her boutique in Stirling Arcade for bridesmaid and flower girl wear, the move to Linlithgow is "a dream come true".

"Although we opened in Stirling in 2019, I knew my heart lay in Linlithgow for its history and friendly people. This was made even more evident when I got married to Chris at St Michael's last October."

Erin said that at such a strange and worrying time for everyone, not least small business owners, she had been so pleased to have been able to move into the West Lothian market.

"We have been overwhelmed by the response, from passers-by wishing us well, to the incredible kindness of fellow shop owners dropping in cards and gifts to welcome us to the town and wish us luck."

Erin said that she had started off in the travel business after leaving school, but had decided her real passion lay in the wedding retail industry. *"At the time my parents were running a well-established bridal boutique in Stirling, and encouraged me to explore my passion."*

She opened her first business in Stirling in 2017, then two years later she and Chris decided to take over her parents' business when they took early retirement, rebranding it Bella Bridal.

Erin said that, at the Linlithgow outlet, designers she stocked include **Mark Lesley Bridal**, **Wtoo by Watters**, and **Georgia Bridal**. They have gowns available in over 100 different colours, to suit all wedding themes, along with a wide range of accessories from veils to tiaras and belts.

She added *"We also have our more unique accessories - bridal T-shirts from Laurie Lou Designs, and our leather jacket hire, which offers brides full personalisation of a jacket for their big day. Both are very popular with our current brides."*

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

AJM Hair

A young hair stylist who trained in Glasgow, then established a reputation for himself in almost five years at a leading Edinburgh salon, has launched an ambitious venture in Linlithgow.

Jack Morrill has just opened the doors of his spacious new salon AJM Hair at 213 High Street in what was previously "The Retreat/LifeHeal". And former clients of his at **Dickson Reid** in Edinburgh have promised to patronise his new establishment because they love the way he has styled their hair.

"I am truly blessed that all my clients from Edinburgh are joining me on this adventure of mine – their support has been priceless and so encouraging during this time."

I am looking forward to welcoming new clients from Linlithgow and the area, and I hope they will be encouraged by the value my Edinburgh clients have placed on my service and standards."

Jack said that he had trained from the age of 16 at Rainbow Room International in Glasgow, and after two-and-a-half years had begun to master his craft.

"It made me understand that all clients deserve 6-star treatment, something that I endeavour to deliver for every client every time they are in the chair."

But it was at Dickson Reid that I truly mastered my craft, and learned various new techniques. I was working in a busy environment, but at the same time delivering what I know were regarded as exceptional standards of work."

Jack said that he was looking to take on hair stylists to rent a chair, and he also had two rooms available to rent for beauty treatments.

He added, *"I will mainly be operating by appointment only, which can be booked on our landline 01506 371143, through our Facebook page, website, or our booking app. While booking is preferable, we will also take walk-in appointments."*



ONE LINLITHGOW



2 Feet 1st would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We would like to thank all our customers for their continued support during these very difficult times that we have all endured. Please keep supporting our local shops. Merry Christmas from Pauline & Angela. X



Santa comes every year/Even with Covid, have no fear!/He quarantined when he arrived/His reindeer too, so they could fly/So smile and laugh, have Christmas Cheer/Even if its 'virtually' this year./This time won't last, that's for sure/2020 will soon be out the door!/We don't need parties or rich fancy food/We don't need big presents (though small ones would be good:))/We just need each other, all healthy and bright/Counting our blessings on a cold Christmas night!/Merry Christmas from **A Wee Mindin'**, thank you to all our wonderful customers!



From everyone at **AJM HAIR** we would like to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and Happy New Year, hopefully 2021 will be better.



A Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year to all our customers both new and old. Thank you all for your custom this year! **Andy's Bike Clinic**



Thank you so much for your custom and support over my first year in the salon. Merry Christmas and a Happy New

Year to you all! Love Aimee at **The Beautique Beauty Salon.**



From all of us here at **Bella Bridal Boutique** we want to thank everyone for being so welcoming since we opened in September. We are so pleased to be part of such a friendly community and we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Wishing all our wonderful customers big and small a very Merry Christmas and lots of fun and games in the New Year! From **Ian and the team at Bright Star Toys.**



Thank you to all our guests who supported us and used our butchers delivery service (David Steins of Bathgate) over lockdown and our cocktail service. We look forward to welcoming you over the winter months with our festive menu running alongside our regular menu, check our socials for details on what's going on and have yourself a great Christmas. **Kieran and the team.**



The Clark family and all the staff at Central Scotland Ballet School hope that our CSBS students and their families have a wonderful Festive break and keep dancing into a happier and healthier New Year!



Here at **Centre Stage Dancewear** we would like to express our sincere thanks to our amazing customers for all their continued support especially during these trying times. Our aim is to

provide the best service, a warm welcome and customer satisfaction. We wish everyone well - stay safe and we hope to see you all soon. **Leigh & Lesley Ann**



Coffee Neuk We would like to wish our customers a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Huge thank you for your continued support throughout this very difficult year for everyone.



Paul and Sandra at Complete Health would like to thank all our terrific customers for their support during our first year. We look forward to seeing you all again next year and wish you all a very merry Christmas and a Completely Healthy New Year!



We would like to wish all our customers a Very Merry Christmas, and Best Wishes for 2021! Also thank you all so much for your support and custom during this unusual first year of trading for **The Crannog!**



Detail Hair Thank you to all our loyal and valued customers for all your support. We appreciate you more than ever in what has been a very difficult year. Let's hope 2021 brings more joy and celebrations with loved ones. Here's to a happier New Year. Love from all at Detail xx



Yes: The staff at **Dollhouse** would like to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year.



Fair Trade Winds Merry Christmas to all our wonderful customers, thank you for shopping local!



2020 has certainly been a year we'll never forget, so at **Far From The Madding Crowd** we're determined to make this a Christmas worth remembering! We have books, gifts, toys, Christmas cards and gift-wrap available to buy direct through our new website. Or join our Book Subscription Service: the perfect gift for the book lover in your life! We'll be here for all your book needs until Christmas, but please contact us to check our latest opening hours: www.maddingcrowdlinlithgow.com E: sallymaddingcrowdlinlithgow.com T: 01506 845509 FB: Far From The Madding Crowd Linlithgow Twitter: @Furtherfrom And from everyone here at Far From The Madding Crowd, we wish you all a peaceful and happy festive season!



Flowers by Carolyn Thanks to all our customers for your continued support, wishing you all a very Merry Christmas!



We would love to thank guests of the **Granary** for supporting the cafe during these times, keeping it local for food + coffee it has been a hard time for all being apart of your routine is beautiful. Be sure to pop in for some winter special baked goods, foods + drinks. Kieran and the team!



We hope everyone has a great Christmas! Thank you for your continued custom... from **all the staff at your local Greggs.**



As a gift to you this festive season, **Halliday Homes** will offer you a **FREE HOME REPORT AND NO UPFRONT FEES** when you sign up with us! Contact us now for your no-obligation market appraisal. 01506 535500 / linlithgow@hallidayproperty.co.uk



Kapital Kilts and Kapital Gifts would like to thank our loyal customers for all their support and business throughout this difficult year. We will still be open for trade throughout this festive season in our high street store and would like to remind everyone that you can view and purchase our giftware online via our website at www.kapitalgifts.com any time of day or night.



We would like to thank all our customers for your support and encouragement, particularly over the past few months. We have lots of activities planned over the coming weeks to make sure your little ones have a special time at Christmas. Best wishes **Caroline, Pauleen and team Kidz Stop**.



We would like to wish all of our customers past and present a very Merry Christmas. It has been a tough year, whilst we are national brand, we are a local family run business and for us, you shopping local has never been more important. With 2021 upon us, we will be making exciting changes to the displays in our showroom, we will hopefully run a few exciting cooking demonstrations showcasing our fantastic appliances. Please pop in and pick up a 2021 brochure which should be with us at the start of December. Thanks, from all at **Kutchenhaus Linlithgow**.



LILYPOND CRAFTS & GIFTS

Lilypond Crafts & Gifts would like to thank all our wonderful customers for their continued support throughout this tumultuous year. We hope you enjoy the festive season as best you can. Take care and stay safe! Evelyn & Kate x We would like to wish everyone a healthy and happy festive season and look forward to seeing everyone in the New Year.



Merry Christmas to you all from **Linlithgow Chiropractic!** Wishing everyone a healthy 2021. Keep safe and well.



A huge thank you to all of you who have supported us in this unprecedented year – without you we wouldn't still be here. Hopefully with continued support from our local community we will see you in 2021. Wishing you all a safe and happy Christmas, from Ross and Alyson, **Linlithgow Distillery**



Linlithgow DIY would love to thank every single one of our amazing customers for their incredible support throughout a challenging 2020. You have kept us busy and in turn we have kept you busy at home. Have a brilliant 2020 Christmas from the whole team at **Linlithgow DIY!**



Linlithgow Physiotherapy

Linlithgow Physiotherapy would like to thank all their clients for their continued support and wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy and Healthy 2021. Best wishes from Pamela, Karen and Gavin. Stay safe.

Linlithgow Pottery.

Thank you for your continued support - it means everything. Check out our new online shop, linlithgowpottery.com



Merry Christmas from all at **Linlithgow Stoves & Gifts!** We have a new online shop, www.linlithgowstovesandgifts.co.uk, with click-and-collect available, and free delivery in the EH49 area. 228 High Street, 01506 842464, hastiestoves@gmail.com



Linlithgow Travel would like to thank all of our customers for their continued support through this difficult year. We wish everyone a safe and Happy Christmas & New Year.



Lisa Ritchie and Michelle Kurkoski (formerly of Natural Therapies) would like to wish all clients Old and New a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. We hope that you can visit us in our new location within Skin Happy for any beauty or permanent makeup treatments. www.lisaritchiepmu.co.uk



Little Beau Peep Thank you for everyone's warm welcome as the new owners and for your continued support in shopping local. We would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, and hope we can stay safe and enjoy our 2020 festive celebrations.



We would like to thank you all for your fantastic support this year and wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. **Mac's of Linlithgow**

Jim Brown, owner of mid-C-mod at 78 High Street, Linlithgow, would like to express our deepest thanks to everyone who has



supported us over the past difficult year. We wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.



PlayBugs

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas from **the team at Playbugs!** We've missed you all since March whilst we have had to remain closed but we look forward to seeing you all as soon as we possibly can. Until then stay safe and have a Wonderful Christmas.



Merry Christmas from all the staff at **Purely Patchwork**. Visit us at 43 High Street for unique hand-made gifts this Christmas. We have handmade quilts, table runners, placemat and coaster sets, craft kits and lots of lovely cotton fabrics. We also sell reusable, washable fabric face masks, haberdashery, threads and scissors. Open 10am to 2pm Monday to Saturday. Phone 01506 846200.



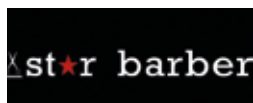
HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU! May peace, joy, and love find their way under your Christmas tree. From **Tina at Skin Happy** where we restore radiant skin to help you feel confident, carefree and skin happy. Clinically proven machines and products to energise, resolve and recover. For both men and women our services & products include: Laser hair removal, Fat and Cellulite reduction, Face & Body Skin Tightening, Face & Body chemical Peels, LED Phototherapy, Medical Grade Skin Care Range, Screen Cancer UK service and Gift Vouchers



Pam and all the staff at So Strawberry Caffé would like to

ONE LINLITHGOW

thank all our lovely, loyal and valued customers and friends for supporting us in 2020. Wishing you all a very happy, peaceful and safe Christmas and a brighter New Year! Xx



Everyone at **Star Barber** on Linlithgow High Street would like to wish all of our clients a Happy Christmas, and hope that 2021 is a really good year for you. We would like to extend our warmest thanks to all of you for your loyal support in what has been a really difficult year. We remain committed to maintaining our reputation for delivering a high quality service, and look forward to your continued custom.



