



the **BLACK** *bitch*

Linlithgow's news by Linlithgow's people

LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY MAGAZINE ISSUE 80 MARCH 2021

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

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PROFILES OF OUR TEAM CHRISTINE MCGREGOR



We moved here thirteen years ago and have found Linlithgow to be the friendliest town to live in. Even in the current circumstances, people you pass smile and say hello.

I joined what was The Rugby Club Ladies Choir. There were fifteen members then now as Linlithgow Ladies Choir there are eighty!

I am Vice-Chair and Minute Secretary of Linlithgow Folk Festival Association.

Two years ago I started bowling with Bellsburn Bowling Club.

The magazine helped us settle here,

so it was only right that I gave something back by offering to deliver to households in the town.

After attending an AGM of the magazine I found myself agreeing to become a trustee.

The Black Bitch magazine is so supportive of the town's activities and businesses and the homes I deliver to say they look forward to reading the articles.

I am very happy to be part of the Black Bitch team.

Christine



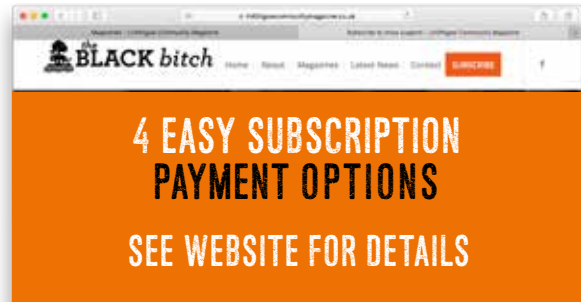
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DAVID TAIT,
EDITOR

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As I write this on 1st of March with the weather feeling very spring-like I thought I should check what is considered to be the first day of Spring.

It turns out that date depends on whether you are an astronomer or a meteorologist. Astronomers complicate the issue by taking into account the degree of tilt as the earth wobbles its way round the sun whereas meteorologists are much more down to earth, as they should be, and divide the year into four equal 3 month periods so Spring always starts on March 1st. (How sensible, pity we can't do the same for Easter.)

And this year the meteorologists have been kind enough to arrange for a decent spell of weather to coincide with the occasion.

Is Linlithgow not a perfect place to enjoy such good fortune surrounded, as we are, by superb walking opportunities on the hills, among the trees, along waterways and by the fields? That said, as we discovered while out walking yesterday, there is a wee cloud on the horizon as gates and fences begin to appear in unexpected places.

We are putting that down to the increase in numbers desperate to get out of the house for a while to enjoy the fresh air but

it is beginning to look like some clarification will be required soon on who is allowed to go where – before there is a bit of bother.

Spring is in the air too in the business community where some new and quite new businesses are “springing” up in defiance of the worst trading conditions seen in a lifetime. We’ve featured 4 new and “nearly new” young businesses on our front page this time – young in that they have not been in business long and young because the prime movers are young in years.

Now that is a refreshing start to Spring!

That said, it has of course been a tough time for businesses with fixed overheads particularly those who are in that category but who don't match the terms of any of the available support packages. Hopefully, the worst of the long struggle is nearly over and a return to trading is not so far away.

The result of overstretched resources is evident too in the public realm where most recently the precarious situation of the Low Port Centre has been revealed. For long a popular and well-used venue for a whole range of outdoor and indoor sporting pursuits with accommodation and restaurant facilities for visitors its future is now unclear. An energetic response from the town in cooperation with West Lothian Council could drive an application under **Community Asset Transfer** legislation to re-create a useful facility in the centre of the town.

“Every issue of the Black Bitch provides pleasurable and informative reading on major town issues and activities that affect us all - news sorely missed since the decline of local press. For these reasons I’m glad to subscribe in support of community news.”

Andrew Ramsay

Here at the magazine we are delighted to be able to once again thank our many existing subscribers and all those new ones since last issue. On the basis of what we have seen so far we firmly believe there is a real prospect of creating a different style of local news production funded and produced within the community, for the community.

We ask those who are thinking about subscribing to use one of the online methods highlighted in the magazine or an application form to take the plunge and contribute to a successful future in these uncertain times.



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



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LINLITHGOW EVENTS

John Richardson of Party at the Palace makes the case for more...



As Joni Mitchell once sang, “You Don’t Know What You’ve Got Till It’s Gone” and that’s certainly how it feels at the moment. In previous years, events such as The Marches and The Gala Day along with all the other activities which surround it, heralded the start of the summer. Concerts in the marquee, family fun days at the rugby club, the duck race, Scotch Hop, The Historic Jousting, Party at The Palace, The Canal Fun Day, The Linlithgow 10k, The Classic Car Day and The Folk Festival all followed and contributed to a busy diary of summer events that made Linlithgow the envy of many other towns. Although some of these events have fallen victim to the covid pandemic, I’m confident that they will all return in the not too distant future.

We possibly took for granted that these great days out would always just be there, however the cancellation of these events is perhaps a reminder that in more normal times, they don’t just happen by themselves. Dozens of volunteers and committees spend months planning, organising and filling in countless forms and jumping through hoops to make sure we all get a safe and enjoyable day out and they often go without thanks or reward. Many of those organisers will no doubt say the red tape they need to get through can make the planning of events a far more arduous affair than it should be.

From my own experience at Party at The Palace, working with West Lothian Council on staging events isn’t an easy process and certainly not as smooth a system as other local authorities have in place. While it may be no more than an inconvenience for some organisers, WLC’s outdated procedures and policies make the job of attracting new events to the town more of a challenge.

However, I am hopeful that their systems can be modernised and a more collaborative approach between the different departments within the council and those planning events can

be adopted. However, before change can be brought in, there also needs to be a greater degree of appreciation from WLC of the efforts of all these voluntary groups and commercial businesses who endeavour to bring these events to the area.

These changes and improvements will make Linlithgow a more attractive location for more events when we return to those more normal times and the addition of Beecraigs Festive Forest will hopefully be the first of many new attractions.

But why do we want more events?

I understand that not everybody enjoys Party at The Palace, The Marches (surely not!), The Jousting etc, however the value that they bring to the local economy is vital for business. Event Tourism is the term used to describe this area of the economy and along with visitors attracted to the area because of its heritage and those following the Outlander trail, it brings in several million pounds to the local economy each year. **A recent study by Visit West Lothian confirmed these findings and a report for Event Scotland found that Party at The Palace has contributed over £4.5million pounds to the local economy since it began in 2014.** Equally important to the financial benefit, is the enormous boost that some of these events would give our mental health and wellbeing. Even just thinking about a return to a summer filled with days out can give us a lift.

It would be great to look ahead and think that the town could benefit more from new events. Better use of the Burgh Halls, more community use of The Cross, a proms concert on the peel, a soapbox race down Preston Road, a local triathlon perhaps, hot air balloons, Tough Mudder type events... Some ideas may seem far-fetched but the idea of Simple Minds, Texas or Nile Rodgers playing in a field overlooking the Palace was just as improbable not so long ago.

Anyone with an idea or a suggestion for bringing visitors to the town should be encouraged and a community group which shares experiences, information and resources would be a great starting point.

In these troubling times, we need to remain positive. Let’s look forward to days out, happier times and more events which benefit our physical and mental wellbeing AND contribute to the local economy.

PS. At the time of writing, Party at The Palace is still hopeful of a return this summer.







ONE LINLITHGOW BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

The Cosy Tearoom (163 High Street)

Linlithgow is becoming renowned for its café culture due to the array of eateries on the High Street, each establishing their own loyal local clientele because of the quality of their fare.

The choice of cafés is also an undoubted plus for visitors, and another reason for coming to the town. Now they and locals have another one to try - distinguished by being the smallest in Linlithgow!



Since setting up the **Cosy Tearoom** - 'David's Deli' for many years - **Sheena Halliday** said she could not believe how busy she had been with collections.

"I've had a wonderful welcome from both neighbouring businesses and customers, and I seem to have already built up a reputation for my home baking and scones."

Sheena said that even when life returned to normal after lockdown she anticipated possibly half of her custom would continue to be takeaway. With room for only three to four tables, a 50:50 split would suit her fine.

"I am concentrating on simple, quality home cooking, with soup, toasties, and hot and cold filled rolls. But baking like spiced orange cake and lemon drizzle cake is proving the big hit. I'm selling out of my caramel

shortcake every day!

"I know people can be really particular about their tea and coffee these days, and I'm using The Wee Tea company in Dunfermline and Tapside in Bo'ness for my ground coffee and machine."

Sheena ran the popular Bay Tree Café in East Calder for six years, but said she'd wanted to find a place with more 'buzz' about it. Last year she had tried to find suitable premises in her home town of Anstruther in the East Neuk of Fife, but without success.

Added Sheena, *"I come from a family tradition of bakers in St. Andrews and the East Neuk. I've had almost 40 years' experience of catering in Scotland, but I wish I'd come to Linlithgow years ago, I can't believe how well it's going."*

Ormiston Flutes (14 Mill Place)

A flute maker with an international reputation, and famous musicians among his customers, has moved into his new workshop at Mill Road Industrial Estate in Linlithgow.

George Ormiston, who has been making his 'simple system' wood and silver flutes for over 40 years, has brought a very traditional craft addition to the estate - along with a healthy order book.

The beautiful instruments - suitable for beginners as well as professionals - are played in leading classical orchestras and by well-known jazz and traditional musicians, as well as rock stars.

One rock musician, who called to see George and buy a flute was Ian Anderson, flautist in the legendary rock group Jethro Tull. Another, more recently, was internationally renowned Scots jazz saxophonist Tommy Smith.



"It's a joy to meet and work with musicians of all kinds," said George. "I started off playing rock, but over the years I've developed an interest in all kinds of music."

