



the BLACK bitch

Linlithgow's news by Linlithgow's people

LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY MAGAZINE ISSUE 83 JULY 2021

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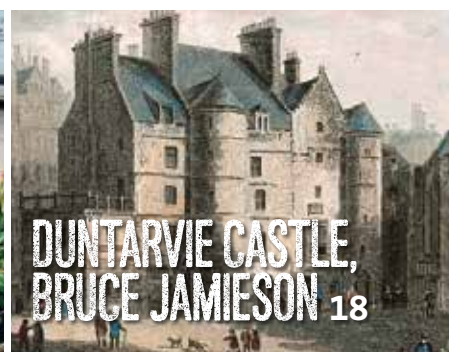
ARE WE BEING IGNORED?

THE BACKSTORY BEHIND THE
GAP SITE AT LINLITHGOW CROSS P4

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MEET THE TEAM FRANCINE HOWIE



Nearly 29 years ago, I came to Linlithgow with my soon-to-be husband, whom I met while working at a marketing company in Paris, where I also later worked as a legal secretary. Very quickly I became fond of Linlithgow, finding it to be a friendly, relaxing place, after having lived in several big cities.

Over the years I was terribly busy bringing up four children. In Linlithgow it was easy to make friends quickly through the ante-natal groups and playgroups I attended. When my children joined playgroup, I was involved in running the playgroup's accounts and helping at sessions.

Once my children were more independent, I volunteered for a good while at the Fair Tradewinds Shop in town, which was a fun job! Then, after my youngest daughter started nursery, I became a parent helper at her school, enjoying this so immensely that I decided to become a pupil support worker. Since 2013 I have worked in many different schools in West Lothian, even as a nursery nurse for a brief period after I obtained my HNC in Early Education and Childcare. My last two years were spent at a special school, assisting, and supporting children with complex additional support needs. The experience was both challenging and rewarding, and I was in awe of the staff's dedication and commitment.

I consider myself to be truly international (I am multinational), after having lived in many countries before moving to Scotland. Being multilingual has always been an enormous advantage, and I also have an eagle eye for grammar and spelling, not always appreciated by my children! This skill encouraged me to complete a proofreading course in March 2020. So far, I have only had a few small jobs. Very recently, while Chris Hamilton was

creating a logo for my freelance business, Precise Proofs, he suggested I get into contact with David Tait, to enquire if I could volunteer as a proofreader with the Black Bitch. I followed his advice, and I am now enjoying proofreading some of the magazine's articles. This experience will be invaluable to me in securing more proofreading jobs in future. In addition, you will soon also see me distributing copies of the Black Bitch to some households.

My love for nature and physical activity makes Linlithgow the ideal place to live. Apart from being active at the Leisure Centre and weekly yoga sessions, I undertake many walks with my husband, family, and friends, both locally and further afield. In the summer, you will find me climbing up several Munros. My latest volunteering project will start soon - a walk leader for West Lothian's over 50s, coordinated by Xcite, on behalf of Aging Well. Other activities I enjoy are swimming, skiing, and surfing.

Travel is another one of my passions - I love discovering new countries: their people, cultures, and foods! The highlights of my travels to date have been Chile, China, and Egypt. As a family we also enjoy visits to our holiday house in Portugal.

Since 2011 I have been part of Linlithgow Ladies Community Choir, a great way to be part of the community by taking part in musical activity. Furthermore, since beginning to learn Spanish (my 4th language) in 2009, I am still participating in small group lessons every 2 weeks! Finally, relaxation is also fundamental to my wellbeing, this is accomplished by playing my piano, reading, and gardening.



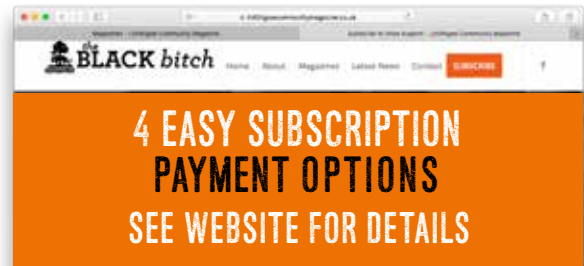
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**DAVID TAIT,
EDITOR**

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Over the past challenging period we have worked hard to make sure you continued to receive relevant information about the town, its organisations, people and happenings which otherwise you may not have been aware of.

Of course, we don't have the broad coverage of a local newspaper with a team of reporters covering all aspects of community life but we do try to inform you too of what is being done in your name by your Local Authority. After all, other than sporadic and often sensationalised reports in the media, how are you to know what is happening in your community, essentially behind "closed doors"?

Which is why over the past few years the Black Bitch has taken more of an interest in issues such as those that affect the appearance and quality of the town's Conservation Area – a major tourism and employment asset – and the West Lothian Local

Development Plan – which no-one is much interested in until a major development is planned in the field over their back garden fence.

As a local resident you will be aware of two obvious visible blots on Linlithgow's High Street – namely the Gap Sites at McCarthy & Stone's Templar's Court and the old Victoria Hall. This issue contains the first part of an update report on the story of the development of Templar's Court prepared by Linlithgow's Planning Forum. For anyone asking, "why is no-one doing anything" this should make an interesting read. (Part 2 will be included in the next issue). Meanwhile, it is pleasing to note that there has been an upturn in community activity in an attempt to bring some pressure to bear on those with authority to take action on these sites.