Zoe and her team would like to thank every single customer for their continuous support throughout this tough year! Merry Christmas and a healthy Happy New Year **from the Subway Linlithgow Team**



Steven, Lisa and the team at Taste wish all their customers and friends a very merry Christmas and a happy new year, thank you for all your support in 2020.

T.D. Anderson
Quality Butcher
Est. 1897

David, Kevin and Ross from your local Scottish Craft Butcher at 165 High Street, Linlithgow would like to thank all our customers for their support throughout 2020 and for your patience and understanding adapting to the new systems in place. Merry Christmas to all and looking forward to supplying Linlithgow residents with Quality Scotch Beef, Lamb and Specially selected Pork in 2021 and beyond.



On behalf of everyone at Tesco, Store Manager Drew Waldie would like to wish everyone in Linlithgow and the surrounding area a safe and happy Christmas, and a very happy New Year.



Thanks to all our loyal customers for continuing to support us during the year. We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. **The Thread Counter.**



We would like to thank all of our customers for supporting us through this difficult year, and we hope you all have a lovely Christmas! Take care, **Colleen, David and the team at Truly Scrumptious.**



We'd like to let local people know that anyone staying in the West Lothian area will get 15% off any new booking at our holiday cottages at **Williamsraig**. We know it'll be the time-out that many people are looking for and will do them good. Merry Christmas!



QWorth With such warm and heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has supported us, especially during these challenging times! We wish you all a very safe and

healthy ending to 2020! Hope 2021 brings out the best we all deserve! Offering exceptional quality for services and products is at the heart of our business. Free delivery to Linlithgow and nearby towns. Thanking you Linlithgow, we love you! sales@qworth.co.uk / 01506 238850 / @QWorthLtd



To the people of Linlithgow... **Du Vin Bouchers** values each and every one of our

customers and cannot express our gratitude enough for your ongoing support through these trying times. Christmas is a time of giving, and we'd like to give you a huge thanks for being our cherished customer. Have a happy holiday and we look forward to welcoming you again through our Big Blue Doors.

Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year, **Catherine.**

"The following would simply like to wish their customers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!"

ALAN STEEL
ASSET MANAGEMENT



FIRE STATION SEEKS NEW RECRUITS IN MILESTONE YEAR



The Linlithgow retained (part-time) Fire Station is looking for people who live or work in the town to join as On-Call Firefighters.

The call for new recruits comes at a time when the local firefighters should have been celebrating the 50th anniversary of the opening of their current facility in Philip Avenue, next door to the Bowling Club. The Covid-19 restrictions this year have put paid to any plans to mark this major milestone.

On-Call Firefighters undertake the exact same duties as wholetime firefighters and attend the same variety of incidents. They are supplied with a pager and must be able to respond to the Fire Station immediately after being alerted. They receive an annual retainer fee and are paid for all training, incidents, and other duties undertaken.

The new £30,000 Linlithgow Fire Station was officially opened on Saturday February 14th, 1970. It had actually been in operation since the previous September, when the volunteer crew had moved from their premises at the Cross, in what is now the Coffee Neuk café. West Lothian County Councillor and member of the South Area Fire Board, William

Drummond, officially opened the building and as well as a tour of the premises, the distinguished guests were treated to a mock car crash and fire in the yard outside, a drill display, and some stirring tunes from the South Eastern Area Fire Brigade Pipe Band.

While plans to celebrate this year's anniversary, including a big Open Day for the local community, have been put on hold, I was privileged to have my own personal guided tour of the fire station recently when I met up with Andrew McAinsh, who is the retained crew commander at Linlithgow. He also works for the Fire Brigade full time as the retained duty system Watch Commander, covering all the retained fire stations in the Falkirk and West Lothian area.



During a fascinating hour-long visit, Andrew gave me an insight into how the station works and showed me the impressive range of equipment for every eventuality which is carried on the fire engine.

"The role of the Fire Brigade these days is much more than putting fires out", he told me, as he outlined recent call outs including floods and water rescue incidents, road traffic accidents and rescuing an animal trapped under a vehicle.

The station acts quickly once an emergency call is received, as Andrew explained:

"We all carry pagers, that are linked to the turn-out system of the station, so when that goes, everybody usually stops what they're doing and makes their way here, whether it be by cycling, running, driving or any other creative means that can get them here. We can generally respond in between five to eight minutes, so it is quite quick, although traffic on the High Street can often cause us problems."

Training nights take place every Thursday and new faces would be very welcome:

"We definitely need recruits", said Andrew. "We have retirements coming up and have lost a few crew members through people changing work locations and leaving to explore other avenues."

"We are needing people. It's a good job. It's a big time commitment, I'm not going to lie, but it's a very unique job, where you get to experience things and do things that many other jobs wouldn't allow you to do. This is an ideal opportunity to challenge yourself, learn new skills, join a closely knit team and be an integral part of the Linlithgow community and surrounding areas."

Further information is available from Andrew McAinsh at:
Andrew.McAinsh@firescotland.gov.uk



Murdoch Kennedy



The article below was published on 28 January 2011, almost exactly 10 years ago, at the time when West Lothian Council was deciding the fate of a site right at the centre of Linlithgow's Conservation Area. The old bus depot opposite The Cross on the High Street, in private hands at the time, was on the market. An opportunity presented itself to transform the town centre but instead led to the intractable mess we have now, creating a gap site and threatening the stability of adjacent listed buildings. Now, in 2020, the Council is on the brink of making the same mistake again, this time at The Vennel.

LINLITHGOW AT A CROSSROADS

A missed opportunity for business revitalisation will rob the community of its greatest economic potential in half a century, argues David Tait.

The ancient Royal Burgh of Linlithgow finds itself at a crossroads.

With a wonderful story to tell, previously home to kings and queens, county town of Linlithgowshire and a centre of considerable economic activity, the town is on the slippery slope to ignominious dormitory town status.

No longer the county town, the last vestige of power and influence having recently migrated over the Bathgate Hills to Livingston, the home of Black Bitches faces a stark choice.

Already being described as a dormitory town, a decision will be taken shortly which will determine whether it continues to sleepwalk to oblivion or takes the bold route, maximises use of its assets and becomes once again a thriving centre of economic activity.

A prime town centre site is available for development – will the end product take the town down a road to nowhere or become the first step on the road to a new future?

To say Linlithgow is at a crossroads is literally true. The Cross stands at the centre of the town and is well documented as its beating heart for 500 years and more. Local historian, **Bruce Jamieson**, has described the Cross this way, *“Here have been held food sales, livestock auctions, public executions, royal proclamations, witch burnings and aristocratic festivities.”*

In the opinion of the late **Colin McWilliam**, director of the **Scottish National Buildings Record**, *“No other town in Lothian, perhaps not even Edinburgh, has a grander civic focus.”*

On the north side of the Cross stands the superb Burgh Halls, dating from 1668 and thought by some to have been built to the design of the master mason to King Charles I. Just behind the Burgh Halls is St Michael's Church occupying a site that has been used for such purposes since

before written records began. And behind that again, the magnificent Linlithgow Palace, a place of kings and queens since the fifteenth century and birthplace of Mary, Queen of Scots, one time Queen of France. And if you want to go even further back then the palace overlooks the crannogs on Linlithgow Loch. Altogether a visitor goldmine, largely untouched.

To the east of the Cross is a row of 19th century buildings now put to good use by local businesses. On the west side, until the 1960s, stood a range of late medieval buildings including the most well known, the Spanish Ambassador's House. The decision to demolish those buildings was highly controversial and the process of replacement described by author William F. Hendrie as *“to the horror of the townsfolk”* were built *“three and four storey monstrosities”*. So they remain fifty years later.

So we come to the south side of the Cross, to decision time and perhaps to the key to Linlithgow's future. At present a bus company occupies a large site as its centre of operations for the area. It has now decided it is time to move on and has put the site on the market creating an opportunity right at the historic centre of old Linlithgow.

So, thinking about Linlithgow's history and its future potential, at a time when complacency risks ignominy for the ancient Royal Burgh, is its past the key to its future? Could something be done on the south side of the Cross to complement the wonders on the north side, to compensate for the disaster on the west side and to help Linlithgow play a far more prominent role in Scotland's tourism industry? In the palace alone it has fantastic potential – how can that be developed? Add to that the myriad attractions round and about, with additions arriving on a continuous basis, and it surely has to be asked if something better than is currently being proposed – 42 sheltered housing units – cannot be contrived for the site.

So what could kick-start a new future for Linlithgow as a major visitor destination? Visitors need close access to places of interest. Other towns and cities around the world with similar assets and

access problems find solutions. What about a development, based on social enterprise principles, with user-friendly access for bus parties, underground parking for visitors' cars, an open European style piazza at ground level, surrounded by a combination of retail and business premises with some residential accommodation at second level? What about an international competition drawing on the talents of the Scottish diaspora and all its connections around the world to add to local talent to produce some novel solutions?

Against that kind of vision, it has been said, informally, that “nothing can be done” as the sale and purchase of the site is a transaction between two private companies and as long as plans comply in all particulars with regulations that is the end of it.

Presumably a similar line was taken when the Spanish Ambassador's House was demolished to the consternation of local people. Do we have to be slaves to the “regulations” and make a similar mistake again? Or is a point reached when the telescope should be put to the blind eye and a bold decision taken for the long term benefit of the community as a whole rather than for short term gain?

Having recently attended a seminar presented by the Development Trust Association Scotland, and heard a brilliant presentation from a feisty lady from Twechar on how to get things done in your community, it's clear there are people out there who can succeed, despite the system, and create wonderful facilities appreciated and used to the full by an engaged community.

Blind uncritical obedience to rules led to the carnage of the Charge of the Light Brigade while the putting of a telescope to a blind eye led to a famous victory.

Citizens of Linlithgow, which is it to be? Decrepitude or fame?

What legacy will you bequeath to the next generation of Black Bitches?

David Tait

*Chair, Linlithgow Business Association
t. 01506 510333 mob. 07767 713024*



It must have been a proud day on 11 December 1964 when Linlithgow Town Council approved in principle the £500,000 town centre redevelopment. By February 1967, all formal permissions obtained, a tender for £600,000 was accepted from Richard Costain (Construction) Ltd. Work began in the same year and was completed in 1969

What a blow to civic pride then to read the summary of local opinion expressed by historian William F Hendrie as “to the horror of the townsfolk” were built “three and four storey monstrosities”

SO WHAT HAD GONE WRONG?

The mid-to-late 1960s was an exciting time in housebuilding. Post war demand was great. Incentives were many – to local authorities - low rates of interest; to low income homebuyers - the option mortgage scheme. Demand for labour was high and a selective employment tax was introduced to incentivise manufacturing, adding further stress to recruitment by the construction industry. Building contractors were encouraged to adopt new and largely untried methods of prefabricated construction, replacing skilled trades with increasingly less skilled assembly work on site. This together with legislated generous room dimensions and facilities

and a maximum cost to build made for a dangerous combination as corners were inevitably cut.

It is suspected the Vennel Development avoided some of the worst aspects of the new construction methods by employing a very competent and demanding Clerk of Works. The traditional brick cavity walls of the design have a characteristically long service life with low maintenance. In contrast, the floors and roofs are constructed of precast concrete planks, factory made, assembled on site. The flat roof was probably covered in three-ply bitumen felt with accessible walkways and other areas waterproofed with mastic asphalt. The roof covering would require regular treatment and replacement. The original windows, factory made and probably single glazed, would have been expected to last no more than 30 years.