George said he had ceased performing traditional and other music a few years ago, and now concentrated on making flutes – and the occasional whistle – traditionally known as the 'penny whistle'. When he performed, it was usually music he had written himself: classical, jazz and traditional.

He said that he and his German wife Jutta had moved to Stirling in 2019 after many years in Tarbrax in South Lanarkshire.

"Then we moved recently to Bo'ness, where I have a small workshop next to the house. But I needed a place like the one I've just found. Jutta is great, running the business and taking turns at the lathe. She also crafts special cases for her husband's flutes."

George said that the younger of their two daughters, **Anja** (the older one is **Mhari**) was a professional freelance violinist, and had played with leading professional orchestras, including the RSNO.

He said he was keen to do all he could to encourage young musicians and Scots wanting to set up their own instrument making business. He was also keen to promote the name of 18th-century Scottish flute maker John Mitchell Rose, who he described as "the country's greatest instrument maker".

"I've got one of his flutes, and it's among several older flutes I hope to get round to restoring soon."

George's presence in Linlithgow might even bring about a modest increase in tourists! *"Over the past few years I've had musicians visiting from places like Canada, the States, and Japan, to buy a flute, and they've brought their family with them for a holiday!"*

ONE LINLITHGOW UPDATE

TOWN GIFT CARD:

One Linlithgow has been investigating a gift card for the town, just like you'd get for chain businesses (perhaps most famously M&S or Boots), but redeemable at any participating local business, with the aim of stimulating the local economy. We haven't made any assumptions or decisions, and there will be further investigation to be done in correspondence with member businesses before any decision is taken.



For now, if you own a business in Linlithgow and have an opinion one way or another, we'd really appreciate the return of a completed one-minute survey to help us gauge interest. You should have received an email on 25th February with the link, but if not, you can visit onelinlithgow.com/survey-town-gift-card for the survey, and it's the usual email address, office@onelinlithgow.com, to ask to be added to the mailing list and receive future updates.

PREMISES IMPROVEMENT GRANTS:

One Linlithgow is now offering Premises Improvement Grants to all member businesses. If you're sprucing up your place of business for re-opening to the public, you might be eligible for a grant. Find out more at onelinlithgow.com/premises-improvement-grants.

The maximum grant is £500 per business, which should be no more than 50% of the total project cost. This allows us to spread the joy among as many applicants as possible, while providing a generous amount to each applicant.

Please note that budgets are limited, so this year's allocation may not last long! However, if you're not ready to improve your premises this time, there will be more rounds of grant funding in future, so just make sure you're getting the mailshots from office@onelinlithgow.com.

PPE AND SCREEN GRANTS:

Although external funding for One Linlithgow to supply PPE and acrylic screen grants is spent, we're still supporting businesses by supplying PPE directly, and approving grants for acrylic screens, or any other bespoke item of PPE useful to member businesses, even if that's the same type of PPE we can supply directly. Just get in touch via the usual means to discuss!

CCTV:

Although the town centre CCTV system isn't completed yet, our existing coverage (now effectively covering half of the High Street, plus the Cross) has helped police in their investigations into two separate incidents. We can't give details of active investigations, but evidence supplied will hopefully help to secure convictions in both cases, so the young system is earning its keep!

DIGITAL MARKETS

It would be remiss not to mention the ongoing success of our digital markets on mylinlithgow.com, however this edition of the Black Bitch is coming out too late to advertise the Mother's Day Market and too early to review how it went!

In any case, following the Valentine's Day market last month, the digital markets have now made well over £5,000 for local businesses under enforced closures, so we'd like to thank the businesses helping to make the markets so successful, and most of all the shoppers spending their money locally, which couldn't be more important to those businesses in their time of need.

Ten Years of Teamwork at the Vennel Flower Bed



Since 2011, our small team of volunteers have worked together to design, plant and maintain the flower bed at the Vennel, adding colour and interest to the High Street, as well as highlighting environmental messages with information boards.

We enjoy collaborating with schools and community groups, have promoted national campaigns, and like to include wildlife-friendly features and fruit & vegetables in our displays. The flower bed often features hand-crafted birds, beasts and animals which children love to spot.

We agree designs more than a year in advance, as we need to order or grow plants, which allows us to use peat-free compost. We usually plant summer displays around the start of June, and these last until September, when frost would usually kill bedding plants. Winter displays are harder to do, but options include ornamental cabbages and daisies, with welcome colour from bulbs popping up in the spring.

The Vennel bed group started out as Transition Linlithgow volunteers, but we now come under the wing of Burgh Beautiful. We hope you have enjoyed our team efforts over the last ten years, making the High Street a more colourful, sustainable and interesting place - thank you for your many kind comments over the years.

Averil, Corinne, Jacquie, Kirsty, Mel, Moira & Sheila - plus many other helpers (and not forgetting sponsors) along the way!

Burgh Beautiful is always looking for more volunteers. It is part of Linlithgow Burgh Trust - Scottish Charity Number SCO47211 lbt.scot/burgh-beautiful

2011 Grow local, Buy local, Eat local



A joyous & productive bed, full of colourful vegetables - plus a couple of big, black oil drums highlighting the

impacts of food on the environment. Food packaging, processing and food miles all contribute to the use of fossil fuels and so also to climate change.

2012 Container growing - big tastes from tiny spaces



All kinds of containers, bursting with vegetables, demonstrated how to grow vegetable crops in small spaces at home. Girl Guide volunteers helped to create the 'sandstone' recycled polystyrene fishbox planters. A runner bean tepee, compost bin and bug hotel were surrounded by wildflowers for pollinators and Green Manure crops.

2013 Cereal Crops & Scarecrow



Mr Scarecrow was a favourite with children, as he guarded cereal crops of Barley, Oats & Wheat. Signs explained the importance of the crops in Scottish farming, and how they are grown and contribute to our diet.

2014 Golden Anniversary bed at the Low Port



The Vennel bed was taken over by Girl Guiding, with a commemoration of the Commonwealth Games. So we moved to the Low Port, creating a beautiful, glowing display to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of the Royal Horticultural Society's 'Britain in Bloom' campaign. Bedding plants suitable for pollinators, sourced by the Council NETS team, were combined with annual vegetables, with signs explaining the importance of pollination for crops.

2015 Climate Change & rising sea levels



Featuring blue & white planting to represent rolling seas and melting ice caps, this attractive floral bed was timed to raise awareness of the COP21 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris.

2016 Healthy Eating, Healthy Planet



Designed in segments to represent a plate of fruit, vegetables, fish, meat & dairy, this bed aimed to promote a diet healthy for both people and the planet. Food accounts for about a third of our carbon footprint, so it's really important to consider what we eat and where it comes from, and also to minimise food waste.

2017/18 Help Protect our Peatlands

A windswept moor, including a dam and seasonal wildlife, popped up on our High



we decorated a tree as part of the Festival of Christmas Trees at St Michael's Church.

2018 Vennel veg barrels – Victory Gardens



With the main flower bed planted by Burgh Beautiful in Remembrance of the 100 year anniversary of the end of WWI, our team grew fruit and vegetables in barrels to represent Victory Gardens. During the First World War, parks and gardens were dug up to help supply food, and many women joined the Women's Land Army to grow food on farms, as men were away fighting.

2019 Let's reduce single use plastic in Linlithgow



In partnership with the Plastic-free Linlithgow group, and inspired by Sir David Attenborough's Blue Planet TV series, this display included

information on marine plastic waste, top tips on reducing single use plastics and having a 'Better Blue Bin'. Linlithgow, Low Port and Springfield Primary Schools recycled plastic bottles and wrappings to create wonderful sea creatures, including a basking shark, turtle, jelly fish and a woven ocean panel. There was also a nesting black-headed Gull made from (thoroughly cleaned!) beach plastics!

2020 Flowers for Pollinators



Sadly Coronavirus meant that the planned design couldn't go ahead. Seeds were sown and left to grow, fortunately there was plenty of rain,

and we added plants in passing, during daily exercise. Luckily a colourful bed sprung up, featuring Flowers for Pollinators, at a time when we appreciate even more the importance of the natural world.

2021 With Covid restrictions ongoing, we felt the sensible option was to continue the relaxed floral theme, as this is low maintenance, flexible and does not need us to meet up to plant the bed. The Fairtrade group are promoting Fairtrade Fortnight, and we will be adding wildlife-friendly features and plenty of summer colour to brighten up the High Street.

Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow

Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow is part of Linlithgow Burgh Trust.

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FOLK FAE LITHGAE RODDY BAIN

Images: Martine Stead



At this time of year, Roddy Bain would normally have been heavily involved in the build-up to the annual show by the Linlithgow Amateur Musical Productions (LAMP) Children's Theatre, which takes place during the school easter holidays.

Roddy's three children – Sandy, Catherine, and Lisa – have all been involved in the Junior LAMP productions over the last fifteen years and he and his wife Sandra would be roped in to help in numerous ways, most notably in front of house duties and building the impressive stage sets. Last year, Lisa was due to play a leading role in Buggy Malone, but this was one of the early casualties of the coronavirus pandemic. The show will be a huge miss again this year and Roddy appreciates the tremendous benefits that the young people get from being part of it. He told me:

"All our kids have been involved and I am a firm believer in just how much it helps to bring youngsters on as individual people and the massive life skills benefit it gives them. They have to interact with adults and their wider peer group and be part of a team, and through that, they learn an awful lot of really important life skills."

A self-confessed 'jack of all trades', who has done a variety of jobs over the years, Roddy has always had a great passion for cooking and has attended courses to develop his skills. For many years, he ran

the catering for match days and functions at Linlithgow Rugby Club. Since July 2019, he has been co-proprietor of the Dolphin Snack Bar at the Rugby Club car park and admits that it has completely taken over his life.