As a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation the magazine is owned by its members

who also appoint its Trustees. To help us achieve our aim of providing you with more relevant local news we therefore have two asks for you to think about:

1. Consider supporting the magazine by becoming a member or a Trustee. In the first instance, to express an interest in being a member, simply provide your name and email address to the Editor at on.a.lead@gmail.com
2. Consider becoming a subscriber by using the online options available in the magazine or by contacting Moira Goll at moirag29@sky.com

And finally, a very big thank you to all our volunteers, subscribers, contributors, advertisers and readers who make the magazine possible.



Q. 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.



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



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ARE WE BEING IGNORED? – THE BACKSTORY BEHIND THE GAP SITE AT LINLITHGOW CROSS PART 1

A backstory in literature provides a history for a fictional event or character in a novel. The backstory to the gap site at Templars Court could almost be fiction. It is now 10 years since the planning application for the erection of 41 sheltered flats for the elderly and in 2011 it would have been beyond credibility to invent the story which unfolded. The story is one of poor decision-making, flagrant breach of planning and building control regulations and the power of big business over local communities.

The story begins with a straightforward planning application reference 0249/FUL/11 for the construction of 41 sheltered flats for the elderly with communal facilities, car parking, landscaping and erection of two ground floor retail units by the contractor/developer McCarthy and Stone on the site of the First Bus garage which was for sale. The application was contested by Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council. The late Jack Thompson, then planning secretary, wrote a detailed letter dated 24th May 2011 to West Lothian Council objecting to the

lack of car parking spaces and the potential impact on pupil numbers at Linlithgow Academy. Jack stated in his letter that *“most of the houses in Linlithgow vacated by residents of [McCarthy and Stone’s], Kinloch View development are now occupied by families with children. It has been estimated that over 50% of Kinloch view residents downsized in Linlithgow.”* If the same happened at the proposed Templars Court development, then this would be the equivalent of a housing estate of 20 family houses stressing an already full Academy. A lengthy objection was also received from Transition Linlithgow, concluding a four-page letter with the statement *“Transition Linlithgow are not in favour of this development as it stands from a sustainable environmental, social or economic perspective. It falls short in every regard”*. Interestingly within the letter is a statement that there is *“no provision for electric car charging points or buried power cables for future connection.”*

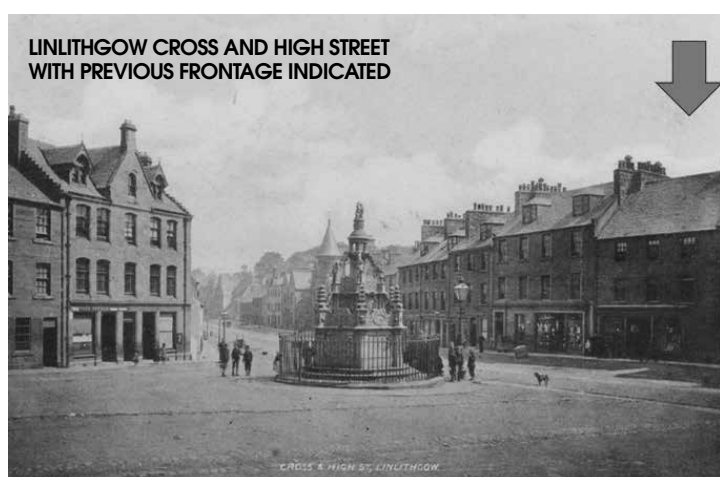
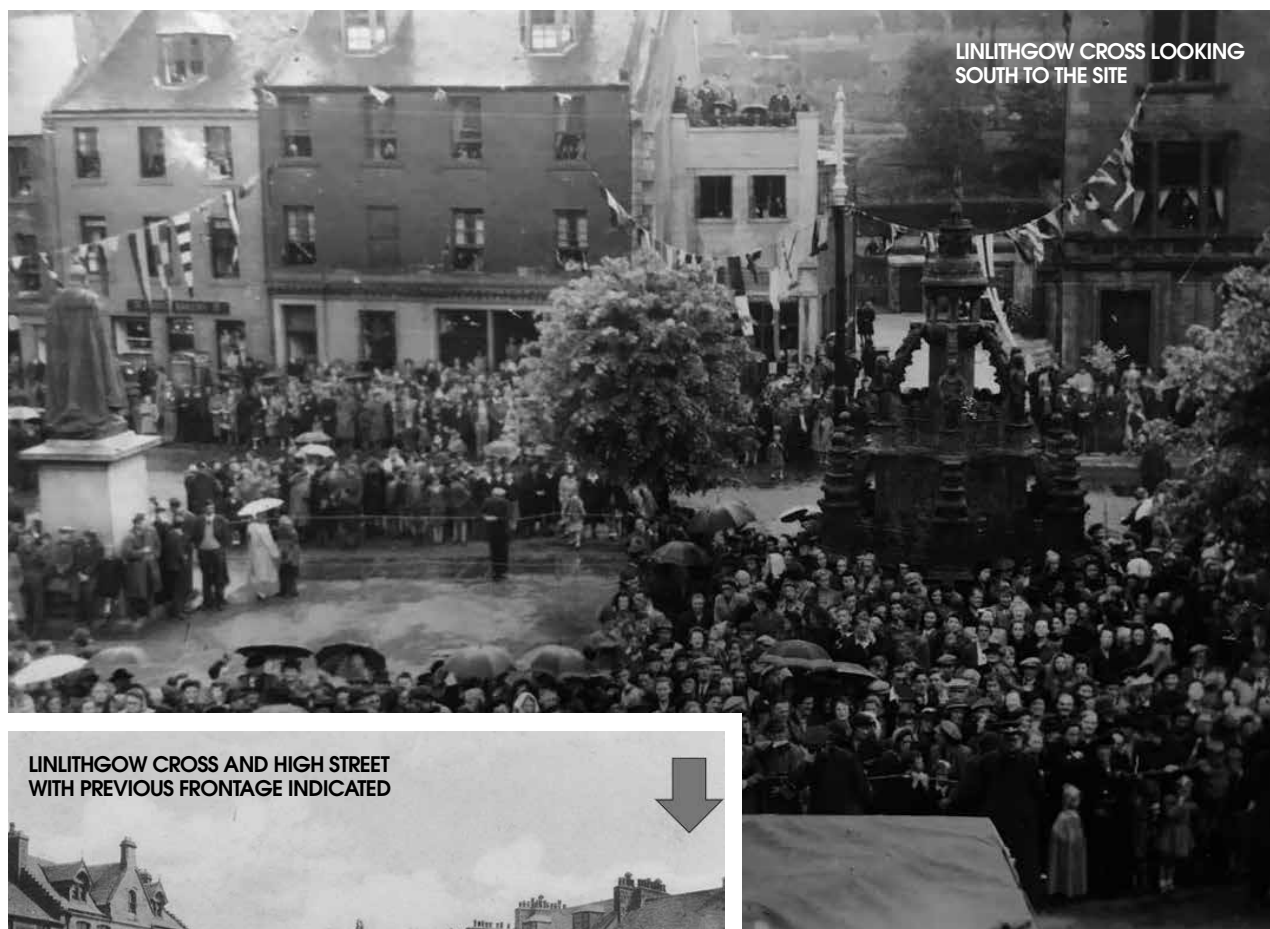
In November 2012 First Bus closed the bus depot in Linlithgow. In April 2013 West Lothian Council concluded its agreement with McCarthy and Stone (called a section 75 agreement). On 8 May 2013 West Lothian Council, ignoring the