With a likely design life of 60 years, the primary elements of the structure were unlikely to last longer than that without substantial structural maintenance. Over the past 50 years many weak points have been addressed: insulated wall over-cladding installed; frequent roof covering replacement; windows, frames and panels replaced without ever entirely eliminating the effects of water leaks, condensation and mould growth.

The precast reinforced concrete floor panels were manufactured to a now superseded British Standard. Kept dry, reinforced concrete panels are extremely durable; in damp conditions they can

become subject to carbonisation and corrosion. Expansion of the reinforcing bars follows causing the concrete to fracture. Repairs are possible but disruptive and very expensive.

In 2017 a firm of structural engineers surveyed The Cross flats. Their report found the walls to be in good condition, minor defects in cladding, some defects in roof coverings and copings, evidence of water ingress and defective waterproofing at gullies.

The likely cost of repairs reported to the Local Area Committee of West Lothian Council is between £200,000 and £300,000. Inspection of the precast concrete floor panels is recommended during the proposed works.

During the summer of 2017, West Lothian Council conducted a nine-week consultation on its draft “planning guidance” for the redevelopment of a part of The Vennel area. The Linlithgow Planning Forum conducted an exhaustive public consultation exercise in two phases.

Phase 1 comprised an online and paper-based initial survey receiving 259 replies.

Phase 2 a few weeks later at the Low Port Centre comprised the public exhibition of development ideas prepared by the Linlithgow Civic Trust and attended by about 150 visitors who completed 120 detailed questionnaires. The main findings from this exercise were:



>> This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve the centre of Linlithgow with a design in sympathy with Linlithgow's traditional buildings in terms of built form and building materials.

>> Over 90% of respondents mentioned a link between the High Street and the loch making the area more attractive to tourists.

>> A minimum of 25% of the houses in any redevelopment being social rented.

>> In both surveys over 80% of respondents wanted the Linlithgow community to be actively represented in the specification and design stages of the development process.

Following this exercise, in 2018 the Linlithgow Planning Forum developed an options appraisal for the part redevelopment of The Vennel. Essential to this option appraisal is consideration of the Cross flats. It is beyond doubt that between now and the final demolition of this building it will incur very high maintenance costs if the residential and business occupants are to be accommodated in anything like reasonable comfort.

Considerations: Human

If the Cross flats were to be included in the redevelopment, the existing tenants must be offered new accommodation in the proposed new buildings keeping neighbours together and allowing a phased move to new homes prior to the demolition of the existing flats. Not to take this opportunity may result in the ultimate dispersal of residents across West Lothian when the flats are ultimately demolished

whether this is in for example 5, 10, or 15 years time.

Considerations: Financial

In the option appraisal the highest financial return to West Lothian Council is achieved by selling the site to a developer. However, the option appraisal proves that the demolition of the whole site including the Cross flats and the rebuilding of flats, shops, tourist office and toilets, youth facility, community facility and a two deck car park could be achieved although with a very small financial return to West Lothian Council. This latter option, however, would be the best value option for Linlithgow.

On 6th October 2020, the Council Executive meeting heard a report on the development from the Head of Planning and also a presentation from John Kelly of the Community Council. The main thrust of John's report was to petition the Council not to sell to a developer stating *"to sell to a developer gives an immediate cash receipt but does not guarantee a best value solution for Linlithgow. Indeed it does not guarantee a development at all – we have two ugly gap sites in Linlithgow High St awaiting developer action, one from 2013. The developer is most likely to hold the investment until the optimal time to resell at a profit. The final outcome is most likely to be very expensive lochside flats and a sum given to the council towards social housing built elsewhere in West Lothian"*

John stated that the Community Council's preferred action *"will not involve a cost to the Council but... it retains control of the project... and the achievement of a best value solution for Linlithgow. It also,*

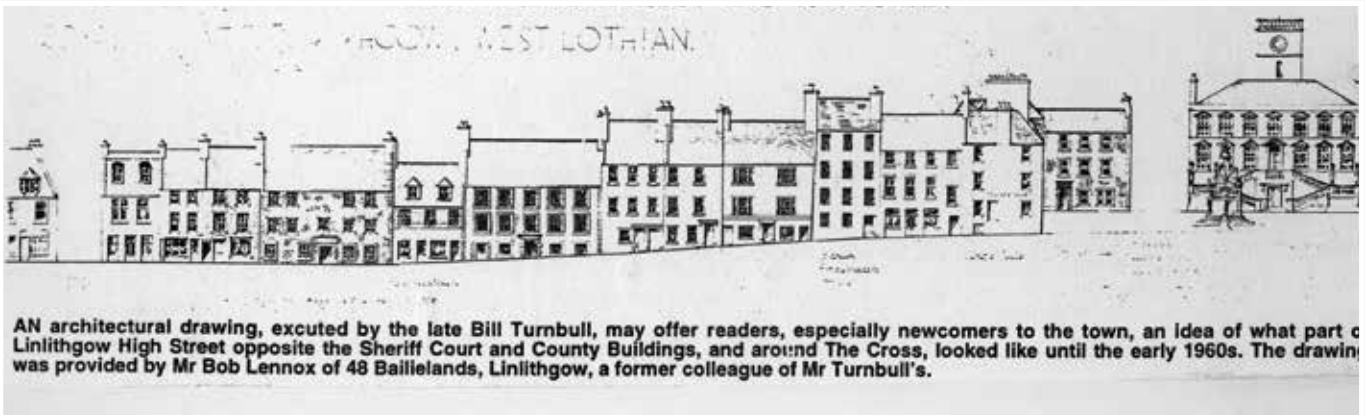
importantly, meets the stated wish of the community to be actively involved in all stages leading up to and including the development of the brief for the redevelopment of the Vennel."

In reply Councillor Tom Conn stated that the concern over gap sites was a red herring. Councillor Conn moved a motion which states "Council Executive notes the officer's recommendations. However, given the time that has elapsed since the public consultation in 2017, Council Executive agrees to expedite any redevelopment of The Vennel area and instructs the Chief Executive to initiate a marketing exercise as part of a 'Development Opportunity-mixed residential and commercial' project inviting potential partners to submit offers and details with a closing date of 31st March 2021... officers are also instructed to investigate with local community, voluntary and business groups the appetite for the development of a community/resource hub within the former library building. If successful a community innovation centre to be included in any new build final proposal for the redevelopment of The Vennel area". The motion was passed 7 votes to 6.

So we move forward like a juggernaut on rails towards the inevitable sale of another Linlithgow asset unless...

**John Kelly,
Linlithgow Planning Forum**

Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge
Community Council





Trees have been on this planet for about 400 million years, humans for about 300,000 years. Trees in Scotland were erased by the last Ice Age and only gradually returned after its retreat ten thousand years ago. A new planting in the town hopes to show the succession of the trees arriving, firstly with the return of native trees. These were then followed by naturalised trees such as sycamores and horse chestnuts, and then by other introduced species.

Last year's planting of around 500 native trees at the new community wood 'Triangle Wood', by the canal west of the leisure centre, seems to have been a success. This was despite the spring drought. Working with Linlithgow Community Development Trust there was scheduled to be a Burgh Beautiful organised planting on 22 November of 500 Woodland Trust trees, this is to be an extension to Triangle and it should become the backdrop to the new cycle track.

The public following socially distanced rules were invited to participate.

The new area includes a reed-bed by a former quarry with an adjacent planting of the first trees to arrive after the ice retreated. These are willows, aspens, and Scots pine. Next to arrive is an area of silver birch and hazels, and then of oaks. The fourth area is a collection of other native trees. These trees are ones selected that have the ability to live for hundreds of years in Scotland. We have called this area 'Ancient Trees'. This is to try and promote keeping the trees that we have and letting them grow to middle and even old age. Unusually the town has very few old trees, and only one ancient tree in the Ancient Tree Register, this is the Palace sycamore. Adjacent areas have a much larger number. Our older trees have been lost, and this regrettably continues month-on-month. The overall tree coverage in the town continues to fall. Any new trees planted are not compensation for the trees being cut down. The new planting has some sycamores, these maligned trees are beneficial environmentally and are particularly good for carbon storage. It is the usual ethos of having 'the right tree in the right place'. The western edge of the wood will be gradually planted with evergreens to help screen

the cycle track from the wind. There may be the opportunity to sponsor trees to speed the development of the view and raise funds for both Burgh Beautiful and Linlithgow Community Development Trust.

The main planting at the extension to Triangle should be completed by the end of November. Another Burgh Beautiful project reaching a stage in its development is the Rosemount Park Arboretum. This park is referred to as a 'hidden gem'. Its location by the canal was much frequented during the lockdown. Recently West Lothian Council has replaced the benches making it more welcoming. Burgh Beautiful, with the support of the Council, has been gradually developing the park as a community arboretum. We have been making additions, hopefully in a way that enhances the park without radically changing the character or views over the town. Examples of the tree species have recently been labelled, and we will soon have an example of all the tree families to help the educational use of the park.

To this end several small trees will be added over the coming year. It is hoped to plant a small example of a Cedar of Lebanon and in the very wet area a swamp cypress. These ancient trees will complement the dawn redwood, and an example of 'the world's biggest tree' - the Giant Sequoia. We will update the guide to the trees on our website <https://lbt.scot/trees>.



Over the year we have been given trees and these have gratefully been received and planted. Whilst planting opportunities around the town have been limited, we have been able to find these trees a fitting home. If you have a suitable location for a tree or trees then we may be able to arrange a planting. Looking for opportunities, last year Burgh Beautiful made a bid for the restoration and enhancement of the town's street trees. Over the years the High Street has lost many trees, and with the pollution and general



environment issues the need for the careful addition of suitable trees became apparent. Our bid under the Scottish Government's Town Centre Fund, was successful. The project is being managed via the Linlithgow Burgh Trust in conjunction with WLC. Alas, like many other projects this has been delayed by Covid-19. Currently WLC is about to appoint a consultant and a public consultation will follow. The work is scheduled for completion in 2021.

Environment Working Group of Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow

Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow is part of Linlithgow Burgh Trust. Linlithgow Burgh Trust is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Scottish Charity Number SC047211

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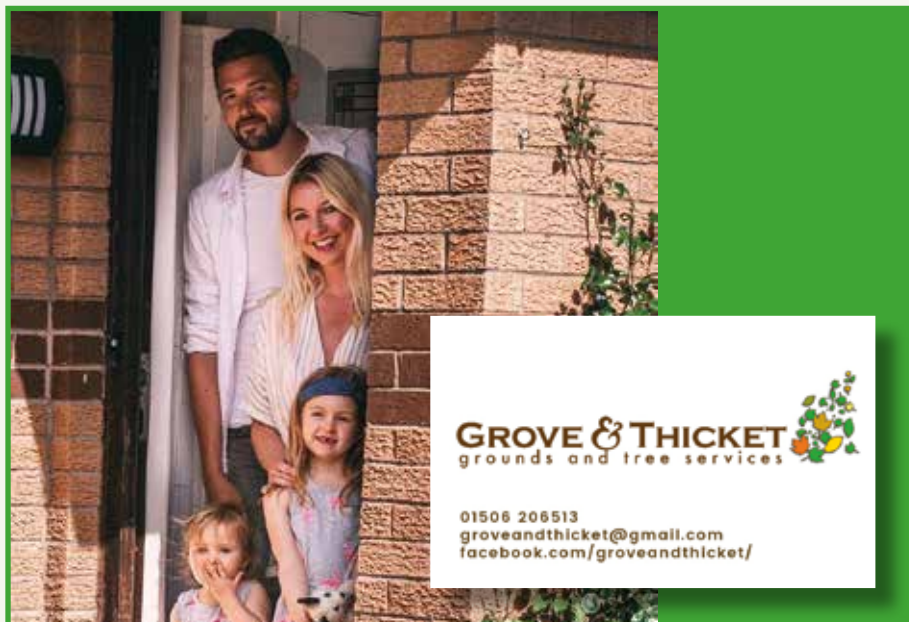
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GROVE AND THICKET GARDENING SERVICES

Grove and Thicket, a husband-and-wife team comprised of **Kris and Anne Margett**, was set up in September of 2020 as a new Linlithgow family business. Offering Gardening Services, ranging from small garden tidy-ups, to hedge cutting, all the way up to felling trees, they were set up with the goal of helping their clients love their gardens and outside spaces.