"It's an all-encompassing thing", he said "you don't just turn up, flip a few burgers, shut the doors and go away again. People might regard it as a snack bar and bacon roll thing, but I've turned it into a lot more than that."

Roddy believes that the past year has provided him with many opportunities:

"With it not being a normal year, that helped me change the town's view of what the Dolphin is. When the first lockdown hit and we had to close, I had to find something to keep things ticking over and keep the income going. That's when I started doing all the delivery, Thai, and Malaysian curries for the Indian, and this has proved unbelievably popular. The curries are now a major part of the business and can be pre-ordered by telephone for collection. With the snack bar side now up and running again, we are maintaining our strong lunch time trade and have been able to expand the range of items on offer, including the curries, our proper stovies on a Tuesday and our famous haggis lasagne. That seems to be a more popular buy for heating up at home and we are looking to expand a range of similar products. Frozen curries are already available."

Roddy's curry-making skills came from his Dad, Sandy, who shared a student flat

in Edinburgh with an Indian and a Thai in the late 1950s. He learned from them how to cook their traditional food and this was something Roddy grew up with at home. He also recalls boyhood trips to Indian restaurants in Edinburgh:



"We used to go regularly to the 'Star of Bengal' at Haymarket and Dad would order up curries for us all. I liked a chicken dhansak and would have a chapati instead of rice. I would rip off the chapati and scoop up the meat and sauce with it and the waiters were amazed at this wee Scottish lad who could eat curries the proper Indian way!"

Roddy feels that the Dolphin is doing well, and that the lockdown has not done it too much damage. *"We are in an ideal location and people can come here with confidence to a safe environment and know that they will get fresh food, properly prepared."*

The full menu for the Dolphin can be found on the Facebook page.

Murdoch Kennedy



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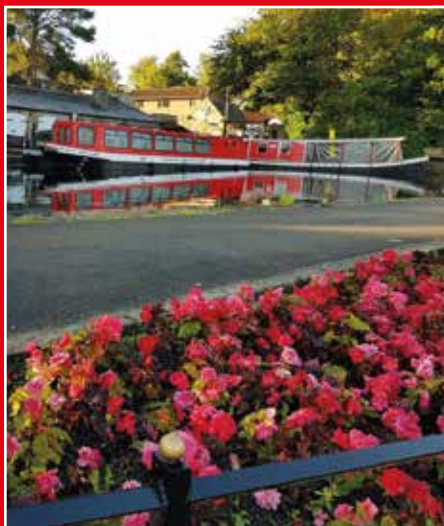


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LUCS WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY

Amy Cornock



THE NEW MILLENNIUM HERALDED THE START OF A NEW DAWN AND NO MORE SO THAN FOR LINLITHGOW UNION CANAL SOCIETY.

A big milestone for the Millennium Link Project was reached in 2001 with the reopening of the Union Canal. At a cost of £83.5 million, this was the largest canal restoration in Britain. In 1975 when LUCS was formed, this restoration was founder Mel Gray's ultimate goal and remains his lasting legacy. The following year brought another historic moment with the opening of the Falkirk Wheel which reconnected the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals for the first time in over 70 years.

LUCS now offers Falkirk Wheel Cruises onboard Saint Magdalene where visitors get the opportunity to travel on the Falkirk Wheel. LUCS has three trip boats, Saint Magdalene, Saint Michael and Victoria. Visitors can enjoy a cruise along Scotland's longest and tallest aqueduct, the Avon Aqueduct, on Saint Magdalene and Saint Michael and they can go on a short cruise along the town on Victoria. These boats are also available for private hire with crew. LUCS also offers a self-drive option on board Leamington for those who want a bit more flexibility.

In recent years LUCS has been awarded for its stellar work as a voluntary organisation and tourist destination. This has included the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, West Lothian Business Excellence Award, Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence and it has

consistently achieved 3 stars as a visitor attraction by Visit Scotland.

LUCS continues to be a focal point for the local community. In terms of education, the Canal Centre organises primary school visits which is managed by retired school teachers. The visits cover a presentation on water safety and different aspects of canals and boats followed by a trip on Saint Magdalene. The presentations take place in the Mel Gray Centre which is primarily used as an education centre but can also be hired out to groups for community-based activities.

The Canal Fun Day is the highlight of the LUCS' calendar. Taking place every August, locals and visitors alike can enjoy a variety of stalls, a BBQ and live entertainment. The main event of the afternoon is the famous Cardboard Boat Race where participants compete for that number one spot while trying to stay dry. Christmas is also a busy time for LUCS when Santa makes an appearance in his grotto which is located in the Canal Museum. LUCS also participates annually in the Marches Day celebrations with a float which has won first prize several times over the last few decades.

For over 20 years, single and double kayaks from Linlithgow Kayak Racing have been plying the waters of the Union Canal eastwards and westwards from the Manse Road Basin where the club shares launching space with LUCS. The club currently has 75 members who enjoy kayak racing around the UK and Europe. Members hold a special regard for their home waters on the Union Canal, from those selected for International and

Olympic stardom to those who enjoy the sport at a more leisurely pace. Many of its members are in the Scottish Canoe Association's Performance Squad and the canoe club has plans to run more beginners' sessions to introduce the locals to the joys of paddlesport.

Understandably, the last year has been a particularly challenging one for LUCS and what should've been the year it celebrated its 45th anniversary ended in it having to close its doors to the public indefinitely. However, LUCS is managing to keep its head above the water with the help of its dedicated volunteers and members. Despite the tough year membership has increased to 485 members and thanks to modern technology they have managed to keep in touch regularly with Zoom meetings. However, Mike Smith, Vice Chairman of LUCS, has stated that they need the support and encouragement from the local community now more than ever. He hopes that when the doors open again the existing volunteers return and new ones come onboard. We look forward to news of when that will be and we wish LUCS all the best for the next cruising season and beyond.



GARY CLINTON, MUSIC TUTOR

I am delighted to be joining the Black Bitch magazine. As a regular contributor I hope to use the power of music and the creative arts to bring Linlithgow together, inspire people to get into music or associated areas and also to provide a platform for those who wish to promote themselves.

As local residents, many of you will know it's hard to keep a secret in Linlithgow! However it's thanks to this word-of-mouth nature that over the years I have been able to build up a busy teaching schedule of guitar students from all walks of life. It's one of my favourite things about teaching – getting to know new people and in many ways almost becoming friends as the months and years go by. I do believe that guitar tuition is much more than simply learning how to play.

So a regular feature of my page will be 'Student Diaries' and it will introduce to the town a cross section of people I work with both as a source of inspiration and perhaps some light entertainment too!

Finally – can I teach the town to play guitar!? Or perhaps rekindle a love affair with the instrument you once had before life became so busy and complicated? Well I am going to try! So I will include a 'riff' or 'chord' or 'song' of the month and support this with free video lessons on my YouTube channel.



Student Diaries

David Manion

Linlithgow resident David Manion, who has in the past contributed to the Black Bitch, has been learning guitar with me since early 2017 and as we became better acquainted I was increasingly impressed with how heavily involved he is in the community and how much of his time he donates to it.

Recently David has been appointed to the Board of Angling Scotland and is the secretary of the Linlithgow Angling Club which on top of looking after the River

Avon runs the 'Trout In The Classroom' project with Historic Environment Scotland, local schools and The Forth Rivers Trust. David is also active at St Peters Church, the local Labour Party and is a trustee of the Linlithgow & District Community Day Centre where he has praised the 'fantastic staff' who during recent times of closure have still visited residents in need of care - true community heroes deserving of praise and admiration. It's actually a wonder he has any time to practice!

David sets a great example to other adult students who unfortunately sometimes have to stop playing when 'life' gets in the way. David too has come up against these challenges and very occasionally was forced to put the guitar aside however he has always came back to it and I hope playing has provided him a certain sanctuary away from his busy schedule.

For example – some of David's study pieces have included 'I Walk The Line' by Johnny Cash; 'Hallelujah' by Leonard Cohen; 'Le Mer' by Charles Trenet and even hymns like 'Leaning On The Everlasting Arms' and I would defy anyone who plays these, not to be transported away to a quieter and more peaceful place. Although I'm sure if you ask David, getting there wasn't easy – it took discipline, hard work and passion and he is still working on perfecting some of these great songs.



Learn Guitar With Gary

Riff Of The Month

The unwritten rule of guitar tuition is you have to learn 'Smoke On The Water' as your first riff! (You also have to learn

Stairway To Heaven – but that comes later). Deep Purple's classic about a fire in Montreux at a Frank Zappa concert and using a mobile recording setup owned by The Rolling Stones at The Grand Hotel was the first riff my Dad taught me. It is also the first riff Jack Black's character 'Dewey Finn' teaches his would-be students as he poses as a substitute teacher in the musical comedy film 'School Of Rock' – so fair to say this medieval-inspired phrase is immortalised in rock history!

By the time this issue reaches you I should have a video on my YouTube supporting this with other riffs too from artists like 'Nirvana', 'The Beatles' and 'Led Zeppelin'. Just remember not to play the latter in a guitar store when they re-open...

Gary's Tips

Beginner:

Try starting with the D-string only. Use thumb or a plectrum to play the string (right hand) and use only finger 1 (left hand) to play the frets. Keep finger 1 'pointy' and aim for long notes.

Intermediate:

Use a plectrum on both strings together, half-barre with finger 1 on the left hand, play 'staccato', use an over-driven tone and include the mutes represented by 'X' on the TAB.