objections, granted planning permission. Normally, a representation from a Community Council on a planning application will initiate the requirement for the planning application to be heard at a planning committee meeting attended by officers and councillors. In the case of the Templars Court application, after a protracted period of negotiation between officers of West Lothian Council and McCarthy and Stone, planning permission was given by the planning officer without the application being heard at a planning committee meeting which would have allowed scrutiny of the objections.

There were two notable conditions in the agreement with McCarthy and Stone. The planning rules applicable at the time required contractors to provide 15% of the proposed accommodation as affordable housing. In the case of Templars Court this would have equated to the five flats to be built above the two retail units on the High Street which could have been local authority or housing association flats. However, West Lothian Council agreed to accept a lump sum payment of £90,000 from McCarthy and Stone in lieu of this provision. The second condition related to the demolition of the frontage building. The agreement states that demolition shall not commence until written



LINLITHGOW CROSS SITE 1950S



West Lothian Council records show that the building warrant application (L IV/11/1642/BW) for the demolition of the First Bus offices was refused on 14 August 2014.

confirmation is issued by the council. *"Until written confirmation is issued by the council, the building shall be maintained adequately in a structural condition that prevents further and unnecessary deterioration to the building fabric and that of adjoining properties."* This *"to protect the visual character and amenity of the Linlithgow Palace and High Street conservation area and in order to protect the adjoining listed buildings."*

By October 2013, without a building warrant from the council, McCarthy and Stone had demolished the frontage building, previously the First Bus offices. Interestingly, West Lothian Council records show that the building warrant application (L IV/11/1642/BW) for the demolition of the First Bus offices was refused on 14 August 2014 – somewhat late. Contemporary photographs show a section of the office building remaining to support the now exposed gable wall of the adjacent property.

Around Easter 2015, without a building warrant, McCarthy and Stone began the demolition of the remaining supporting section of the original building. During the initial stages of the demolition the chimney of the adjacent property moved. Work ceased until the chimney was stabilised. The demolition was completed. The second movement in the gable wall occurred when excavation for new foundations was undertaken and work ceased after the excavation had been backfilled. Timber shoring was erected to stabilise the gable wall. McCarthy and Stone commissioned Blyth and Blyth structural engineers to design a new foundation which comprised piling, ground beams and an insulated, suspended in situ concrete slab. In February 2016 this design was submitted for a building warrant which was approved.

By September 2015, 50% of the apartments at Templars Court had been reserved with occupation in 2016.

It is presumed that the cost of the new engineering design for the foundations of the new frontage building caused McCarthy and Stone to back away from the project. Profit had been taken from the stage one development and viewed on its own, the stage two development of five flats and two retail units was considered unprofitable.

There followed five years of procrastination, inaction, missed opportunities and overt disregard of the Linlithgow Community by McCarthy and Stone and the Planning Authority. Part 2 of the saga of the Templars Court gap site continues in the next edition of the Black Bitch.

Linlithgow
Planning Forum

LINLITH-GO-SOLAR: COMMUNITY ENERGY ON THE MARCH ACROSS THE UK

What Could it Mean for Me, My Children & Community?

There's a new revolution in energy springing up in small and large communities across Europe.