"Lockdown was difficult for all of us"

Kris says *"Having 2 small children in a 2 up 2 down forced us to re-evaluate the outside space that we had. We created an area for us to relax at night, a family area to sit and eat al fresco, and a space that the kids could explore and have fun, all in a garden no bigger than your average new build. It made us realise the importance of having a garden to enjoy, especially when the world outside is turning upside down"*

Originally from Derbyshire, **Kris** has been surrounded by family that have influenced his passion for all things horticultural. His Grandfather, **Maurice** (91), was a florist and publican, whose pub won 'Derby in Bloom' year after year. He taught him everything he knows about gardening and floristry and continues to advise to this day. In addition to all this, Kris is a fully qualified LANTRA tree inspector, and holds City & Guilds Qualifications in ground-based tree felling, allowing him to expand their business' range of services.

Anne, a former Sales and Marketing Manager, runs the business and

relationship side of Grove and Thicket. Dealing with new and existing clients, she prides herself on offering excellent customer service and creating a fantastic client experience from start to finish. No stranger to the world of horticulture, her father, a landscape gardener, always taught her that it's not just about what you know, it's also who you know, and this is her mantra when building relationships with the community.

In addition to the gardening work, Grove and Thicket also make seasonal goods. Currently making Autumnal Wreaths, and taking pre-orders for Festive and Advent Wreaths, they want to add their same love of nature to front doors as well as back gardens. Committing to their ethos of sustainability, they not only forage locally but also use cuttings from their garden work to minimise their environmental impact.

Anne said *"The response from the community has been brilliant so far. We have some wonderful customers who have been super-enthusiastic and complimentary of our work. Through our Autumn wreath offerings, I have been able to deliver to houses and meet the customers face to face, albeit behind a facemask. It's great to see their smiles and it really feels like we are offering something positive through these difficult times. It feels like this Christmas, more so than ever, people really want to make their homes shine and inject Christmas cheer onto their front doors. We are so happy to be able to help with this."*

Further to their commitment on sustainability, Grove and Thicket also pledge that for every tree removed, they will plant another from their nursery



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

of saplings or donate money towards planting trees & helping communities rebuild habitats around the world.

Grove and Thicket are taking pre-orders for their festive wreaths now. You can also buy Garden Tidy-up gift vouchers, starting at £50. Further information can be found on their Facebook page or email them directly on groveandthicket@gmail.com



FOLK FAE LITHGAE

Marjorie Russell



Marjorie Russell (nee Manson) has lived all her life in Bridgend and Linlithgow. After attending the local Academy, she studied Primary teaching at Callendar Park College of Education. A later change of direction then saw her embark on a forty-year career with the Civil Service, mostly in the Department of Work and Pensions.

Looking for new interests following her early retirement in 2018, and something where she could use the excellent listening, consultation, and communication skills she had developed during her career, Marjorie trained as a Humanist Celebrant and now conducts weddings, funerals and baby-naming ceremonies right across central Scotland, Fife and the Borders.

This new journey was inspired by a family wedding at Kelburn Castle in Largs. It was meaningful, personal, and different from other ceremonies Marjorie had attended and she was blown away by the flair, fun and enthusiasm of the Celebrant from the Fuze Foundation. Marjorie was interested in finding out more and learned that Fuze were trialling a training package leading to an SVQ qualification. She signed up and it opened her eyes to things she thought she could already do quite well, such as public speaking.

Marjorie really enjoys working with couples on their wedding service, which she describes as "building a jigsaw". The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that Marjorie has not done a wedding since the end of February, but her diary already looks very busy for next year, as couples have re-scheduled, rather than go ahead in the current situation.

As a Humanist Celebrant with the Fuze Foundation, Marjorie has conducted funeral ceremonies in all sorts of locations and circumstances. The interaction with people is very important to her, as she told me: -

"It is actually very rewarding, where you can really help somebody tell the story of their loved one. Through this, I have met so many interesting people. You get the basic facts, but you can weave in so much, like historical events they have been witness too, and make that life story come alive. The focus is on the person who has died and gathering all the bits and pieces about them. People are so appreciative and it is a lovely feeling that you can keep a loved one's memory alive and tell their story. For me, the service is so much more personal, more fitting and it can be whatever you want it to be."

Since March, organising funerals has been particularly challenging, with severe limits on the number of people able to attend causing additional grief and stress on families.

"In times like these", said Marjorie, "it's important to look for what we can do rather than focus on what we can't and sometimes it's the little things that give families the greatest comfort as they come to terms with the loss of their loved ones. Even during a pandemic, we can still give them a fitting, loving and respectful send-off."

The situation at the moment is challenging but it also offers new opportunities, as Marjorie explained: -

"Although we can't meet face to face and have that human connection before the funeral, through the mediums of FaceTime and Skype I encourage families to share fond memories, favourite stories, adventures, things that made them laugh and cry. They can even show objects that linked them to their loved one. The technology has meant that many more people than usual can be involved in the preparation. All these things have enabled me to deliver moving, fitting tributes that have really captured the personality of the deceased and celebrated the life they led, filled with music and stories that meant so much to them."

If you would like to know more about what Marjorie can offer, contact her via email marjorierussell@fuzeceremonies.co.uk, or phone 07855 413892.

Murdoch Kennedy



LINLITHGOW'S ROTARY TREE OF LIGHT



These are strange and unsettling times we all live in. The seemingly inexorable spread of the Coronavirus through our society has changed all our lives, at least for the foreseeable future. However, one positive that has come from the current public health crisis is that we all now really appreciate our, albeit limited, social interaction - taken for granted until now. Linlithgow is an attractive place to live and work, with a keen awareness of its history, but it also has an incredible sense of community. The way in which it has pulled together in these testing times has been proof positive of that.

Most people will be looking forward to Christmas as a season of joyous celebration even if it feels a little different this year. However, even in normal times, it can bring sadness and loneliness to many. In the weeks ahead, many will experience these feelings acutely - young and old. Various charitable organisations operating in the Linlithgow area work tirelessly to help combat this feeling of isolation and provide support to those in need. All are worthy causes, and all have a pressing need like never before to raise money to fund the increasing demand on their services.

Rotary's purpose is to serve and support local communities. For the last four years, the **Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange** has supported local organisations with its Tree of Light fundraising initiative over the Christmas period.

West Lothian Council have once

again given permission for the town's Christmas tree at Linlithgow Cross to be used as the Rotary Tree of Light and we are very grateful for their continued support. This special tree is being placed at the very heart of the community and we hope that it will provide a focal point for both celebration and remembrance.

There is an African proverb that states, *"As long as you speak my name, I shall live forever"*. This is the motivation behind the Tree of Light, now in its fifth year.

The tree is a tree of celebration - yes, of a life fondly remembered but also, perhaps, to celebrate a milestone event such as a significant anniversary or a new life begun, even a new generation for a family. There will be many personal reasons to make dedications. For those that wish it, the names of the people who are to be acknowledged and the tributes written will be displayed on panels encircling the base of the tree as well as on the dedicated Tree of Light website, so that it can be shared with family and friends wherever they are.

First and foremost though it is a tree of remembrance and a beacon of light and hope in the bleakest of circumstances for some who look on Christmas with trepidation and even despair. The numerous people who have made a Tree of Light dedication in the past have found the "speaking of the loved one's name" consoling, even cathartic.

The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange hopes to raise a significant amount for organisations working locally. For 2020, the chosen charities are -

>> **Linlithgow Day Care Centre Day Care** who provide services for elderly with dementia in and around the Linlithgow area

>> **Linlithgow Link** who give support through social and community activity to those who are isolated by illness, age, or infirmity

>> **Carers of West Lothian** who provide information, advice and support for all unpaid carers and people with disabilities,

>> **Children 1st - Scotland's National Children's Charity** who exist to prevent abuse and neglect, to protect children and keep them safe from harm and who work tirelessly to protect the rights of children in Scotland.

The Benevolent Fund of The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange will be able to disburse any Gift Aid received from these

donations to all these good causes.

This year Linlithgow's Rotary Tree of Light will shine brightly again thanks to the generosity of **Alan Steel Asset Management, RGM Solicitors, Stewart Electrical, Cala Homes and other community-minded businesses and individuals**. Their financial support ensures that every pound of public donations goes to the designated charities.

The Rotary Tree of Light is a community endeavour. Dedication forms and envelopes will be found at a variety of shops along the High Street and other locations in and around Linlithgow. Look out for the Tree of Light posters displayed around the town for details of these venues. **Several venues have also agreed to receive completed dedications and donations in sealed envelopes**. These will be regularly uplifted and processed by members of the Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange who will update the panels around the base of the tree and on the website. Alternatively you can make donations by credit or debit card via the online donation platform Jumblebee at <https://www.jumblebee.co.uk/linlithgowrotarytreeoflight>

Rotary is all about helping communities wherever they are in the world but most especially locally. The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange is proud to be able to promote and support these worthy causes but could not do so without the big-hearted folks of Linlithgow, a strong community which has proven time and again to put their hands into their collective pocket when the need arises.

So far as we know Linlithgow's Rotary Tree of Light is unique in Scotland, but then so too is Linlithgow!

Allan M Robertson

The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange



Club of Linlithgow
Grange

More information can be found at www.linlithgowtreeoflight.org.uk or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LinlithgowTreeOfLight. More information can also be obtained by emailing Allan M Robertson at administration@linlithgowtreeoflight.org.uk

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Fridays 11-4pm

Please follow social distancing and wear a mask.



Eddie the Elf is ready and waiting to welcome your donations. For those of you who maybe don't have any toys to donate but would still like to support this fabulous charity, why not shop local and pick up a toy from Bright Star toys or a book from Far from the madding crowd. Sometimes it's harder to get things for teenagers so books for this age group or toiletries would also be welcome.

Thanks for your support and let's help those with nothing get something to look forward to this Christmas.

The Toy Appeal is West Lothian wide with full details of the project provided below by River Kids.

This year more than ever Kids need your help.

**Mark Darragh, Playbugs,
Linlithgow**

THE TOY APPEAL IS COMING TO TOWN

River Kids are pleased to announce the launch of this year's Xmas Toy Appeal. The toy appeal started in 1984 and since its inception has helped over 69,000 disadvantaged kids in West Lothian. River Kids has managed the appeal on behalf of the West Lothian community since 2009 and last year they provided gifts to over 1,300 kids from over 600 families.

River Kids receives referrals for families in need from agencies such as the social work, health centres, DASAT and the homeless unit.

River Kids then collect donations of new toys and passes these on to the families to ensure that their children will have presents to open on Christmas morning.