You can keep up to date with Gary's tuition business through social media

Twitter: @GaryGuitar4

Facebook: garyclintonguitartutor



Intro ♩ = 112

'Smoke On The Water'

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

They are keen to get involved in local community issues and want to hear your views and opinions on these issues. We will be publishing an article in the magazine every month, covering ongoing community issues which we are keen to address within the ward. There is also a public assistance desk at the station, which is open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Unfortunately due to the Covid Pandemic the Linlithgow Community Police Surgery has been suspended.

ONLINE SCAMS AND FRAUD

Over the past couple of months reports of online scams and fraud have been on the increase. These are becoming more and more sophisticated. Here are a few examples

- >> Courier Fraud
- >> Identity fraud
- >> Online shopping and auction sites
- >> Romance and dating fraud
- >> Ticketing fraud
- >> Scam mail
- >> Computer software service
- Fraud Banking and Card Fraud

TAKE FIVE is a national campaign that offers straightforward and impartial advice to help everyone protect themselves from preventable financial fraud. This can be found on the Police Scotland website.

**SO WHEN ONLINE BEFORE YOU
MAKE ANY DECISIONS OR
INVESTMENTS... TAKE FIVE**

STOP

Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.

CHALLENGE

Could it be fake? It's ok to reject or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

PROTECT

Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam and report it.



MY MONEY? MY INFO? I DON'T THINK SO!

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

"Rogue traders" usually cold call, claiming to be workers offering to make repairs or carry out work on your house, garden or driveway. They will charge over inflated prices for work that is often of poor quality or completely unnecessary. If you feel threatened, unsafe or suspicious of a caller then contact police immediately.

CALLING ALL PARENTS

Over the past couple of months there have been numerous complaints from local residents in various areas of Linlithgow regarding large groups of youths congregating.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 through Contact us Service

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

Hopefully when we are through the pandemic the Linlithgow Community Police Surgeries will resume. We shall keep you posted.

ARMCHAIR GARDENING



As we write this month's column there is 30cm of snow blanketing the garden and we are reduced to armchair gardening, and the only person who is happy is Henry the cat who has us stuck at home welcoming him onto our knees! He is unimpressed when we leave him to make the daily trips out to feed the garden centre cats, Rowan and Willow. They are very unhappy being on their own for most of the day and disliking trying to wade through the snow when we try taking them for a walk around the plant area.

The views of the garden from inside, always important to us, have been very precious at this time and prompted us to share some of them with you... hopefully the snow will have gone by the time you read this page? The most exciting view is from the kitchen to the bird feeders. At times we have had fifty or sixty birds feeding at once, but then we spoil them with sunflower hearts, top quality fat balls with no 'fillers' and fresh water in the birdbath. The black cat is called Phoebe (not Henry) and is a statue presented to Dougal when he retired from the Royal Horticultural Society's Council a few years ago.

On the northside of the house the downstairs bathroom window is screened from outside by a red stemmed Japanese maple and the grandchildren's bedroom window is dominated by the fragrant Daphne Jacqueline Postil.



Indoor gardening, caring for the plants in the conservatory, prompts a little action but only briefly before the temptation to sit in the armchair and enjoy the view wins. The orange flowered Clivia adds a warm tropical touch despite the cold scene outside beyond Lesley's Clematis Roundel (her leaving gift from the Beechgrove Garden team) looking to the snowy hills of Fife.



The cold weather leaves lovely clear skies between snow falls and the low winter sun adds to our delight of the views from inside.

The days are lengthening quickly now, we'll need to be back in the garden very soon where there is plenty of pruning awaiting us. What plans might you have this Spring to change the views of your garden from inside?

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Belated mid-winter musings in words and verse from Kirk Gates (Ed – with apologies)

Fast on the heels of Christmas comes New Year...

2020, despite sounding cool, was a turkey and I suppose our optimism for 2021 will depend on how much whisky is put in our glass on Hogmanay.

But New Year is also a time for looking back even if it means you risk bumping into things like further lockdowns and High Street closures. Some people compare our thinking at New Year to driving a car – you look ahead through the windscreen but using the rear-view mirror is just as important.

Looking back may show how far or how little we've travelled: but what can't be denied is that the past shapes what we are today.

Stay well and may all your worries last as long as your New Year resolutions.

Slainte mhath!

The Scots

*We'll never know what
brought us here,
For dreams alone could never
tame the land,
And yet we came,
Out of the journey's dust,
Felling the timber for our
simple homes,
Shaping our tools from
broken stones.*

*We only guess what kept us here,
For fortitude alone could never
conquer fear,
And yet we stayed,
Between the breasts of hills,
Listening for a neighbour's
answering call,
Hearing the stomp of his soldiers
through our hall.*

*We barely understand what
we endured,
For love of liberty alone can
never combat greed,
And yet we lived,
Bitter in the bleat of sheep,
Scarred by hardship and
the pain,
Of learning how to start again.*

*We know we spread our
children wide,
Though flight alone was not
the freedom that they sought,
Until they settled,
On mountain and low meadow,
Leaving the heel-marks
of our history,
Beyond the wide horizons
of a different sea.*

*We cannot know what lies ahead,
For hope alone can never make
a people whole,
And so we stand,
Waiting for something,
Feet astride the fissures
in the land,
Holding the future in the
hollow of our hand.*

Kirk Gates

Would you like to help us out?

Many of us have embraced the outdoors more in the past year, and a lot of us have enjoyed noticing nature at an enhanced level because of our daily walks. If you enjoy a little walk and feeling that you've helped in the Community you might be someone who could help us out.

We publish 8 magazines per year and volunteers deliver 6,000 magazines to all households and businesses in the town each issue. Some simply

deliver to the houses in their own street, some take on two or three streets and we have a few who go above and beyond.

Sharing the load makes the task manageable but we still have space for more helpers. Please consider whether this could be you. The dates for delivery are published at the beginning of the year, so you can easily advise in advance if you are unavailable due to holidays etc. We are flexible but administratively it does require that you do your best to be free to deliver as many as possible. That could amount to as little as say 7 hours of your time over the course of a year.

If you wish to offer some assistance please email on.a.lead@gmail.com detailing the street you live in, whether you'd be willing to deliver in other streets close to your home, or whether you would deliver anywhere in town. If you have any mobility issues please advise too as stairs are involved in some areas.

We look forward to hearing from you.



THE ARTS

"CLOTHING WITH ATTITUDE"

Pat Swan patswan@virginmedia.com.



I continue to search out local artists to feature here, and it's clear there is a wealth of artistic talent in the town, so I'm hoping more of you will get in touch and we can share some of your amazing work. This time round I'm highlighting a new venture by local girls **Hannah McKay** and **Evonne Summers**.

Bad Luck Club



Evonne Summers

Bad Luck Club was founded after Linlithgow based drummer Hannah found herself out of luck and live gigs in 2020. After years of touring with bands such as The Amorettes and Echo Machine and with all future bookings cancelled indefinitely Hannah needed to diversify.

She joined up with school friend and graphic designer Evonne to start Bad Luck Club, selling "badass clothing for people who refuse to let bad luck get in their way".

The idea was born out of socially distanced walks around the loch and along the canal. Hannah and Evonne met at Lowport primary school and spent all their rainy day breaks drawing together. They had often thought of working together on a project, so when lockdown cabin fever hit, a new clothing brand was born.



Evonne originally studied Textiles and was keen that their project was an environmentally friendly one, having seen the impact that clothing production can have on the planet. They were both delighted to find a UK supplier who would print their products on 100%



Hannah McKay

organic cotton in a renewable energy powered factory. Keen to keep their footprint on the planet to a minimum they also wanted products to be printed once ordered, so there is no waste.

At present they offer T-shirts, baseball tops and canvas tote bags featuring eye-catching, modern designs. It's very much a collaborative effort as both girls are studying at present. Hannah will draw ideas for designs and Evonne will digitise these with her Graphic Design and Illustration experience. They obviously both have a great eye for colour as you will see. Have a look on their website - bad-luck-club-apparel.teemill.com or on Instagram @badluckclub_apparel. There's a great design which sums up many of our feelings about the year 2020, but which I thought maybe I shouldn't include in the photos here!

The Bad Luck Club has given them both a positive focus and the reaction from customers has been a real boost in these tricky times. They would both much appreciate your support if you're looking to treat yourself and support a local business.

I wish these enterprising ladies much success with their new venture.

Evonne is currently studying Illustration, and in November last year her design was selected for a BBC History Magazine's Books of the Year spread. Her topical, inky, textured illustration showing readers floating about in bubbles featured in the Christmas issue of the magazine.

Evonne also had some very exciting news to share with me when we spoke. She had just heard that she is one of four people short-listed for The Kelpies Prize for Illustration, which independent publisher Floris Books run, with the aim of nurturing and developing children's illustrators in Scotland. The Kelpies are a highly-respected and much-loved range of children's novels set in Scotland. Entrants were asked to submit a selection of illustrations suitable for a children's book, and Evonne did this last year and had put it out of her mind. Due to Covid the 2020 Prize was delayed, so it was a real surprise for her to get this news. The winner will be announced at a virtual award ceremony this spring. The prize package includes a year of mentoring with the experienced design team from Floris, as well as the opportunity to be published I believe. This is an amazing achievement Evonne, and good luck!

Evonne's work can be seen on her Instagram @cloudburstkingdom, and she is available as a freelance designer and illustrator too.

The Line Gallery

Come what may Iona Leishman's planned exhibition "Exploring the Thin Places" will go ahead. Gail said "we have to do something to keep The Line alive, so have resolved that the exhibition will open on March 13th - ideally we will be able to welcome people back to the gallery properly, but we will be online if that is not possible. If we are able to open, the show will run until April 13th, but if lockdown continues we will have to be more flexible".