It's called 'community energy' and Linlithgow is part of it. This is our 3rd article in a series that aims to chart the history of our progress, help you, your home, business or community group - and all of us - benefit from our collective ambitions.

Have you ever wondered what it means to you? How it might affect your home, business or group? Or how you might get involved?

Linlithgow Community Development Trust (LCDT) and Linlith-Go-Solar (LgS) volunteers will try to paint a picture in its own simple words. But we're certainly not alone.

A comprehensive new report by Community Energy England, who teamed up with our own Community Energy Scotland and our counterparts in Wales have just published their State of the Sector Report 2021, which can be found here:

www.communityenergyengland.org/pages/state-of-the-sector

According to the report, which LCDT/Linlith-Go-Solar contributed to, 424 community organisations across the UK, with 431 staff and 3096 volunteers, reached over 358,000 people in delivering their energy projects in 2020.

Over £3m was diverted into community funds and £200k to support COVID.

All of us involved in the sector want to continue to do our bit to make our local places more resilient and help everyone along the path to Net Zero by 2050.

If you are not inspired by our words, then we recommend this short documentary called: *'We the Power/The Future of Energy is Community-Owned'* available free on YouTube. Listen to the incredible efforts of local community activists as they lead the way. In one case taking over the local electricity grid from the local nuclear power company in Germany!

Closer to home, you will have seen in our last article that we teamed up with Linlithgow Academy to help their 'Genesis' Formula 1 in Schools World Finalist Team make their Pit Stop display more carbon friendly with renewable energy and sustainable building materials.

Finishing 8th in the world (!), the 4 budding, brilliant young S5 engineers and designers - Molly, Louise, Ellen & Ethan - and their Design & Technology teacher, David Marshall, have inspired us to keep this education rolling forward to spread the word to other schools and as many young people as possible.



Building the Pit Stop



The Genesis Team - Ready for Action



The solar charging kit, carbon negative hempcrete blocks and reused wood from our community shed project all used to help make the Genesis Pit Stop more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Through more hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) projects like these, we want to bring the world of energy alive and use the creativity of young minds themselves to shape our and their futures.

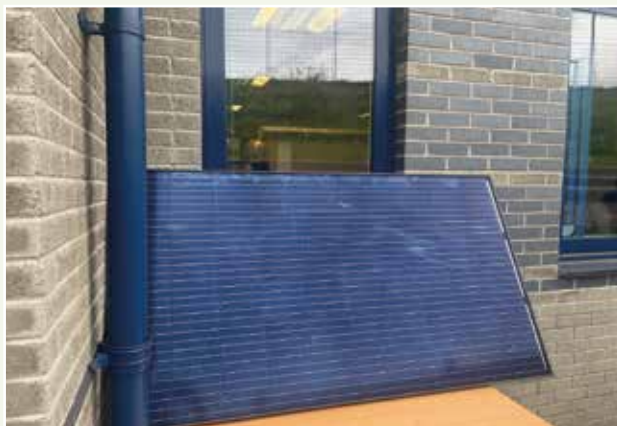
But we need to scale up fast, bring in more volunteers, staff and funding. Especially if we want our local economies to be carbon-free, recover from COVID and provide youngsters with sustainable jobs.

We need your support in this new revolution. Equally, we can help you.

LCDT/LgS can help and advise over different energy-saving and renewable energy solutions. We can bring in specialist installers, carry out thermal imaging surveys to highlight cold and hot spots in your buildings and link you to funding support including Home Energy Scotland and others. We have helped several homes to install Solar PV and batteries in the last few years on top of lots of other advice and our community Solar PV projects.

We are also aiming to provide the next ethical investment opportunity in the coming months where you can put some of your savings into our projects, support their funding and generate interest for yourself.

Businesses, community organisations and eventually householders themselves will benefit too as they will be able to buy cheaper electricity and reduce their carbon emissions.



Continuing the success of our first solar projects on local sports centres, and our innovative, ethical Community Bonds, and as more of these projects go live, we are also planning to build up a bigger community surplus fund to put back into more benefits for local communities in and around Linlithgow.

Indeed, we are now talking to communities in Polbeth, Glasgow, Arran, Moray and elsewhere about how we can help and support each other. Building these community networks will strengthen our resolve and help us learn from each other.

With our new **Community Hub** opening at the old Library in the Vennel building in the centre of town, we hope to harness more volunteers to help us in many different ways.

So, please come forward, help us on our collective journey. There is always something for everyone if we come together.

If you'd like more information on all matters community, business or domestic energy, or want to volunteer for us, please contact:

energy@trust-linlithgow.org.uk



Or visit:

www.trust-linlithgow.org.uk

We would like to thank AES Solar and Unyte Hemp in particular for their support towards the Genesis project's environmental improvements.





ONE LINLITHGOW BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT



LOW PORT MUSIC

Linlithgow is fast gaining a reputation as a “go to” town for speciality shops, but like many high streets in recent years it has lacked one outlet that many have yearned for - a record shop.

With the opening of Low Port Music by Chris Corrie, that gap has been well and truly plugged. To describe Chris as an “enthusiast” does scant justice to someone who’s life’s passion has been records and music.

“I started collecting records and DJing and going to see bands in my teens. I’d spend an hour on the 157 bus to go round record shops in Manchester, then spend all the journey home looking at the sleeves, and reading every word.”