River Kids require donations of toys (generally around the £10 mark) which can be dropped off at a number of collection points including:

- >> River Kids, 3 Tailend Court, Starlaw Livingston, EH54 8TE
- >> River Kids, 63-67 East Mains Street, Broxburn, EH52 5EE
- >> The Chain Runner, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA
- >> McNicholl Vehicle Hire, 19 Houston Mains Holdings (On A89), Livingston, EH52 6PA
- >> Play Bugs, 24 Mill Rd, Linlithgow Bridge, Linlithgow EH49 7SF (Wed-Fri only)
- >> Stoneyburn Health Centre, Sunnyside, Main Street, Stoneyburn EH47 8BY
- >> Nationwide Building Society, 106a Almondvale S, Livingston EH54 6HT

Alternatively for those not keen on venturing out, River Kids also has an Amazon Wish List - https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/3MFZ8I21NCU2V?ref_=wl_share

Cash donations to the charity can be made through its website www.riverkids.org.uk

Jack Christine,
Charity Manager at River Kids said

"We are delighted once again to be managing the toy appeal of behalf of the West Lothian community. COVID has meant that this hasn't been a normal year and the indications are this isn't going to be a normal Christmas. We are anticipating an increase in referrals as more and more families struggle financially due to furlough and redundancies. It has been tough on everyone, especially children. However, we at River Kids want to try and bring a "degree of normality" by ensuring that Santa delivers his presents on Christmas morning and every child in need has the joy of opening up a toy on Christmas morning. The delivery of the WLTA is going to be even more challenging with the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. It has meant that this year River Kids will be unable to rely on its logistics partner to pick up and deliver toys to the families. That aside, we love a challenge at River Kids and with the West Lothian communities help we are determined to make this year's appeal a resounding success"



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

PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS?

As we approach the festive season again it is important to remember that criminals too are preparing. Don't make it easy for them, criminals are often opportunists and may take advantage of poor security.

There are lots of ways that you can secure your home from intruders – many of these do not cost money.

- >> Don't leave keys on the inside of door locks, under mats or anywhere else an intruder may easily find them
- >> Always ensure that your keys are well out of sight / reach of letterbox and windows
- >> Don't label your keys – if you need to identify keys, consider a colour code theme
- >> Don't keep house keys and car keys on the same key ring
- >> Avoid keeping large amounts of cash in the house. If you must, then put it in different locations

- >> Don't leave valuables in view of windows
- >> Don't have your wall calendar near a window where appointments can potentially be seen
- >> If you are going away for a few days, use timer switches to turn lights on when it gets dark.
- >> Record details of your valuables on the National Mobile Property Register at www.immobilise.com
- >> If your home is accessed via a communal stairwell, make sure your door entry system is well maintained.
- >> Don't let anyone you don't know through the controlled entry door
- >> Get into a routine at night for locking up your house and your vehicles
- >> Ensure that all cars are locked and secure and don't leave valuables or Christmas presents in your car.

SECURE YOUR HOME FROM INTRUDERS

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.

We require the public to register online. You can register at www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk



BOGUS CALLERS / WORKMEN IN LINLITHGOW AREA

Unfortunately with the coming of bad weather and the festive period we have been receiving a rise in calls regarding doorstep crime in the Linlithgow area. If you feel threatened, unsafe or suspicious of a caller then contact police immediately.

PROTECT OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

- >> External lighting can help deter intruders if the area is overlooked from either your own property or neighbouring properties
- >> Secure shed / garage windows with grills or wire mesh, or make it difficult to look inside by using opaque film or curtains
- >> Lock away tools and ladders as they could be used to access your home
- >> Keep hedges low and any walls or fences at the front of your property no higher than four feet to make it harder for an intruder to avoid being seen.
- >> Lock away valuable items in the shed when not in use and think about covering them with an old sheet or blanket.
- >> Keep bins in an area where they can't be used as a step to climb fences, walls or access windows
- >> If you have an intruder alarm, consider extending its coverage to include outbuilding and ensure it is visible.



KEEP INTRUDERS AWAY FROM YOUR HOME

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](https://twitter.com/policescotland)
Facebook: www.facebook.com/policescotland

RUGBY CLUB CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY THIS MONTH

Ken Richardson



On Tuesday 17th November 1970, at a meeting in the Star and Garter Hotel, Linlithgow Rugby Club came into existence. Four days later, the newly formed club travelled through to play their first match against Currie RFC - another club in its first season! This year, in highly unusual circumstances, Linlithgow Rugby Club celebrates its 50th anniversary. The Club has come a long way since those days in 1970 and can now boast some of the best rugby facilities in the amateur game in Scotland.

Back in April's Black Bitch magazine, Club stalwart and renowned local historian, Bruce Jamieson took us through the early years of the Club and in particular its long search for and early development of a home at Mains Park. In this anniversary month, current Club President Ken Richardson, brings the story up to date...

DEVELOPING FACILITIES

In 1983, Linlithgow Rugby Club had finally found a home at Mains Park, with a new pitch and a new Clubhouse with changing rooms and showers. The Clubhouse was extended in 1992 and a second pitch at Lower Mains Park was added. As the Club moved into the new millennium, the lease on the land was extended to 99 years and now included a strip of land between the Clubhouse and Mains Road for future development of training facilities.

As the Club approached its 40th anniversary, an ambitious vision for uprating the Club's facilities in time for the Club's 50th anniversary was agreed with the membership at a series of meetings. "Towards 50: 2020 Vision" became the mantra

for a wide ranging combination of uprating existing and developing new facilities. Over 6 years from 2014 to 2019 inclusive, the Club invested around £750,000 in a series of projects, securing £500,000 in grants from over 10 different bodies in the process. The balance of £250,000 was raised over 10 years through major fundraising work by Club Members, which peaked in 2014 with a major drive to fundraise for the centre-piece project, the new Indoor Training Centre (ITC). Other projects included a major refurbishment of the Clubhouse, with a new kitchen, roof and Lounge windows, in addition to modernisation of the bar and a major refresh of the Club memorabilia and displays.

The Indoor Training Centre (ITC) was built in 2014 to provide enhanced training facilities for the Club that would ensure all year round training and continuity for Club operations. Additionally, it provides another recreation option for the local community and is popular for 5-a-side football.

In April 2014 the Rugby Club held a Gala Dinner at Murrayfield, attended by over 300 members of the Club, together with family, friends and supporters. The event was staged in partnership with the Bill McLaren Foundation, the purpose being to have a great time while raising funds both for the Foundation and for the Rugby Club's Indoor Training Centre. Both objectives were achieved. Everyone was entertained by the Scottish rugby legends, John Beattie, who compered the evening, and speakers, Iain Milne and Andy Nicol. The Rugby Club Male Voice Choir performed and the evening was capped with John Beattie's band providing music for those who wanted to take to the floor. Guests also took part in a prize draw and silent and live auctions so that, by the end of the evening, the grand total of £28,000 had been raised. This was shared between the Rugby Club and the Bill McLaren Foundation, although the Bill McLaren Foundation were so impressed that they later donated £5,000 to the Rugby Club.

Wednesday 8 July 2015 was a red-letter day for the Reds. It is not often that a grassroots community rugby club prepares to welcome the Patron



of Scottish Rugby, HRH The Princess Royal. Princess Anne had graciously agreed to perform the opening ceremony for the indoor training centre and this provided a sense of occasion to match members' sense of achievement.



COMMITMENT TO YOUTH

The development of young players has been a priority for the Club pretty much since its formation. Indeed, as previously mentioned, 10 of the players from the first ever Reds' team were under the age of 20. Links with Linlithgow Academy were established from an early time.

Linlithgow Rugby Club was among the first of the grassroots clubs to go down the path of directly employing someone to reach out into the local community, especially the schools, to promote the game of rugby. It all began in 2006 when Graham McKenzie was appointed as the Club's Development Officer and has continued to the present time with Dougie Thomson and Euan Mochrie, who both work in a partnership between the Rugby Club, Scottish Rugby and Linlithgow Academy's School of Rugby.

ACHIEVEMENTS ON THE FIELD

A rebuilding process from the turn of the millennium saw the Reds move back up through the National leagues culminating in a stand-out season in 2008-09 winning promotion to National League 1 (just below the 3 Premier Divisions), after winning 20 of their 22 league games, with a squad built around players developed through the Club's youth system. The following season the Club finished 4th in National League 1, which put the Reds at 40th in Scotland - the

highest ever placing in the Club's 50 year history.

Further restructuring of Scottish Rugby, in 2011, has reduced the number of National Leagues and expanded Regional Leagues as many Clubs were complaining about the travel distances involved in league rugby. Linlithgow found themselves in East Region League 1 (Edinburgh and the Borders), which is where they have remained to the present.

In season 2017-2018 the Reds' 2nds brought silverware to the Club in the form of the Reserve League East 2 Plate as league champions - a great achievement.

The Reds enjoyed a bit of a resurgence in season 2019-2020, finishing 4th in the Tennents East 1 league with 11 wins and one draw from 17 games played when the league was concluded early on account of the Coronavirus pandemic. The 2s also finished 4th in their league (Tennents Reserve League East 2) with 8 wins from 13 matches. A fine 31-0 away victory at Livingston in the New Year derby match, saw the Reds retain the West Lothian Trophy.

MODERN COMMUNITY CLUB

The Rugby Club has always prided itself on its contribution to the local community, not only in its primary role of providing a focus for rugby but, more widely, in organising and staging such local events as the annual Town Fireworks Night in November. Increasingly, in the Club's fifth decade, this community role has gone to a new level. A wide range of groups now use the Club as a base for their activities. As a community organisation, Linlithgow Rugby Club has looked for ways to provide some leadership in the use of renewable energy and other energy saving schemes to make the club more sustainable for the future. In 2013 a biomass (wood pellet) boiler was installed to provide hot water



for showers and clubhouse heating. Then in 2019 and again in early 2020, the Club entered into agreements with the local Linlithgow Community Development trust to install 100 solar panels on the roof, generating power for both club and community.

THE RUGBY CLUB TODAY

Linlithgow Rugby Club is a fully sustainable amateur rugby club with modern training and playing facilities and with a fully developed coaching structure covering structured rugby and related skills development for boys and girls from Primary 1 age group through to senior level. It is a strong community club, with key links and partnerships involving local schools, community organisations and sports clubs to promote fitness, wellbeing and community spirit.

The Club is sustained by a large number of trained volunteers who give up their time to train and develop young people through to adults. It also invests in employing two Development Officers who work in the local schools and in the Club to promote best practice in health and fitness, in addition to running the School of Rugby.

We have over 600 members, with around 250 youngsters (from age 2 to 18) and 80 adults playing rugby. The Club has a Male Voice Choir, a Rugby

Memories' Group and a Golf Section. Amongst the affiliated clubs, which use the facilities, are the West Lothian Eagles (Aussie Rules football) and the Linlithgow Rose Walking Football group.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

We've had to postpone plans to celebrate our birthday from November till the end of the season in mid-May, when we hope to be able to bring everyone together in a couple of big weekends of rugby and fun. In the meantime you can read all about the Club in a brand new illustrated publication:

The A4 sized book is now on sale at £18, including postage (in the UK) and packaging, and can be ordered at book50@lrfc.club.

And now on sale at Far From The Madding Crowd.



GIVE COMFORT AND JOY THIS CHRISTMAS

Lesley has some positive thinking to counteract the continuing disappointments brought by Covid-19. First she says I shouldn't mention that virus on this page, but more positively she says that they can't take Spring away from us and it will come, take comfort in this fact!



Even if we have restrictions on who we can invite into our homes at Christmas we have decided to decorate our home as normal. So we will have the tree, but I sense that I will have to help with the decorations for once, no more *'but you love doing it darling'*! The wreath at the front and lights in the garden will cheer us and anyone coming to the door – especially **Ian the postie**.



We have a plant of Hellebore Maestro opposite our patio doors that we see every morning. It is a hybrid of the *Helleborus orientalis* which is also called the Lenten Hellebore,

flowering during Lent. Maestro, like many of the new hybrids that are available, actually started flowering at the end of October in our garden and will keep performing until March. Nothing like a display of flowers during the winter to cheer us up.