Iona talks about her inspiration - "Edinburgh Castle, Linlithgow Palace and Stirling Castle, three mighty monuments to the fortunes of the Royal House of Stuart, whose characters and stories shaped Scotland's history for centuries, have captured my imagination as a visual artist for so many years. My past experience gained amidst the ancient monuments of Forth Valley has been pivotal to the emergence of this body of work. Here in Findhorn the landscape is one of windswept beaches, dunes and pine forest - so contrasting to the built landscape of central Scotland."



Linlithgow Arts Guild during lockdown

The Arts Guild has been unable to offer a live concert for almost a year now, but at the end of December it was able to bring a new event to members. Together with 6 other Music Societies in Scotland they sponsored a new video concert by a Scottish group of young musicians, **The Broen Ensemble**, who had been scheduled to perform in Linlithgow in November 2020. Their programme featured "Metamorphosen" by Richard Strauss, and Tchaikovsky's "Souvenir de Florence" for strings. The concert is available online to anyone who has paid this season's nominal subscription, and to former members of the Arts Guild.

The normal lead time for arranging the Arts Guild's professional concerts ranges from several months to 3 years. However, the committee is ready to act as soon as public

gatherings become possible again, and venues become available to the public. A piano recital is currently provisionally booked for September. In the meantime membership is still available through the website for anyone who wishes to show their support.

You may also like to look on their Facebook page where you'll find a motet to sing along with the Gesualdo Six, a train ride with the Scottish Ensemble playing two movements by **Philip Glass**, and a link to a fabulous concert promoted by **New York Met with Anna Netrebko** performing songs at the **Spanish Riding School in Vienna**. The first two are free, but although The Met offers free opera performances, this special event requires a ticket purchase.

Mascagni Easter Hymn project

Soon after lockdown began nearly a year ago, the church choirs of both St Michael's Parish Church (directed by **Alison Hastie**, Organist and Coordinator of Music), and St Michael's Catholic church (under **Dr Evelyn Stell**) took the leap into recording tech, and have been individually recording hymns each week for Sunday worship. First a backing track is created, which is sent out to the choir members, who record themselves at home and send back their recording for mixing. For both parishes, it has been a great boon, keeping the choirs singing and contributing to worship online.

At Christmas time, there was a collaboration with Linlithgow Ladies Choir and the Linlithgow RFC Male Voice Choir. Alison was keen for everyone to have something to work towards to get them through the winter, and she had the idea to join forces to create an audio recording of Mascagni's famous Easter Hymn from his opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*, in time for Easter. She has a particular connection with opera as she plays viola in the Orchestra of Scottish Opera. Although the orchestra is furloughed for now, the company have been very active in designing smaller scale productions during the pandemic, such as Puccini's *La Bohème* in the car park last August, and filmed performances of Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* and *Hansel and Gretel* by Humperdinck, from the Theatre Royal in Glasgow. These can be viewed online for free.

Alison said *"the Easter Hymn is a glorious piece of music, beautifully written for voices, and very uplifting to sing. We're singing it in English, the text being 'Rejoice that the Lord is arisen, is arisen to save'. We've opened the invitation to all the other churches through the Linlithgow Church Forum, and to singers who don't have any church connection. It's a challenging piece,*

Come and sing *with combined choirs of Linlithgow* Mascagni's Easter Hymn

From his opera Cavalleria Rusticana

Details and audio guide-tracks from

Alison Hastie, Coordinator of Music, St Michael's Parish Church, Linlithgow
alisonhastie1@gmail.com

To be streamed on Easter Sunday, 4th April 2021

and some choral experience is advisable, but it's fun to learn. There's nothing like a fine piece of opera to raise the spirits!"

Guide-tracks have been prepared for each voice, and participants will record themselves at home, and send their completed recordings (by 22nd March) to **Alison** (alisonhastie1@gmail.com) for mixing. It will then be shared with the participating churches, to be used for worship on Easter Sunday. If you'd like to get involved please contact Alison by email as soon as possible. Happy Singing!

The Art of Photography

There are a lot of active photographers in the town with an eye for an interesting shot, so I'm planning to feature some of that talent in a future article. I put a call out on **Linlithgow Photographers FB page** recently, and have shared it on the other local FB pages. I'm not sure what form this article will take until I receive enough images, so please join in, and thank you to those who have already contributed.

I love pictures of our beautiful palace but they are being excluded from this exercise as we see enough of them everywhere, all the time!! I'm looking for magical light, a new take on a scene, an unusual event, wildlife detail, a lucky shot, nature at its finest, dynamic composition or even a happy accident. **Send a maximum of two photos to me with a sentence explaining why you love the images.**

If you are a local artist and would like to be featured in future please get in touch - patswan@virginmedia.com. I hope you take time to benefit from the experience of ART over the next few weeks.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"in the midst of chaos lies creativity"

BRING US SUNSHINE

BIG SOLAR CO-OP



The Linlith-Go-Solar community energy enterprise is a vision dreamt up by local volunteers and now a reality. Two successful phases have delivered 5 solar panel systems on three local sports club roofs, across four separate buildings. The Rugby Club was our first solar project in 2019, which had a second system installed alongside the Golf & Sports Clubs in 2020.

The 3rd phase is now investigating the potential for rooftop systems on our commercial and public buildings. Linlithgow Community Development Trust is working with The UK-wide Big Solar Co-operative, Linlithgow's Business Improvement District - ONE Linlithgow - and Scottish Communities Finance Ltd to try to make this happen.

At Linlithgow Rugby Club before and after the first system was installed. People power works!



Let's capture the solar energy from business rooftops

Nearly 1 Megawatt of solar energy (or 250 homes worth!) has been identified as outputs from potential Solar PV systems on local commercial rooftops. This vital preliminary work was undertaken by the talented young academics of Linlith-Go-Solar's Young Energy Enterprise Group.

Neil Barnes, Linlith-Go-Solar's prime mover, sets out the future plan:

"Linlithgow Community Development Trust is now aiming to work more closely with local businesses, supported by Big Solar Co-op, to put forward firmer, long-term proposals, whereby no upfront capital is required, and businesses benefit from cheaper green energy generated on their own rooftop."

Mark Darragh, owner of Playbugs, Mill Road Industrial Estate, and Vice-Chair of ONE Linlithgow continues the theme:

"I believe passionately in businesses and SMEs leading the way to green our economy. Not only to save the bottom line and make us more resilient, but we need to think of providing more employment and training opportunities for our young people. This is as much about good business as it is our children's futures. Working in partnership with the local community, we can lead the way."

Ethical investment opportunity

This new phase will also provide another ethical investment opportunity akin to the two successful community bonds already delivered in partnership with Scottish Communities Finance Ltd. We know that, properly informed, people will invest in local projects and services. They can earn decent interest too. Some are just

happy to be part of a community legacy, especially when it concerns the future of our young ones.

Nurturing Young People's Skills

From the graduates and undergraduates involved in the **Young Energy Enterprise Group** to date, 3 have gone on to find full-time jobs with well-established energy and engineering firms and three others have gone on to Master degrees.

One volunteer from the group is **Calum McKeown**, a local resident and recent MSc graduate in Renewable Energy & Sustainable Technology at Strathclyde University, who has just landed his first graduate job. He says:

"Our Young Energy Enterprise Group is hoping to lead and create initiatives like this for a carbon-free, happier and healthier future. It can provide young people like me opportunities to boost their CV or just gain from hands-on experience to get a taste for the community energy industry and associated roles."

Recently, **Linlith-Go-Solar** were also called to advise 'Genesis' - Linlithgow Academy's Formula 1 in Schools competition team, who are once again through to the global finals! Congratulations to the whole team and thanks to **David Marshall**, Teacher of Design & Technology, for making contact. Together, we are pulling together some green technology innovations that are hoped to give the young budding engineers the edge in the latter stages.

The young people on these groups come from a range of backgrounds and ages with one thing in common: they care about the planet, each other and everyone's future. We're in good hands if we give them the opportunity to flourish.

Are you a business or young person or anyone who wants to get involved in Linlith-Go-Solar? Linlithgow Community Development Trust would love to hear from you at:

energy@trust-linlithgow.org.uk

Linlith-Go-Solar community energy enterprise



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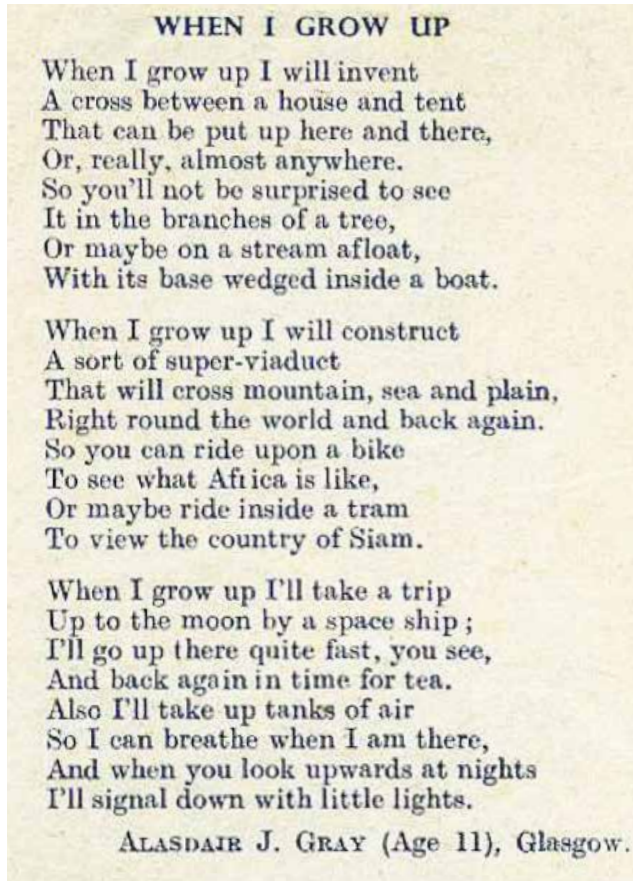
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LINGIN
'JANUARY
COMPETITION'
WINNER
IRENE MORAN

THE GREATHEART CHURCH MAGAZINE AND ALASDAIR GRAY

There was an article in issue 79 (January 2021) which referred to a poem that had appeared in a church magazine for 1946-7, called 'Greatheart'. Unfortunately the poem, written by Alasdair J Gray, age 11, was too small to be read and it is now shown below.