After taking an HND in catering Chris embarked on a varied career in Manchester - if records and music weren’t at the heart of what he was doing, they were ever constants in his life. He worked in hotels and catering for several years, ran a sandwich bar, was involved in light haulage, and also had a spell in retailing.

All the time he was heavily involved in record fairs both taking part and helping organise them. He was also DJing, and for a time had his own record label. For many years he has been selling records online - for the last few years that has been his full-time occupation.

Now he has finally realised his long-held dream of opening

his own record shop, in a town he described as a “brilliant location”.

He moved to Linlithgow two years ago, and married Sharon, who is local, and a practice nurse in the area.

Said Chris, *“Since I opened up neighbouring shops have been so welcoming and supportive. I love dealing with the public and interacting with people, and there’s no better place than a record shop for doing that.”*

“I’ve got a great selection of new and classic vinyl through to memorabilia via CDs, DVDs, books, and a range of music memorabilia. I can order anything in, particularly if someone is finding it difficult to source. I’m also interested in buying LPs and 45s, providing the records and sleeves are in good condition.”

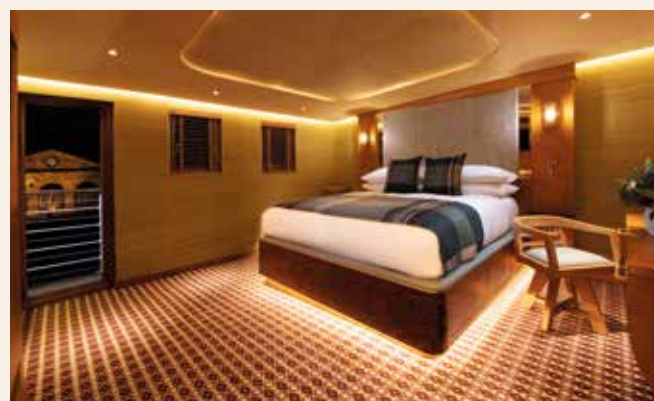
“It’s almost impossible to summarise the range of music genres featuring at Low Port Music. From Arctic Monkeys to ZZ Top, blues, country, indie, folk, rock and pop, High School hits, memories evoked, to current and future musical hopes. I also have a range of jazz and classical vinyl which I plan to expand.”

Chris added that as in the “good old days” customers would be able to listen to records that interested them, and if they had any issue with quality when they returned home he would reimburse them without quibble.

GOPHERWOOD

Cabinet maker Jonny Kane was fast building a reputation from satisfied clients throughout Scotland for his meticulous craftsmanship in installing bespoke luxury kitchens and other custom-built fittings in homes, as well as high end work for shops.

But even Jonny, whose business Gopherwood is now based at Mill Road Industrial Estate in Linlithgow, could not have anticipated a stunning addition to his impressive CV - being head-hunted to work for five months on fitting out the 5-star luxury floating hotel Fingal moored at Alexandra Dock in the historic Port of Leith.



Opened in January 2019, and developed at a cost of £5 million by the Royal Yacht Britannia, the former lighthouse supply ship has now been rated by TripAdvisor as one of the top 1% of luxury small hotels in the world.

Jonny was approached by Alan Pedley, head of the main contractor Pedley Furniture International, whose refurbishment projects have included the Hilton and Savoy in London, and a string of luxury hotels in the United States.

He became so impressed with the quality of Jonny's work, and his problem-solving abilities, that he made him project manager for the final month of his time aboard the Fingal. The project involved work on the 23 stunning cabins, each named after a Stevenson-designed lighthouse, and with its name carved into the bedhead, and the luxury dining room and bar.

Said Jonny, *"The job was a constant challenge - there were no straight walls, floors or ceilings. Everything had to be just right, and of the very highest quality. I obviously instilled confidence in Alan when I showed what I could do, and it was a great compliment to be put in charge of the project."*

Continued Jonny, *"It's marvellous to think I was involved so much in helping create a floating hotel that has been visited by the Queen, and where Princess Anne and other members of the Royal family, and some famous people, have been guests."*

He said that some recent projects he had been involved in included the conversion into a family home of a former church in Leven, and three months of redesign work on a family home in Inverness, after which he received a glowing review and recommendation from the homeowners.

They wrote, *"Jonny's meticulous eye for detail, and ability for high-end craftsmanship, combined with a personal determination to satisfy a customer's expectations, give you the confidence that your project is in safe hands. He brought a special creativity and problem-solving ability to our project, coming up with an innovative and functional family kitchen and living room (in our Victorian house), creating beautiful features."*

Jonny said that he had now set up special computer software which allowed a client to see exactly what a kitchen or other room would look like. While he was "not cheap", people knew they were assured of top-quality craftsmanship, using woods like ash, poplar, oak and walnut. He did not charge for design work, and no one had yet decided not to proceed, with several return clients.



He added that he and his wife **Hannah**, and three-year-old daughter **Sariah** (pictured above), currently lived in Milnathort, but hoped to move to Linlithgow soon. *"Hannah's background is in marketing, and she is a tremendous asset to the business. I've also taken on a cabinet maker, Piotr Suslo, and hope to employ someone soon to do the spray painting, which I do at present."*

ONE LINLITHGOW UPDATE

Huge thanks to everybody, who used the digital "Linlithgow Summer Market" in the latter part of June! It was our first foray into doing longer-term digital markets, and it went off without a hitch!