Finally, this must be the year to send Christmas cards to family and friends that we haven't been able to visit over the last nine months. Keeping in touch is so important and sharing good news is wonderful. Lesley and I are sending cards that support the charity Perennial, the Gardeners Royal Benevolent Society. This spreads the word about the charity and directly supports their running costs helping all horticulturists in need. If you don't get a card from us, forgive us and let us wish you a happy Christmas for you and your family, wherever they are.



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AND MEET UP WITH A FRIEND IF THAT
IS STILL ALLOWED?





CHRISTMAS ON THE LOCH

PAT STEWART

Linlithgow loch was shimmering under the light of the moon, the night before Christmas. Snow fell silently onto hard ground. Many of the animals living down by the loch were getting so excited anticipating what Father Christmas would bring them. Each had their little sacks made from straw that they had collected through the autumn months hoping that little presents would appear in them on Christmas Day.

"When will he be here?" was their chant. Snowy swans wished for little glittering tiaras to extenuate their long necks.

"We will be the Princesses of the loch", said the swans. "No-one will miss us gliding through the water!"

The rabbits were hoping for extra carrots and woollen mittens for their paws that got so cold on dark snowy nights down by the loch.

The ducks who congregated near the swans hoping for titbits from the Folk Fae Lithgae were all hoping for extra duck food and warm scarves to tie round their necks.

All the animals settled down for the night in their beds and nests and hoped that Father Christmas would come.

The town clock struck midnight and all of a sudden the sky was ablaze with twinkling stars and the most amazing sight of a sleigh being pulled by prancing reindeer. In the sleigh was Father Christmas. The animals had been woken by the sound of the clock chiming and were so happy to see Santa on a beautiful snowy Christmas night. They waved and cheered and sure enough the sleigh touched down at the edge of the loch. Their presents were left in their sacks and all the little creatures were so happy.

Santa couldn't stay long but was able to say "hello" to all the animals who had gathered to see him.

Suddenly he was away with a whoosh, a shout and a jingle of bells.

This was the best Christmas any of the animals had ever had and one they would never forget.

*Image: by local illustrator Sandra Gibson.
Email: sgibsonillustration@gmail.com*





Seasonal Outdoor Events

Events have been so badly affected by the pandemic, so it's great to see that many seasonal outdoor Events are going ahead (fingers very well crossed!). **Beeccraigs Festive Forest** will run for its second year from 4th to 24th December. It promises to be bigger, brighter, longer and more spectacular than last year's event.



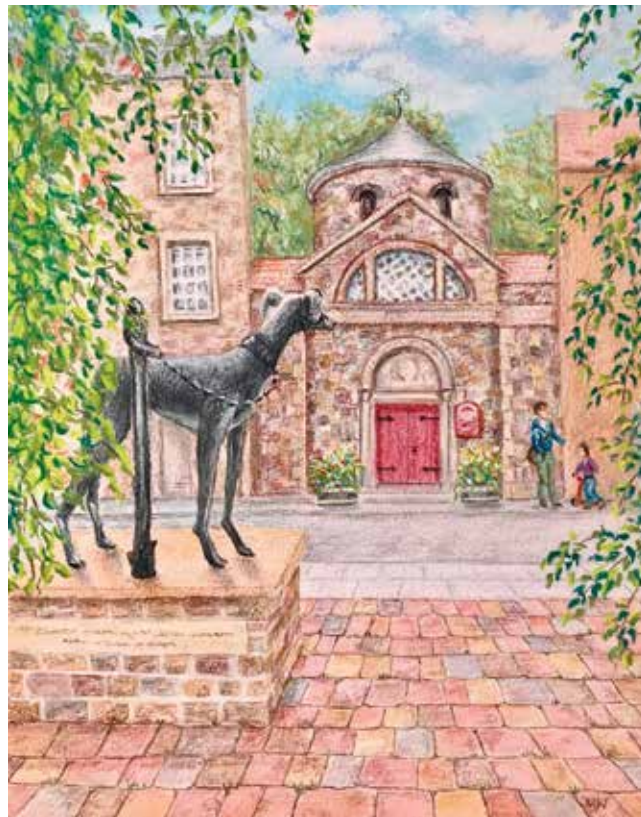
Some ticket timings are already sold out so book quickly! See page 36.

If this is your thing then similar events are running at **Edinburgh Zoo** and at the **Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh** through till early January. Who needs a pantomime when you can have fresh air, social distancing and twinkly lights?

Meg Wallace Art

Local artists are featuring more in my column during the pandemic, when there are less events to preview. I was very pleased to be able to meet up with **Meg Wallace** recently to discuss her new venture, following her early retirement.

Meg has always loved drawing but during her career did not have time to indulge often in her love of painting, but knew that when she retired it was on the to do list. I was amazed at what she has achieved since she gave up work in May this year.



Church with the Black Bitch in front of it is a good example of a scene that we might not often see, but highlights just how beautiful this historic Burgh is.

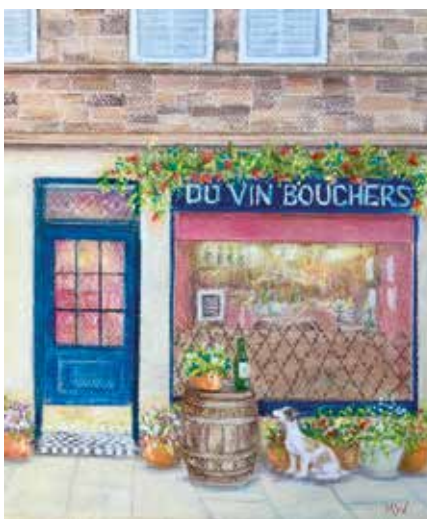
When she had completed ten or so, the idea of a calendar started brewing and being a determined lady, she soon had twelve pictures ready. A printer was found and the “**2021 Linlithgow Life in Pastels**” calendar is now for sale online, in *A Wee Mindin’* and in *Mannerstons*.

Meg then continued to record Linlithgow life including a series of paintings of local hostelrys. One of my favourites is the one shown here of *Du Vin Bouchers*. If you are

interested in her process do have a look on Instagram where you can see stop frame videos of how she works – very meticulously and neatly I noticed!

Other products have followed and now she can offer giclee prints of her paintings, Christmas cards and coasters as well as the calendar, in her Etsy shop – **MegWallaceArtStudio.etsy.com**. I have no doubt that there will be other products soon, as this lady is a prolific artist who has a real passion for pastel drawing.

Meg's next project is one which I think will be a big hit with local children and



Living in Linlithgow for 30 years and bringing her family up here has given Meg a love of Linlithgow and its community spirit that she wanted to express in her painting. Having previously worked mainly with watercolours in the past, Meg decided to try working with pastels when she retired. She loved it so much that she was quickly producing paintings of Linlithgow scenes, including some less commonly recorded views. Her picture of *St Peter's*



a great Christmas present for you to consider if you have young children or grandchildren. Her Linlithgow colouring book of local scenes is very much viewed from the eyes of a child. The toy shop looks inviting and what child wouldn't want to colour in the ice cream shop? It will be stocked in Far From the Madding Crowd, Bright Star Toys and Mannerstons, as well as being for sale through her Etsy shop. It's very reasonably priced at £5.99, and Meg is making a donation to the "River Kids" charity for every book sold. Disadvantaged children and their families in West Lothian will benefit from this kind gesture.

*** COMPETITION TIME ***

Meg has very kindly offered a generous prize package, so we have a competition running until December 5th. Email me (patswan@virginmedia.com) with your ideas of a view in Linlithgow that you think would be ideal for Meg to paint, and we will pick a winner between us to receive a calendar, a set of 4 coasters and a colouring book, delivered before Christmas. Your idea may even feature in the 2022 calendar!

Find Meg online at megwallaceart.co.uk, on Facebook and on Instagram @megwallaceart.

The Line Gallery

It has given me great pleasure that our local gallery has weathered the storm and stayed open throughout these tough times. I visited the other day to see the annual Postcards from the Line exhibition which runs until November 22nd. Lorraine Robson and Shona Young who I have written about are both exhibiting, along with many other artists - the walls are absolutely full of postcard sized Art, at very reasonable prices. Treat yourself or a loved one for Christmas.

The annual Christmas Angels exhibition follows and runs till Christmas Eve. It features many of the artists who have exhibited over the year including Ruth Nicol, Nikki Monaghan and Rhona Fairgrieve. There's a big movement to shop local this Christmas and the gallery sells gifts such as jewellery and glass that might fit the bill.

I'm just back from doing a couple of galleries in Edinburgh today and it has lifted my spirits. Take advantage of the quietness of the galleries just now and take time to think about something else! Do email me if you have any recommendations or ideas for future articles - patswan@virginmedia.com. I hope you have time to experience some ART over the next few weeks.


QUOTE OF THE MONTH



"let art get you through the dark"

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Linlithgow Ladies Choir would like send warm wishes to the readers of the Black Bitch magazine and let them know that during these extraordinary times we have been working away in the background. Since the initial lockdown due to the COVID restrictions, we realised that choirs everywhere would probably be one of the last groups to be allowed to sing as a collective. So we took a different approach. We meet each Monday (at our usual time of 7pm) via Zoom. It took a while to master but our gradually acquired technical skills now have us producing film clips and video compilations. We are currently working on some Christmas Carols which Kirsty Ball our musical director hopes to place on YouTube in the coming weeks. We'll also use social media to keep our audience up to date.

To find more of our music look for Linlithgow Ladies Choir in the search section of the YouTube site. We are in no doubt that Christmas will be different but we hope we can offer some seasonal cheer and hopes for a brighter 2021.

Shelagh Bell, Linlithgow Ladies Choir



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Noughts and Crosses Malorie Blackman

"You're a Nought and I'm a Cross and there's nowhere for us to go where we would be left in peace... That's why I started crying. That's why I couldn't stop. For all the things we might've had and all the things we're never going to have."

Noughts and Crosses is the first novel in a young adult, fictional series written by acclaimed writer Malorie Blackman. It was first published in 2001 and tells the story of two childhood friends, Sephy and Callum, and the importance of their relationship to one another as they grow and mature into their teenage years.

This science-fiction, romance story is fast-paced and thought-provoking. It takes place in an alternative, parallel reality which is driven by racism, fear, political unrest and mounting violence. While there are many ironies and similarities that can be drawn between our world today and the reality created by Blackman, it's defining difference is that she has imagined a world where the elite, powerful class in the UK are comprised of citizens from dark-skinned heritage. It is they who have evolved in society over time to effortlessly and predominantly have the better prospects in terms of jobs, housing, education and financial security.

Sephy and Callum represent two different levels of their society. Sephy belongs to the ruling class – the Crosses – and at the beginning of the novel is largely unaware and naïve to the status, privilege and influence afforded to her. Conversely, as part of the subservient group – the Noughts – Callum has greater insight into the injustices of the world, the effort he must exude to break the cycle of his heritage and the restraint he must show in the face of grave miscarriages of justice. In their society, Noughts

and Crosses do not mix. Callum and his people are considered as 'colourless' or 'nothings' and have been regarded as nothing more than slaves to the Crosses for centuries.

"D'you ever wonder what it would be like if our positions were reversed?'... If we whites were in charge instead of you Crosses?'... 'I used to think about it a lot,... Dreams of living in a world with no more discrimination, no more prejudice, a fair police force, an equal justice system, equality of education, equality of life, a level playing field..."

Blackman expertly invites discussion and debate through her exploration of a plethora of social and ethical issues in this novel. Not an easy topic to navigate, she uses her writing to shine a light on racism, discrimination, ideas of heritage and public consciousness. It is not unfathomable to imagine that, in writing, Blackman's primary aims were to ensure that her young adult readers continuously question their own attitudes and beliefs, learn to deconstruct historical events and ultimately act as catalyst for reform and change. Knowledge, empathy and understanding allow a society and its people to learn and grow – what better way for Blackman to achieve this than to powerfully touch the hearts and minds of young, teenage readers.