In my previous article, I said that Gray was multi-talented, being foremost a poet, then artist and finally an author.

I sent a copy of the Greatheart to the Scottish Poetry Library and they were delighted to receive what is probably the earliest printed example of his work. In their reply to me they described the find as 'a little treasure' which has now been added to his collected poems.

For those wishing to know more about the man, the library provided this link -

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4N9Drwmcht5lN3GV2NlHgK1/alsadair-gray-at-80-under-the-helmet>



The library also provided the additional information copied below, which amply demonstrates Gray's early talent.

Q. When did you realize you were an artist?

A. I did not realize it. Like all infants who were allowed materials to draw with, I did, and nobody suggested I stop. At school I was even encouraged to do it. And my parents (like many parents in those days) expected their children to have a party piece – a song or poem they would perform at domestic gatherings. The poems I recited were very poor A. A. Milne stuff. I found it possible to write verses which struck me as equally good, if not BETTER, because they were mine. My father typed them for me, and the puerile little stories which I sent to children's magazines and children's radio competitions. When I was eleven I read a four-minute programme of my own compositions on Scottish BBC children's hour. But I was eight or nine years old when it occurred to me that I would one day write a story which would get printed in a book. This gave me a feeling of deliriously joyful power.

His reading on the BBC radio children's programme included his version of one of Aesop's fables and some of his own poems. In his 'answer' above, he says this was when he was eleven - the same age as his poem in the Greatheart magazine.

PS. Below is my drawing in the same magazine – my reason for keeping it for 74 years.

Laurie Alexander



10 'VEGETABLE GROWING' GARDENING MISTAKES



I came across a useful gardening article called "10 Biggest Vegetable Gardening Mistakes". I have made most of these mistakes at some point over the years that I have been growing vegetables and thought it would be useful to share this as it might be helpful for those starting out on vegetable growing and perhaps for old hands as well.

1. Planting too early

Do not sow seeds or plant seedlings in the soil months before the last frost date. (The average date for the last frost in the Linlithgow area is the second week of May). Warm up the soil with horticultural fleece, polythene or cloches before sowing seeds, harden off seedlings before planting and give them some protection if frost is predicted.

2. Picking a bad spot

Do not grow vegetables in shade, for example of your shed or compost bin.

3. Skimping on soil

At the end of the growing season mulch your plot with well-rotted manure, compost, shredded leaves, leaf mould or grow green manure all of which prevent goodness being washed away from the soil.

4. Not harvesting

Pick your vegetables when they are ready. It is sad to see excellent looking Cauliflowers and Cabbages going to seed because they have been left too long in the ground.

5. Planting too much

Do not grow so much that your vegetables will ripen and rot or go to seed before you can use them. Try and work out how much of each crop you will need over the year

6. Ignoring spacing

Check the spacing that your vegetables need.

7. Not staggering harvest times.

For example, do not sow a 10 feet row of Lettuces or Radishes all at once; sow a few every couple of weeks so that they don't all come ready at once.

8. Putting off maintenance

Weeding, feeding, and watering needs to be done on a regular schedule, especially watering. Plants do not like competition for water and nutrients and allowing weeds to fill in will stunt many plants and reduce their yields.

9. Not fencing

This is necessary if rabbits are a problem near you.

10. Ignoring little problems

You need to monitor your plants regularly. If you see yellowing leaves or spots, inspect closer and make a

correction before the whole row of plants becomes ill. Insects like to lay their eggs on the undersides of leaves. Check them occasionally. Scraping off the eggs before they hatch can totally avert the problem.

THINGS TO DO IN YOUR VEGETABLE GARDEN IN MARCH

>> If you have not already done so, prune Blackcurrants and Gooseberries.

>> In **week 1** sow summer Cabbages and Broad Beans indoors for planting out later in the spring. Sow early types of Peas such as 'Meteor' outside under cloches

>> In **week 2** sow Broad Beans outside under a cloche. Sow Celery and Celeriac seeds inside. prepare the soil in your vegetable plot for Courgettes, Pumpkins and Squashes.

>> In **week 3** sow early Carrots under cloches. Sow seeds of early Brussels Sprouts. Sow Tomato seeds in a propagator in the greenhouse

>> In **week 4** plant spring planting Garlic. Sow Kohl Rabi seeds inside. Sow maincrop Peas. Harden off Cauliflower seedlings.

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



Paul Taylor
Chair, Linlithgow and District Allotment Society





As we move further into 2021 the emerging picture of the UK housing market is one of continued upward pressure on prices as demand grows set against a lack of supply.

The average house price increased by 0.5% (£1522) last month. Property views on Rightmove in the first week of February were up 45% compared to the same week in 2020, with home buyers sending 18% more enquiries to agents and the number of sales agreed up 7%.

This though is set against a reduction of 21% of new house sellers coming onto the market. We can only speculate but we imagine that some families dealing with working from home and home schooling are putting their moving plans on hold.

Current average house prices

Comparing Scotland to the UK national average, the current average house price in Scotland is £161,522 compared to £318,580 across the UK as a whole. However Scotland has seen a 5.2% increase in house prices in the 12 months to date, compared to a 3.0% increase in the UK as whole.

Scotland remains the fastest selling part of the UK with an average of 48 days to sell a property. This compares for example, with an average of 68 days in the south east of England.

In regard to LBTT (stamp duty), the Scottish Government have confirmed that the temporary raising of the nil tax band from £145,000 to £250,000 will end as planned on the 31st March, and will revert back to £145,000 (£175,000 for first time buyers). It is rumoured that in England the Chancellor is considering extending their stamp duty holiday up to £500,000 for a further 6 weeks from the end of March, with the aim of allowing home buyers who agreed a purchase in principle in 2020, but who are possibly struggling to complete a purchase before the 31st March deadline to enjoy this benefit.

Private rental sector

The private rented sector though shows a mixed picture. There is a marked downturn in demand for city centre properties. Asking rents in Edinburgh are down 10% annually and in London by 12.4%. We think this driven by two factors, firstly the significant contraction of demand for AirBNB type properties and secondly with the increase in home working tenants realise they no longer need to be as close to their normal place of work.

In fact several cities across the UK have seen the number of properties advertised for let on Rightmove more than double.

This certainly seems to be borne out by the very healthy demand we are seeing for rental properties in the local area.

In the last quarter of 2020 the average monthly rental in Scotland was £772, an increase of 3.1% on the same period in 2019, yet in Greater London as a whole the average monthly rent in the last quarter of 2020 was £1932, a fall of 6.4%.



WHAT IS SKIN AWARENESS? HOW TO SELF-SCAN YOUR SKIN AT HOME AND WHEN YOU SHOULD SEEK HELP.

Skin Awareness is simply taking a good look at your skin and any lesions on it. What they look like, their shape, colour, size, sensation, and any changes since you first noticed them. Photos are a great way to keep a record of your skin and to notice any small changes that may be occurring.

At Skin Happy, when we carry out your in-clinic consultation and assess your skin for treatment, we also look at any lesions that may be present in the area for treatment.

We may ask you questions about specific lesions and depending on your answers, we may suggest you get it checked for further investigation. This can either be done via your GP or your lesions can be checked via the ScreenCancer UK screening service available at Skin Happy.

WHAT DOES A SCREENCANCER UK APPOINTMENT INVOLVE?

We ask you to complete a consent form with some personal data. This is so ScreenCancer can contact you with the results of the analysis.

You will be asked a short series of questions about your skin including ones specific to the lesion(s) you want to be analysed. This will assess your risk factors of skin cancer and provide the UK based dermatology specialist(s) with the necessary background information for analysis.

We take images of your lesion(s). It is totally painless and harmless and takes a few minutes to complete. There are very few restrictions but if you have any doubts just ask.

HOW TO CHECK YOUR SKIN FOR SKIN CANCER

By checking your skin regularly, you'll learn what is normal for you.

The best time to check your skin is after a shower or bath. Use a full-length mirror and a hand-held mirror in a room with plenty of light.

Check yourself from head to toe:

1. Look at your face, neck, ears, and scalp. You may want to use a comb or a blow dryer to move your hair so that you can see better. You also may want to have a relative or friend check through your hair. It may be hard to check your scalp by yourself.
2. Look at the front and back of your body in the mirror. Then, raise your arms and look at your left and right sides.
3. Bend your elbows. Look carefully at your fingernails, palms, forearms (including the undersides), and upper arms.
4. Check the back, front, and sides of your legs. Also check the skin all over your buttocks and genital area.

Learn where your moles are and their usual look and feel.

Check for anything new, such as...