We've gathered feedback from sellers and, although daily sales weren't as high as they have been for our shorter one-or-two-day-only markets, the general consensus seems to be that we have a great resource on our hands, which provides an extra platform for local businesses to do business online, particularly for those, who don't have their own e-commerce setup. A few tweaks were requested, to make things a bit easier for sellers to present their virtual shop-fronts, and we've taken it all on board!

The new stamp-card-based Loyalty Lottery is finally going full steam ahead!



it hadn't quite had the immediate impact at launch that we had hoped.

Now that shops and services are open again, we've randomly selected three winners for the June draw (each month, the first-place winner gets £50, with second and third winning £30 and £20 respectively) and they're already hitting the town to stock up on goodies at the 37 participating outlets.

Those filling in cards throughout lockdown didn't miss out, however! An additional £300 was won in the special reopening draw, each getting £30 in vouchers.

Are you playing it yet? Next time you're out and about in Linlithgow, look out for Loyalty Lottery stamp cards, keep one in

After launching immediately prior to the October 2020

lockdowns,

your wallet and make sure to ask for a stamp when you make a purchase at a participating business. Fill in your details and post it through one of the letterboxes shown on the card, then "it could be you"!

The 2021-22 Linlithgow Visitor Guide is now available all over town! If you'd like to pick one up, just head over to the Burgh Halls, Partnership Centre or Court Residence foyer. Your favourite shops will have them, too!

They've been really well-received and we think it's a comprehensive guide, if we say so ourselves. Linlithgow has so much to offer, we had to expand it to 40 pages!

The digital version will be available by the time you're reading this, so please check the One Linlithgow Facebook page for the link.



PLANNED VISIT OF THE BEAUTIFUL SCOTLAND JUDGES IN AUGUST – AND HOW YOU COULD HELP

Burgh Beautiful has been busy since the beginning of the year preparing for this year's Beautiful Scotland competition in August. The last time we competed in a similar competition was in 2018 when we were invited to represent Scotland in the Britain in Bloom UK finals, in which we were delighted to win the 'Town' category.

Preparations for this were very challenging because, at that time, all the town's roads and pavements looked particularly neglected, entailing a massive amount of voluntary work from Burgh Beautiful volunteers and other town residents to upgrade Linlithgow's public realm to a standard worthy of our floral displays and environmental projects. We decided to take a break from Beautiful Scotland in 2019, and of course the restrictions and uncertainty associated with the coronavirus pandemic necessitated cancellation of the competition in 2020 and postponement until this year.

In January, we listed the improvements required on the judges' route and categorised them under the heading of the organisations which would be involved. As always, much of this relates to the removal of weeds and detritus from the streets, and this is being pursued with West Lothian Council staff in the hope that they can do as much as possible, particularly given that Community Payback cannot help this year because of virus-related difficulties with the transport of offenders.

Similarly, because of the need to avoid transporting the judges in a car (to avoid the risk of virus transmission), the entire route this year will be on foot, in and around the centre of town. Another related change this year is that the need for a 'Powerpoint' or similar presentation to the judges at the start of the tour has been removed, making the contents of the 'Judges' Portfolio' of information, forwarded in advance to them, all the more important.



Clearing up for the judges in 2018 (Averil Stewart).



The last judges' visit in 2018 (Averil Stewart).



We are hoping that these volunteers' efforts will 'wow' the judges at the start of their tour (RS, end May 2021).

Projects already in hand on the revised judges' route include the upgrading by Linlithgow Civic Trust of Carmelite Friary site and the footpath through to Rosemount Park, with the much-valued help of the Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange. Burgh Beautiful volunteers have already successfully re-planted the flower/shrub beds at the Low Port roundabout which had been much in need of a 'makeover'.

We have received promises from the Council about such things as the replacement of rusty railings at Low Port and the repainting of lamp-posts at Low Port and West Port, but time is marching on ... so we live in hope! One disappointment has been the unwillingness of either the Council or the One Linlithgow BID to take any direct action to better screen our two major High Street gap sites, so fingers crossed that



Averil Stewart – Our all-year floral displays will hopefully please the judges.



Fingers crossed that the Linlithgow Gap Sites Action Group will do their best to show the judges that the community cares about the state of the Victoria Hall gap site (RS, April 2021)

McCarthy Stone (sic) and the Linlithgow Gap Sites Action Group can help out in time!

Our revised route this year ends at the Cross, following a walk down the Kirkgate from the Peel. Historic Environment Scotland has been alerted to tidy up relevant areas, but promised wildflower areas are postponed until 2022 because of the pandemic.

We have walked the route again and noted in detail the tidying-up still required – we are seeking confirmation of the Council's contribution, then will publicise the further help required to enable the town to look as good as possible. If you own or lease property anywhere along the judges' route – Manse Road, Station Road, High Street, The Cross, West Port, St Ninians Way and Kirkgate - we would be especially grateful if you could weed and sweep along the frontages to help 'spread the load'.

And finally, the main thing of course is the high standard of our floral and environmental work that we want to show to the judges. So a massive 'thank you' is due to all who have helped with Linlithgow's entry, and all who will be involved. At the time of writing, we know who the judges will be, but not the exact date in early August.

Dianne Lamont
Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow



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GALA DAYS REMEMBERED WITH BARRY'S PHOTOS



In our last issue, we told the story of how **Barry Mulholland** of Braehead Drive has created a local social media sensation by sharing some of his extensive collection of old Linlithgow photographs.

Barry inherited the photos from his late grandfather, Mr John Young, who was a keen photographer all his life.