"I used to comfort myself with the belief that it was only certain individuals and their peculiar notions that spoilt things for the rest of us. But how many individuals does it take before it's not the individuals who are prejudiced but society itself?"

This young adult text is unquestionably an important novel and has influenced adult and teenage readers alike over the last twenty years since its publication. So much about racism and discrimination is absorbed into the texture of everyday life. Noughts and Crosses deliberately challenges this, forcing readers to look inwards – to question, understand and grow – which in turn perpetuates the reality that our nation's shared future together can be stronger and brighter by being built upon layers of equality, tolerance and harmony for all.



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



WITCH HUNTING

Bruce Jamieson



'Linlithgow at Sunrise' by Alexander Campbell

While doing some research for Halloween, I came across the case of Elspit Scott who was tried in Linlithgow Tolbooth in 1612, for witchcraft. Under painful interrogation, she confessed that she was indeed a folk healer and used the plants of the countryside to work for those who paid her. Some of these local remedies may have been effective, such as: rubbing a marigold flower to relieve a wasp sting; pushing a nettle leaf up the nose to stop bleeding; applying boiled primrose liquid to help chilblains. Others were stranger: cowslip cordial to cure loss of memory; a bunch of ash keys placed in a sleeping child's left hand to stop bed-wetting; ivy leaves soaked in vinegar to cure a corn on the foot.

Elspit admitted to using such treatments after searching for plants around Linlithgow Loch at sunrise and going to a source of water with special powers. It came from a south-flowing stream and had to be carried home without speaking - or it lost its power. Mixed with sage or valerian, it provided a powerful love potion.

Under further questioning, Elspit let it be known that her child had been stolen by fairies and replaced by a changeling (a human-like substitute)!

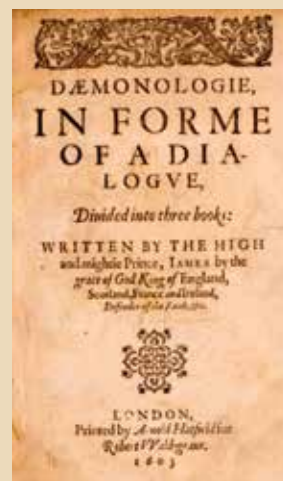
Women had been punished as witches for admitting much less than this

but the Linlithgow tribunal, headed by Alexander Livingston, Earl of Linlithgow and St Michael's minister, the Rev Robert Cornwall, came to a practical decision. They balked at the cost of keeping the 30-year old Elspit in the Tolbooth until the case could be investigated and furthermore, they did not wish to pay the cost of an execution. (A witch burning cost money for firewood, inflammable tar, rope, a wooden stake, paying the executioner to strangle the victim and then to ignite the pyre.) Consequently, on discovering that Elspit was not local but had been born in Glasgow, the tribunal took the decision to have her pilloried at the Cross and then banished back from whence she came.



A modern pillory in use at the Street Fair

This decision was a strange one - given the anti-witchcraft laws of the time including statutes endorsed by King James VI whose book "Daemonologie" wasn't only to convince the doubters of the existence of witchcraft - it was also to inspire those who persecuted witches to do so with new vigour.



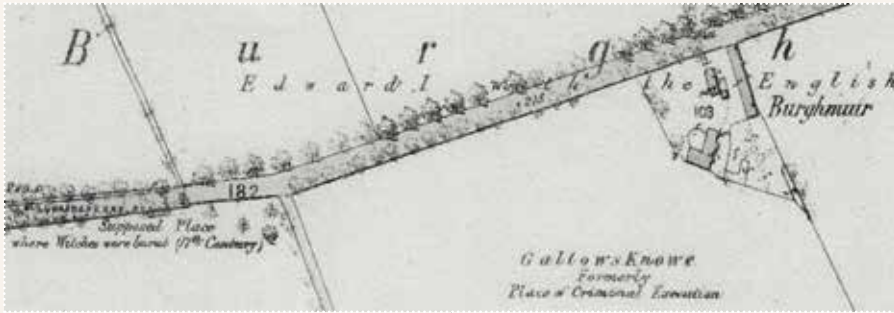
The front cover of "Daemonologie"

In addition, the Scots kirk insisted on applying "God's Law" as outlined in the Book of Leviticus ("A man or a woman who is a necromancer shall surely be put to death") and Exodus ("Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live").

It is generally thought that once a woman was accused of witchcraft, she had no hope of escaping the death penalty, surrounded as she was by superstition, misogyny, belief in the powers of Devil and the chaos the Evil One was causing in the 17th and 18th centuries.

However, looking at witchcraft trials in Linlithgow, I can only find one case of a "witch" being executed - Agnes Dallop/Dunlop, who met her horrific end in March 1648, on a bonfire at Linlithgow Cross. All other cases I've looked at including Elspet Paris, Elspett Fergusson and Margaret Kennedy (who was examined by Linlithgow Provost Andrew Milne and his bailies) were all dismissed due to lack of evidence.

Another local woman, Margaret Kincaid, named by a "fellow witch", was cleared but died in the Linlithgow Tolbooth - a result no doubt of the treatment she received there. The usual examination process was that if a suspect made no confession she would be severely tortured by sleep deprivation, thumbscrews or witch-pricking to obtain proof of guilt.



Few men were arrested for witchcraft. In his book, King James explained why: "The female sex is frailer than man, so women become more easily entrapped in the snares of the Devil."

Any male warlocks who were accused fared well in Linlithgow trials as all were cleared of any charges including Andrew Turnbull, John Wauch and David Langlands. In all, there is evidence of some 12 witchcraft trials held in Linlithgow - and one burning. Given that, it puzzles me that on 19th century OS maps a location off the Blackness Road is designated "Supposed place where witches were burned."

That is not to say that Linlithgow was not involved in the witch-hunting craze. On several occasions, Linlithgow Tolbooth became a holding prison for suspects. In 1629, the 75 year old Alexander Drummond, accused of "sorcerie, witchcraft, and cureing of dyverse seiknesses", was held in the Linlithgow lock-up before being taken to Edinburgh where he was strangled and burned at the Mercat Cross.



An Edinburgh ghost tour at the Mercat Cross

Agnes Bischope, who confessed to being a "common charmer and heinous witch", was also held in the Linlithgow Tolbooth before being taken to her native town of Mid Calder and burned at the stake there on a hillock still called Witches Knowe.

It is estimated that in Scotland between 1560 and 1707 over 3000 witches were put to death - twelve of them from our near neighbourhoods of Carriden and Bo'ness.

In 1648, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland decided that the Devil was seriously at work and so they encouraged all Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to take the lead in searching out and destroying witches. The authorities in Carriden took the advice to heart and set up a commission to try six witches. They had been seen conducting an unholy meeting in the graveyard of Carriden Kirk where demonic practices had taken place. All six were sentenced to death and they duly perished, allegedly at a spot still called the Witches Stone, near Carriden House.



The Witches Stone near the first Carriden Kirk

Thirty years later, another six individuals were accused of the same crime. Margaret Pringle, Bessie Vikker, Annaple Thomsone and two women both called Margaret Hamilton were accused of making a pact with the devil, drinking ale with him and becoming his servants. Accused alongside them was a male warlock, John Craw, who had

arranged the meeting with the devil and supplied the drink.

Incarcerated in the Bo'ness Tolbooth and subjected to the usual treatment, all confessed to the charges, including the allegation that after a meeting at Grange, on the Airngath Hill, they had turned into black crows and had flown down to a kirkyard where the devil - in the form of a large black



Corbiehall, Bo'ness

dog - had his wicked way with them, before they danced around the graves as the devil played the pipes.

The specially convened assize, made up of leading Bo'ness citizens, had no doubt that all of this was true and the six were sentenced to death. On December 23, 1679 they were 'wirried (strangled) then burned at the stake at the west end of Corbiehall.

The last recorded incidence of local witchcraft occurred in 1704 when Robert Nimmo, walking home from Linlithgow to Carriden, was pursued by six witches - one of whom he recognised as Anna Wood who he had seen change from a cat into human form.

Anna was found guilty by Carriden Kirk Session, but, fearing for her life, she fled. Little was done to track her down as by then the authorities had become pretty disgusted with the whole witchcraft affair and trials after then were almost unknown - an end to a sorry business!

PENSIONS – DO YOU KNOW WHERE ALL YOUR POTS ARE??

Virtue Money



The government is currently consulting on proposals for a new pension dashboard to enable pension savers in the UK to view all their pensions under one online login.

According to the Pension Dashboard Prototype Project, during our working lifetime, the average adult in the UK may have up to 11 different jobs. This means potentially 11 different pension pots which may be why they also estimate £400M of pensions monies are unclaimed.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pension, Amber Rudd, sent a written statement to parliament in April this year advising that the government expected to see the first workable models of the Pensions Dashboard developed and tested in 2019. Although pension schemes will be given 3-4 years to get the data of their members ready for inclusion on the Dashboards.

Rudd added that the dashboard project would eventually “enable people to access their pension information in a single place online, in a clear and simple form.”

Industry experts have suggested that the benefits of the Dashboard could be that we:

- >> Have a better understanding of our likely finances in retirement, based on our current situation
- >> Have a clearer grasp of the need for financial advice
- >> Be motivated to increase our pension contributions



>> Have more inclination to take a proactive role in managing our potential retirement.

Until the dashboard comes into play though, where are your pensions pots, have you lost track of some?

The Money Advice Service website has a myriad of advice on how to track down old pensions. You could write to your old employer or provider (if known) and there are templates on the website to help you do this.

Both employers and providers can change their names making it difficult to trace them. If this is the case you could try the Pension Tracing Services. It's a free service which searches a database of more than 200,000 workplace and personal pension schemes to try and find the contact details you need.

Once you've located all your pension pots what do you do with them? How have they performed? What are the charges on each of the plans?

>> You might be thinking of merging multiple pension pots into one and there can be potential advantages of doing this.

>> You can keep track of and manage your pension savings more easily, it might save money if you can transfer from higher-cost schemes to a lower-cost one and open the possibility of a greater choice of investments.

>> Unless you're confident that you understand the costs, benefits and risks involved then you will probably want financial advice on this matter.

If you would like to make an appointment to speak with one of our advisers regarding consolidating your pensions or any other aspect of your finances, life assurance, critical illness, income protection or retirement, then please give me call on 0345 034 3424 or email me at susan@virtuemoney.com and I will be happy to arrange this.

The first consultation is completely free of charge with no obligation.

This article is intended to provide a general review and opinion of certain topics and its purpose is to inform but not to recommend or support any specific investment or course of action.

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

Susan Ralston

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BOOK WEEK SCOTLAND (16-22 NOVEMBER)

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



For Book Week Scotland (16-22 November 2020), 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 nature 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':

A Scots Dictionary of Nature brings together the deeply expressive vocabulary customarily used to describe land, wood, weather, birds, water and walking in Scotland. Artist Amanda Thomson collates and celebrates these traditional Scots 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.