- a new mole (that looks different from your other moles)
- a new red or darker color flaky patch that may be a little raised
- a change in the size, shape, color, or feel of a mole
- a sore that doesn't heal
- a new flesh-colored firm bump

Don't be shy: melanoma isn't, and finding it early could save your life!

www.screencancer.com

ABCDE Rule To Detect Melanoma

The ABCDE rule is a common recognised screening tool used to assess characteristics of normal moles vs abnormal moles (melanoma)

ASYMMETRY

An irregular shape - The 2 halves should be symmetrical



BORDERS

Look for unclear, irregular or ragged borders



COLOUR

Changes in colour, especially black, blue or uneven colour



DIAMETER

More than 5 - 6mm in diameter and change in size



EVOLVING

Changes in shape, size, colour, itching, bleeding of existing mole or if a new mole/ lesion appears



ScreenCancer

Once the dermatology specialist has written their report, a health advisor may call you to discuss the lesion(s) or talk through the report along with any remedial action that may or may not be required.

HOW-TO SELF-SCAN YOUR SKIN AT HOME AND WHEN YOU NEED TO SEEK FURTHER HELP.

Follow this chart produced by ScreenCancer UK. If you are unsure the best thing to do is get it checked.

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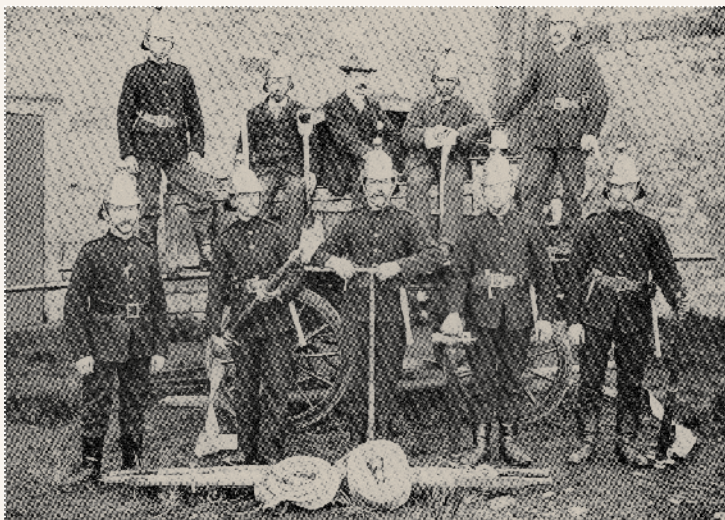
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skinhappyme

FIGHTING FIRE IN LINLITHGOW PART TWO

Bruce Jamieson

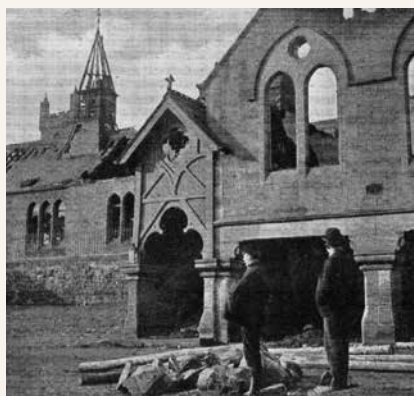


*Above: Linlithgow's early 20th century Fire Brigade with their manual pump.
Back Row: R. McNair, P. Murray, Convenors J. R. Thomas and J. Bamberry snr, J. Frame.
Front row: W. McGregor, J. Bamberry jnr, Hugh Wallace (Firemaster), J. Young and J. Alexander.*

Linlithgow Fire Station has been in service for 50 years. In this second article, Bruce Jamieson continues the story of fire-fighting in Linlithgow.

By the early 20th century, Linlithgow had a Fire Brigade consisting of a Firemaster (at an annual salary of £3-3 shillings) and seven, part-time firemen.

Using its manual pump, one of the Brigade's first tasks was to extinguish a blaze in the town's Grammar School, behind the Burgh Halls. The fire occurred in the early hours of the morning of February 28th, 1902 – probably when a spark from a coal fire, kept burning overnight, ignited a classroom. By the time the firemen were called out and the heavy pump manoeuvred into position, the building was well ablaze. Later, only a shell was left and the ruins had to be demolished.

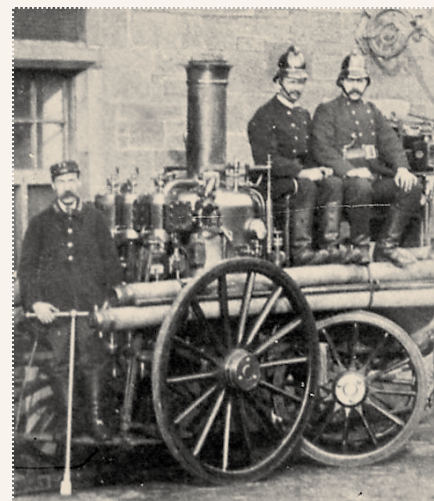


The fire-damaged Grammar School.

The town's manual pump was later adapted to be pulled by horses and the stables of Garvie Davie in St Michael's Wynd often supplied the steeds. Local lore has it that if the beasts had been used to pull the town hearse in the morning, it took great persuasion to make them break into a gallop if called upon later to pull the fire engine. On one such occasion, Murphy's rag store, at the west end of town, burned to the ground.

In 1923, a second hand Shand Mason steam appliance was purchased from the Leith Brigade. Later, the appliance was adapted so that it could be towed by a motor vehicle and in 1928 an arrangement was made to hire a lorry from the SMT Bus Company at £1 – 1 shilling a time.

Hugh Wallace retired in 1935 after 33 years of service. Under new Firemaster Peter Swan (recruited from the SMT Bus Company) and a squad of nine firemen, the 1916



Linlithgow's "steamer" appliance - seen here in Leith.

Merryweather pump engine (S6135) which had been purchased from the city of Edinburgh, served the town well. It was also used throughout the Second World War, by which time Firemaster Dalrymple was in charge - employed by the Burgh Council.



The "Merryweather" Fire Engine, here on duty in Edinburgh, was bought by Linlithgow in 1936.

Linlithgow's team of nine firemen was assisted by members of the Auxiliary Fire Service who operated two Home Office trailer pumps, pulled by a "bucket cart" and a large saloon car. Some firemen, including Alex Salmond's grandfather, Sandy, slept in the station overnight so as to be on permanent call.



The old fire station at the Cross. Firemen Eric Edwardson, Tom Baird and "Tack" Gray outside the fire station.

When the Fire Service was nationalised in 1948, Linlithgow, along with 31 other stations, became part of the South Eastern Fire Brigade and, still led by Officer in Charge Jim Dalrymple, now operated from a building at The Cross. When Bill Macmillan took it over as the Coffee Neuk, he showed me an inspection pit beneath the floor and hooks for the fire hoses still fixed to the ceiling. Many exciting call-outs saw Linlithgow's firemen, along with their Dennis New World Ace engine (SY5885), attending such conflagrations as a huge distillery fire in South Queensferry, a blaze that destroyed the Blackness Inn and a serious British Railways Sleeper Yard fire in Bo'ness which badly damaged the fire engine

By the mid 1960s, it was obvious that the station provision at The Cross was increasingly inadequate and would not be suitable for more modern appliances. Eventually, in 1969, a new £30,000 establishment was built in Philip Avenue, under the command of George Gray who had been in charge since 1966.

The new HQ was officially opened by Councillor Drummond (West Lothian Member of the Joint Fire Committee) in 1970. Linlithgow Town Council, headed by Provost Fergus Byrne, and the Rev David Steel were in attendance and speeches and a prayer were followed by a demonstration of a car crash rescue. The crew then carried out a mock rescue from their new, 60-foot high fire tower which was filled with thick yellow smoke. The "entertainment" culminated in a selection of pipe music from the South Eastern Fire Brigade Pipe Band, under the direction of Pipe Major A. Mitchell. A tour of the new premises ensued, including a visit to the shower room which the Linlithgowshire Gazette reported "would be most welcome by a smoke-begrimed, perspiration-soaked fireman on his return from a blaze." Thereafter, a buffet meal was provided in the large lecture room.



Town Crier John Shipton and others aboard the Dennis in the mid 70s.

The vintage Dennis fire engine was guest of honour in the 1974 Marches procession. It also starred in an episode of BBC TV's "Dr Finlay's Casebook".



The 1970s crew: Bob McQueen; Wull Anderson; George "Tack" Gray; Bill Craik; Eric Edwardson; Alfie Alexander; Tom Baird.

Since then, operating from Philip

Avenue for 50 years (with George Gray jnr in charge from 1982 -2001) the Brigade has performed sterling service in and around the burgh, dealing with house fires, industrial conflagrations, car crashes and a host of other emergencies. One of the most serious took place on October 15th, 2010 when the 18th century Star and Garter Hotel caught fire. Watch Manager Derek Mair commented on national television, "We've got eight pumping appliances, two height appliances and five support vehicles, with approximately 55 firefighters on the scene."



The Star was badly damaged but saved from total destruction.

The Brigade's invaluable work continues today with men and women, in their Scania P270/Emergency One engine, attending hundreds of incidents each year.



The present Linlithgow fire engine with Andy Bathgate who recently retired after 43 years service.

In addition to their invaluable life-saving work, in 1968 the firefighters started building floats to participate in the town's Riding of the Marches. To carry on the tradition, a group of retired firefighters, calling themselves The Extinguishers continued to build prize-winning floats.

The Fireman Sam float. Bruce Jamieson - with thanks to George Gray and Ian Scott.



DANCE LIKE A MARIPOSA



Local girl Eilidh McCall has recently returned from touring the world and pursuing her number one passion, dance. It all began in 2012 when she set off to live the California Dream studying at the Young Americans' College of Performing Arts. From there she travelled around the world delivering performance-based workshops before she got her sea legs and worked as a dancer and assistant cast manager for Princess Cruises. Last year was to be her final cruising season but it didn't quite go to plan as she was stranded at sea for 66 days. After all the hard work Eilidh had put in she wasn't going to let the current situation ruin her ambitions. She spread her wings and brought her passion of teaching dance and choreography back to the community she grew up in.