In recent weeks, Barry has unearthed many images relating to the **Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Children's Gala Day**, which was first established in 1930. With the last two Gala Days being cancelled, like so many other events all over the country, Barry thought it would be a good idea to look back at happier times. His photos have provoked a lot of memories and we are delighted to present some of them here.

The Gala Day committee managed to hold a small-scale event on the traditional Saturday this year, as explained by Chairperson, **Marion Fleming**:

"Last year due to covid regulations, we were unable to hold the Gala Day but on the 19th of June 2021 we organised a small private crowning ceremony with a handful of the retinue picked from 2020. Mrs Myra Cunningham was able to perform her duty of crowning the 2020 Queen

elect Hayden Dunleavie within the grounds of Longcroft Hall Gardens, watched by the parents of the retinue children.

The crowning was streamed live and has now been downloaded onto the Gala Day Facebook page. We were lucky to be able to invite the Reed Band along and it was so uplifting to hear them play again.

A big thank you to the children and all who helped make the day a success. A very different day, but special just the same for Queen Hayden, her retinue, our lady crowner Myra and her husband John, Provost of the Deacons' Court. John took on the Gala Day role of Provost of the Children's Court. He was never picked for the Gala Day as a boy, and he was delighted to be able to play his part this year. John is now the very proud owner of a Gala Day badge."

Murdoch Kennedy



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KINNEIL BAND MUSICIANS MAKE A WELCOME RETURN TO LINLITHGOW

We have all been starved of live entertainment over the past fifteen months and so it has been wonderful in recent weeks to hear the stirring sound of music coming from the terraces of the Linlithgow Rose football ground at Prestonfield.

The local Reed Band kicked things off on Tuesday May 18th, when they took up the offer of practice space outdoors and welcomed members to their first rehearsal since March 2020. The following week, musicians from the award-winning **Unison Kinneil Band of Bo'ness** also made use of the excellent facilities at Prestonfield and renewed their links with Linlithgow, which were first established in 1859.

The band was formed in 1858 and their very first public engagement was at the Riding of the Marches in Linlithgow in 1859. For many years, they traditionally led the Marches and were the principal musical ensemble, but these days they can be found accompanying the Fraternity of Dyers at the rear of the procession.

Unison Kinneil are one of Scotland's top brass bands and contest in the elite Championship section of the Scottish Brass Band Association. In June 2019, their band hall at Newtown was destroyed by a fire which engulfed the adjacent football stadium. However, three months later, they rose phoenix-like to become first section national champions of Great Britain. The band are still homeless and have been operating from a base in Grangemouth. They hope to be able to return to a permanent home in Bo'ness in the not too distant future. They have recently taken part in various online contests and emerged victorious at the June event organised by the Whitburn Band. Having returned to rehearsals by meeting outdoors in Linlithgow, the band are now meeting twice-weekly at Braes High School.

Murdoch Kennedy



Images: Rebecca Holmes Photography

THE BLACK DOG COFFEE ROASTER

About Us

The Black Dog Coffee Roaster has been trading from our home in Linlithgow for just over 2 years, under the name “the Black Dog Coffee co.” We’ve not always been easy to find locally, it seems, so with a small name change on the way this is a good time to make our presence known to more people in the area. The Black Dog started out of adversity, and has developed into a small company with a strong presence, currently providing the coffee for two cafe outlets in Edinburgh, trading at Stirling Farmers Market and providing coffee for individual customers.

Our remit is to source and roast high quality, specialty coffee from around the coffee-growing world. As a specialty coffee roaster, our coffees are sourced and traded ethically and sustainably. We have been fortunate to find excellent coffees traded directly from their place of origin through UK-based representatives. This helps us to find unique coffees that are hard to find elsewhere. We also work with well recognized and respected coffee importers who obtain coffees globally and work with the growers to ensure product quality and sustainability. The most important consideration for any of the coffees that we select is that they must taste great!

Coffee is a seasonal product, so we aim to obtain recently produced coffee (within the constraints of processing, packing, shipping and practicality). We try to cater for all tastes with the coffees that we select – some show the fruity and/or floral characteristics that contribute to the diversity of flavours to be found. If that is not your thing, we also roast coffees that bring sweetness, caramel and chocolate flavours to the fore. As well as very well-known coffee origins such as Brazil, Colombia, Kenya, etc, we have also roasted fantastic coffees from less prominent regions such as East Timor and Malawi, Burundi and Uganda. We also have a fantastic decaffeinated coffee, coming from Colombia.

The Story

I experienced two prolonged periods of anxiety and depression during 2005 – 2015. This led to the loss of

employment in an environment where I’d worked for nearly 20 years and the need to find a suitable alternative. That is what led me to coffee roasting. I learnt the process of roasting over time and improved to the point where I felt sufficiently confident commercially.

The company name and logo were designed to reflect the circumstances in which the company came into being, my location in Linlithgow and our family life here.

The Black Dog represents the Black Bitch of Linlithgow and also makes reference to the metaphor, most commonly associated with Winston Churchill, about the depression that seemed to follow me. The image of the dog is based on our own (now sadly deceased) greyhound, Dixie. Unfortunately, Dixie had one of her rear legs amputated after a seemingly innocuous accident, so having her as part of the logo symbolises the overcoming of adversity, as she did for a number of years following the amputation, and that my move into coffee roasting – something for which I have a real passion – continues to do for me.