The trail will go live around Linlithgow on 16th November, and be in place for the duration of Book Week Scotland for people to explore and enjoy. Markers

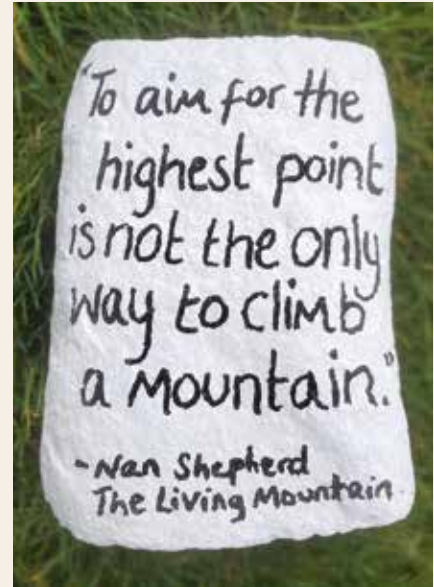


will be located around the lochside path, along the canal towpath, in community gardens and enroute to Beecraigs Country Park and Cockleroy, highlighting the beautiful outdoor spaces we are so lucky to have all around us in Linlithgow. All the trail locations are marked on a dedicated trail map, available via <https://www.transitionlinlithgow.org.uk/book-week-nature-trail.html>



The selection of books chosen as Linlithgow's favourite nature writing will be featured in **Far From The Madding Crowd** this November - enticing us to discover some new favourites, rediscover a classic or get started on the Christmas shopping - with a 25% discount on all featured books.

Sally Pattle, of Far From the Madding Crowd, said: *"We are delighted to be involved with this brilliant project - this year more than any other, I think we've all come to appreciate how lucky we are to live in a place where we can access nature and*



wild spaces relatively easily. It seems so fitting to celebrate Book Week Scotland with a nature theme and Amanda Thomson's beautiful book is the perfect starting point! All the books featured on the trail will be available at a 25% discount from Far From The Madding Crowd throughout the week."

Pamela Barnes from Transition Linlithgow said: *"Such simple pleasures: reading, walking and appreciating nature! Bringing them together is nourishment for the body and soul indeed. Transition Linlithgow is delighted to be promoting this wonderful trail for all ages to enjoy."*



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 property portal Zoopla reports an increase in more wealthy property sellers than seen in 2019, and predicts that in 2021 the numbers of first time buyers will reduce further, the number of buy to let investors will remain broadly static and that the share of property sales to cash investors and existing property owners with mortgages will increase slightly.

In regard to average house prices post lockdown, and how they compare to this time last year, Rightmove reports that asking prices are an average 5.5% higher year on year. **This is supported by figures from the Halifax Building Society, which says based on their lending figures they reckon house prices have risen 5% year on year.**

An interesting bit of research that clearly demonstrates the strength of the Edinburgh housing market is that Rightmove have identified that the number of £1million pound streets in Edinburgh has risen from 2 in 2015 to 22 in 2020. A £1million pound street is defined as one where the current average selling price is £1million or more. This is the biggest increase anywhere in the UK.

In the private rental sector we are seeing growth of monthly rental values stall in Edinburgh due to a surge in supply over demand as many Landlords in the Air Bnb sector have pulled out and moved over to long term lets in light of the pandemic to try and secure some income from their properties. Conversely, in Glasgow monthly rental values continue to grow and demand continues to outstrip supply.

Looking forward into 2021 we all want to know what will happen in the property market of course, and industry opinions vary. **The economic impact of Covid and Brexit are, as yet, unknown, but our own opinion is that whilst demand and activity may soften a bit, we can expect to see a reasonably healthy housing market into 2021.** Firstly mortgage lenders have for several years now, post the financial crisis of 2008, been far more prudent in who they lend to and deposit requirements; remember self-certified mortgages and 115% loan to value deals!!

So more homeowners in the housing market are in better financial shape. Secondly, harsh as it may sound, generally those most negatively affected by the economic effects of Covid are those who find it more difficult to get onto the property ladder. Finally demographics and population data indicate that going forward demand for property will still outstrip supply.

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BEECRAIGS FESTIVE FOREST RETURNS FOR 2020

4TH - 24TH

It's been a trying and testing year for everyone, but we can share the good news that Beecraigs Festive Forest returns for 2020.

After a successful inaugural year in 2019, where we welcomed 24,000 visitors to Beecraigs Country Park, we couldn't not bring it back.

We are back even BIGGER and BETTER than last year, to lift everyone's Christmas spirits and give us all something to look forward to.

To lighten up the cold dark December nights of 2020, and give families

something to share and enjoy as the year closes, was all the encouragement local company, Rowen Events, needed to return with all the favourites from last year. Santa and his elves will be busy as ever and maybe there will even be an appearance from the cheeky Grinch himself, you never know!

With an exciting new production company on board, you will be mesmerised by our new 1.8km route housing Scotland's biggest laser shows and a whole new experience of light and sound to delight and amaze all ages.

As with last year you'll be able to enjoy some festive fare as you wander round a safe and socially distanced environment. Our friendly BFF

stewards and security will ensure you and your family are safe at all times.

Lose yourself in the light shows and enjoy the buzz of Christmas in the beautiful setting of Beecraigs Festive Forest.

Ticket sales this year have been record breaking and are selling fast, so if you haven't already bought your tickets, visit our website www.beecraigsfestiveforest.com and help support a small local business.

After a dark year for everyone, let us light up all your faces! We can't wait to share it with you.

The BFF Team



DECEMBER 2020



WWW.BEECRAIGSFESTIVEFOREST.COM

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'BAFFLED & CONFUSED IN LINLITHGOW'...

A visitor to Linlithgow might be slightly baffled at the names chosen for some of our buildings. Take the "Health Centre", for example.

Inside the walls of what's called the "Health Centre" you're likely to find the largest collection of unhealthy people in the town, all waiting to see a doctor. Our visitor would be forgiven for thinking it should be called the "Illness Centre" instead.

Similarly, take a look at people emerging from the "Leisure Centre" dripping sweat and gasping for air. "Leisure" is the last thing you should have in mind when checking in at the reception desk. The "Pech & Pant Centre" would be more appropriate, don't you think? And being able to answer the question "...who swallowed all those sugary pastries?" should be mandatory when seeking membership.

Of course, for obvious reasons both Centres - Health and Leisure - should have a backstairs agreement for swapping customers.

Variants of this inappropriate naming appears in various parts of Linlithgow as these examples show:



High Street Bank: Shuttered premises with a poster telling account holders what airlines will fly them to the nearest branch.

The Cross: Where is it? The Cross, I mean. Has somebody nicked it? Should be renamed "Fountain Crescent."

Betting Shop: Located near a cash dispenser so you don't have far to walk in order to give your money away. Proposed renaming - "Dream-On Square."

Canal Basin: Looks nothing like any basin I've ever seen. It's three sides suggests renaming it "The Auld Triangle."

Church Manse: Property occupied by someone who's under pressure to write sermons and rejoices it isn't Sunday every day. Could be renamed "Sweaty Psalms House" or "Non-Prophet Making Centre" depending on how you see things.

The Peel: Would make an excellent pitch and putt course according to Samuel J. Bovine Jnr. currently on secondment as a planning assistant somewhere in the Lothians. His proposed name for the facility is "Mary Queen of Shots."

Empty premises on High Street:

Hairdressers and nail bar proprietors are the only businesses asked to consider renting. In keeping with current trends, hairdressers will be allowed to choose their own quirky signage, for example "Hairway To Heaven", "James Blond" or "Perms & Conditions." It's important to know, however, that "Fifty Shades of Gray" is copyright protected.

Estate Agent: Business that will flog you a canoe when the pipes burst a month after you've bought a property from them. Experts at increasing your personal debt levels exponentially. Should be renamed "The Moose Shop." Buy one, get one free for your partner.

The Palace: Just needs a roof to make it an impressive shopping mall (Samuel Bovine Jnr. again.) Businesses who have shown an interest in renting retail space include "Lord of the Rings" (jewellery shop), a men's barbers called "Jack the Clipper", a burger bar named "Ketch Up" (for those who have missed a meal), and a glazing company called "Pane in the Glass" for those who have made a botch of their DIY projects. I am told the application for a fire sale shop called "Cromwell" has been refused for reasons known only to the few.

Kirk Gates



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Westport Vet Pet of the Month is Kanzi the 2-year-old Rhodesian Ridgeback!

Kanzi's owner describes her as a dream of a dog, she is kind, gentle and full of love. Kanzi loves cuddles! Her owner says, "When we return home she waits until we sit on the sofa and then the full 40kg of her is on you for a full-on cuddle!" Her favourite place is curled up on the sofa.

Her favourite walk is at the beach, where she just bounces along with a big smile on cloud 9. She also loves emptying her toy box daily and tidies up for liver treats. She absolutely loves learning new tricks.

Kanzi is lucky to have an owner who has a job where she can take Kanzi with her each day. Kanzi joins the 'Linlithgow Leads' dog walks in the afternoons where her gentle side has helped the new pups to settle in. Kanzi helps in building their confidence as well as being a lot of fun for all involved!

Kanzi also has a naughty habit - she loves to fool her family! If they leave their shoes out, she will pull out the insoles - not to chew them, just for the enjoyment of removing them from their shoes!

Kanzi has been a little under the weather recently and it is only thanks to her owner's observations, and quick action, that she is now feeling back to her healthy self.

Kanzi had been eating, drinking and acting as normal, however her owner had noticed that a few weeks after she had her season, she had not emptied her toybox. Although she seemed fine in herself this small change in her normal behaviour was enough to warrant a check-up with the vet. As it turned out this tiny change was in fact an indicator that something was not right internally. Kanzi was suffering from a phantom pregnancy as well as the start of an infection.

The quick diagnosis and treatment plan prevented her condition becoming worse. Kanzi received several ultrasound scans to monitor the size of her uterus, hormone treatment for the phantom pregnancy and antibiotics for the infection. The infection was the start of endometritis (inflammation of the uterus) which can quickly spread to pyometra (infection of the uterus) a serious and life-threatening condition.

Kanzi is back to bouncing around again and the toys are now back to being thrown over their sitting room! Her owner says "her hormones may not have completely

settled but they are certainly on the right track thanks to my wonderful vets at Westport."

Kanzi is a wonderful example of why even the smallest of changes in our pet's normal behaviours should never be dismissed.

Phantom pregnancy, also called pseudocyesis or false or pseudo pregnancy, is a common condition in which unsprayed female dogs start to mimic the physical and behavioural signs of pregnancy. The condition usually becomes apparent four to nine weeks after the animal has been in heat. It should clear up naturally within one to four weeks.

Once your dog has had one phantom pregnancy, she is likely to experience others in the future unless you get her spayed before she is next in season.

Dogs who have developed a phantom pregnancy are likely to exhibit both physical symptoms - swollen abdomen, enlarged glands and producing discharge, and behavioural symptoms - acting in a motherly way, nesting, digging, becoming protective over a toy and agitated.

Other symptoms are harder to distinguish from those common to other conditions. They include lethargy, depression, restlessness, anxiety or clinginess. Loss of appetite or vomiting are also likely, though your dog may not actually lose any weight due to water retention. Smaller behavioural changes are also noted, much like Kanzi with her toy box, these little changes in normal behaviour could be an indicator.

False pregnancies are an unwelcome side effect of a female dog's natural hormonal cycle. A healthy female dog is likely to experience her first heat cycle when she is between six months and one year old. Some smaller breeds experience this earlier, while larger breeds may not come into heat until they are around 18 months old.

Unless you get your dog neutered, or she becomes pregnant, she will then be in heat for approximately 10 days once every six months.

After being in heat, her ovaries will begin to produce hormones which prepare her body for pregnancy - regardless of whether she has been mated.

If she is pregnant, her body will go on producing hormones to maintain her pregnancy. If she is not pregnant, these hormones may mimic actual pregnancy. They should subside within a few weeks,



usually with no lasting effects. Unless she suffers phantom pregnancy and may need veterinary assistance to control and resolve this.

It is not known exactly why phantom pregnancies occur. An imbalance of the hormones progesterone and prolactin seems a likely cause, and it is also thought to be linked to hypothyroidism or mastitis in some dogs.

If you would like to discuss your pet's health or behaviour or if have any concerns about your pet, the Westport Veterinary Team is always available to help. Please contact with enquiries to 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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