With the help of her friends, family and the people at Bridgend Farm, the **Mariposa Studios** opened its doors on October 9th 2020. Eilidh has built a team of highly qualified professional dancers who specialise in different areas of dance. In October, they hit the ground running and launched 4 x 3-day dance intensive classes and then shimmied straight into regular classes. Many types of dance classes are offered from jazz to contemporary for different age groups and levels.

Unfortunately, no sooner had they got into the full swing of things than

Tier 4 hit West Lothian and the doors had to close indefinitely. Eilidh saw this as an opportunity to raise money for a cause close to her heart. She set up a fundraising event through 'Dance4ACause' where online dance and fitness classes were offered in exchange for a small donation to raise funds for Blood Cancer UK. She chose this charity as her dad was diagnosed with the condition two years ago.

A Just Giving fundraising page was set up with the initial target of £500 and by the end of the three weeks the grand total reached £1950 which was a very welcome surprise. Approximately 75-80 people took part in 30 classes over the three-week period. There was a mixture of HIIT workout classes, yoga and three guest lectures for 'Workshop Wednesday'. **Eilidh would like to give a special thanks to Kerry and Ciara Farrelly, Katriona Ramsay, Ryan Douglas and Megan Dawson who gave up their time voluntarily to offer workshops for 'Dance4ACause.'** Eilidh hopes to make this an annual event with the aim of the next one being in person rather than virtual.

This last year has clearly had many challenges and Eilidh has been touched by the support she's received from the local community in helping to make her dream a reality. Everyone who's attended classes has been very respectful of the Covid rules and patient with the ever-changing restrictions. The team at Centre Stage Dancewear has done a great job setting up the beautiful collection of

Mariposa merchandise. Classes are currently running online until further Government guidelines are given. They are open for everyone from Primary 1 to Adults and so far the uptake has been very positive. I decided to give it a try and have thoroughly enjoyed getting my jazz hands out with a routine to 'A Chorus Line' musical and channelling my inner J.Lo with my attempt at commercial dance.

Eilidh has lots of big plans for the Mariposa Studios once it re-opens. Other services will be offered, such as, themed children's dance parties and wedding first dance lessons. Aside from dance, her vision is to create a creative space to welcome the community in whatever way she can. The upstairs Social Butterfly Lounge will be a perfect place for activities including knitting and book clubs. Other ideas are music/voice lessons and baby sensory classes.

In such a tough and challenging year it's inspiring to see that dreams can still be achieved with the right amount of passion, dedication and focus. It also brings to the forefront the importance of teamwork and the support from friends, family and the local community without which none of this would've been possible.

Amy Cornock

The Scarlet Letter

Nathaniel Hawthorne



The Scarlet Letter was published in 1850 by novelist and short story writer Nathaniel Hawthorne. In the years previous to this novel's publication, Hawthorne

was rapidly establishing himself as a leading emerging writer in American society. His stories had strong moral themes. Hawthorne was writing at a pivotal time in American history, at a period of national reflection and a search for cultural and political identity. The Scarlet Letter is still considered as one of the leading fictional writings of nineteenth century American literature.

The novel is preceded by an introduction called The Custom House. It sets the scene for the novel, creating mystery and intrigue about the novel's plot and characters. The Custom House introduction is the account of an anonymous narrator, the surveyor of the Custom House in Salem, Massachusetts. He has discovered some long-forgotten manuscripts in the Custom House, which contain a square of cloth with an embroidered scarlet letter A. The narrator decides to imagine his own tale of the manuscript and embroidery, and so the premise for the novel is set.

The novel is set in seventeenth century Boston and is centered around the main protagonist Hester Prynne and her daughter Pearl. We discover that Hester was married abroad to a scholar who is older than she, and that she has been sent ahead alone to this puritan settlement to await his arrival. While waiting for her husband, Hester has borne a child to another man, whose identity is not clear at the beginning of the novel. The novel opens with Hester's public shaming, the scandal amongst the townsfolk, and we witness her being outcast from the town's community.

"Those who had before known her, and had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even startled, to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped."

Hester bears her shame with dignity. She is forced to live in a small cottage on the outskirts of the settlement, and wear a scarlet letter A as a symbol of her adultery. Over time, Hester manages to regain some of her shredded reputation through her quiet ethic, hard work and charitable kindness to those who once condemned her.

"The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free. The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread."

The novel explores many themes, especially those surrounding identity, religion, knowledge and independence. At the beginning of the novel, it is Hester who has been cast aside and stripped of human liberty, not only by the key men in her life, but also by her community. It would have been easy for her to run away and start afresh in a new place. Staying was by far the hardest course of action but this is the one she chose. By carrying herself with dignity and upholding her own moral code she redeems herself many times over while others, who are seemingly more worthy of society's respect, falter and crumble.

When I read this novel recently, I found it resonated with me. I was awakened to the ideas of romantic injustice, female empowerment and a nation finding its voice and identity. I was also struck by the ways in which we could find parallels through different themes to our own world almost two centuries later.

As the global pandemic continues to restrict and constrain our lives we are marked like Hester, feeling like we are living on the edge of life and cast a little adrift from our community and people we hold dear. However, like Hester, I feel we have a choice. Time passes and the sharpness of memory fades. Our emotions and feelings remain, acting as a blueprint to craft and shape our futures. By endeavouring to find purpose in our lives - to help others, to share kindness, - we gain an appreciation for the life we are leading now and, one day, we will move forwards into a future we have helped to shape.

"All the world had frowned on [Hester] - for seven long years had it frowned upon this lonely woman - and still she bore it all, nor ever once turned away her firm, sad eyes. Heaven, likewise, had frowned upon her, and she had not died."

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



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Hamish is an 18-month-old West Highland Terrier. Hamish is a fun-loving dog with a huge personality, stockily built and larger than most West Highland Terriers. Hamish is very affectionate and loves the attention of other dogs and humans and is confident that everyone loves him!

Hamish was originally destined to be a therapy dog but was unable to continue his training due to Covid restrictions. His now owners were originally asked to foster him until his training could be completed but happily got to keep him permanently. They told us *"With hindsight, it would have been very hard for us to part with him after fostering but a short time later we were given the chance to keep him as our own. Wonderful!"*

His favourite toy is an old plastic watering can which he carries about the garden. Balls, especially footballs, are a great favourite and his owners say his dribbling prowess should be envied by top-class footballers. They spend a lot of time cheering him from the side-lines!

Hamish's favourite place is the garden, most especially when his Dad is there and Hamish helps by tidying the woodpile, hoping to catch sight of some mice, which he never seems to do. Pigeons are always a source of interest though Hamish is still learning to climb the trees.

Hamish loves winter especially when his toys are covered with a blanket of snow. He plays a game of 'Hunt the Thimble' in search of hidden toys and his face lights up when he digs into the snow to find frozen treasures!

He loves exploring but this landed him in a spot of bother when he became trapped by a log in Linlithgow Loch. A caring passer-by rescued him which resulted in Westport Vets launching an appeal to find them. With the help of the local community, they found the local rescuer, **Lesley Kerr**, who received Westport Vets Local Hero Award in December.

His owners say, *"This lovely little dog came to us just before lockdown and immediately made his position in the home apparent – in other words he is in charge especially, when sitting in his Dad's chair. During these dark days of lockdown, we are fortunate to have the pleasure of Hamish."*

2021 has brought a lot of snow, so deep that many dogs are having to wade through it rather than walk it. All dogs are different, some like Hamish revel in the texture and fun it brings. If your dog is not a fan of the snow do not force them, a walk should be fun and if this becomes stressful it is not beneficial for them. In these cases, it is best to have a day of games at home instead.

There are some main factors to consider in winter weather for pets.

Coat type

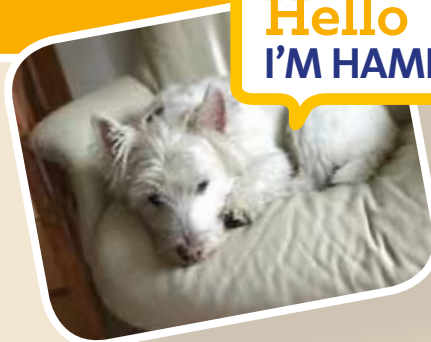
- > do they need an additional layer to maintain body temperature.
- > longer, thicker & curly coats are prone to snow and ice compacting which can be extremely painful. Warm water after a walk removes them quickly and gently.

Grit and Salt

- > this can burn the surface of paws. Clean as soon as your pet is indoors.
- > prevent your pet from licking their paws. Any pet suspected of ingesting salt or grit must be assessed by a vet as grit and salt are toxic.

De-icer and Antifreeze

- > highly toxic to dogs and cats.
- > if you suspect your pet has swallowed de-icer or antifreeze, contact your vet as soon as possible.
- > avoid using products that contain ethylene glycol on your car.



Older pets

- > shorter walks in snow or extremely cold weather.
- > extra bedding to help with arthritis
- > keep beds in draft free areas and consider a raised bed.

Cats

- > litter trays and shelter available indoors

Rabbits, guinea pigs, chickens & small furies

- > a sudden drop in temperature can come as a shock.
- > bring them indoors or sheltered area (shed or garage).
- > keep enclosures in a draught free area with extra bedding.
- > chickens will benefit from extra bedding and regular checks of food and water.

Fish

- > check the temperature of indoor tanks regularly.
- > do not let outdoor ponds freeze over.

If you have any concerns about your pet and in an emergency call Westport Veterinary Clinic on 01506 844165.

For enquiries please email: surgery@westportvets.com

The Westport Team is always available to help.

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