I am very happy to have this opportunity to introduce myself to you and hope that you’ll get in touch



if coffee is your thing (or your family or friend’s thing!). I always welcome a chat about coffee, and what we are doing in that area – samples can be provided to try too! The motto of the Black Dog Coffee co “small scale coffee roasting with a positive attitude” – which exemplifies my approach.

We have recently entered an agreement with the charity, Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) to donate a portion of the price of a bag of coffee to the charity, in recognition of my experiences and the help that such charities can provide.

Colin Campbell
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DUNTARVIE CASTLE

Bruce Jamieson



Duntarvie appears on John Adair's late 17th century map

During the period of strict lockdown, I took the opportunity to jump on my (electric) bike and explore some historic features around Linlithgow which I had not previously visited. Duntarvie Castle, near Winchburgh, has featured prominently in the news of late and so I decided to take a look at the building for myself - cycling along the towpath from Linlithgow and then taking the Winchburgh to Newton Road. As I'd read beforehand, the building is undergoing renovation - and has been so for a quarter of a century - since it was purchased by Geoffrey Nicholsby, a kiltmaker who has provided traditional Scottish apparel for the likes of Robbie Williams, Sean Connery, Alan Cumming, Mel Gibson, and Ewan McGregor.

Duntarvie has seen better times but, in its heyday, it was the residence of some interesting historical characters.

Initially, Duntarvie was a 13th century stronghold which, by the late 15th century was in the hands of a branch of the Lindsays - a family who originated in Normandy and came over to Scotland in the 12th century, at the invitation of King David I.



Duntarvie Castle today

In 1527, the castle was sold to the Hamiltons of Abercorn who in turn leased it out to Alexander Durham the Elder, Argenter (silversmith) of the Royal Household. His son, Sandy, was appointed a clerk in Mary Queen of Scots' Exchequer before being elevated to the position of 'Master of the Prince's Wardrobe', with responsibility for the royal tailoring of Mary's son who would ultimately become King James VI.

In 1567, Sandy was assigned to the household of Queen Mary's husband, Henry Darnley, and commissioned to attend him at Kirk O' Field House in Edinburgh. On the 9th of February, having seen his master into bed for the night, Sandy quickly left the building - giving rise to the accusation that he knew what was afoot: that gunpowder was to be smuggled into the cellars and then detonated - hopefully killing Darnley. Durham's departure occasioned rumours that he was a spy, placed in the house to participate in the conspiracy. Darnley was indeed killed - but not by the explosion. Attempting to escape, he was strangled, using a sleeve of his own nightshirt, in the garden of the mansion which stood in what is now Chambers Street.



Below centre: A contemporary drawing of Henry Darnley and a servant lying in the garden of Kirk O' Field

Alexander's son, James, took over his father's offices in 1580 and also served as Chamberlain for Linlithgowshire between 1595 and 1600, witnessing several charters signed by King James VI at Holyrood House. James seems to have actually acquired the lands of Duntarvie and the present castle which dates from the late 16th century.



A late 19th century painting by architect Walter Lyon

Duntarvie was never the most beautiful of buildings consisting (unusually for a Renaissance creation) of one long, rectangular, main block of four storeys, with square towers rising a storey higher and projecting at each end. Beneath the house is a vaulted basement which contained the kitchen (boasting a wide fireplace) and several cellars, one with a small stair to the hall above.

The upper floors were occupied by many chambers, both in the main block and in the towers. In one of these rooms, sometime in the 1640s, Anna, the wife of Francis Durham, met a relative called James Durham. He was so impressed by Anna's religious devotion, that he later gave up his profession as a captain in the Scottish army, led by David Leslie, and became a man of God, being ordained as a preacher in 1647.

Francis Durham also appears in a legal case when he accused David Dundas, Laird of Philpstoun, of stealing his land. Dundas counter-claimed that he had been ploughing the common moor of Abercorn when he was attacked by a man with "a blue bonnet on his head, his cloak cast about his mouth." This character (whom he went on to identify as Francis Durham) had given him "ane great strike wi' his sword upon ma heid, to the great effusion o' blood and mairow he tookit aff ma little finger." Durham admitted the assault and was imprisoned for a while in Edinburgh Tolbooth.



*Edinburgh Tolbooth (the Heart of Midlothian)
by Alexander Nasmyth*

Francis Durham's absence began a slow process of deterioration for Duntarvie. The family owned the property until the 1770s after which time it came into the possession of the Earl of Hopetoun. Uninhabited, and increasingly roofless, its condition continued to decline.



The castle was reduced to a ruin

The building lay unloved until purchased by Mr Nicholsby around 1990. He has now roofed and partially glazed the building and has plans to make it into a wedding venue and the centre of an activities zone featuring a tank driving course.

Some locals are sceptical – and somewhat annoyed at the erection next to the castle of a large, white, permanent “marquee”. One Winchburgh resident I spoke to suggested that the castle's ghost, someone he called the Countess of Abercorn who he claimed was sometimes seen on the battlements, would not be happy at the plans for the building's future and would make her presence felt in no uncertain terms. Another interesting twist on a fascinating building. Let's hope that its glory days can be restored.



*An aerial view of Duntarvie showing its proximity
to the M9 and the Winchburgh-Newton Road*

Ask the expert: How to manage the effects of hay fever on your eyes

Specsavers



With Linlithgow enjoying warmer temperatures alongside the rest of the country, people have been enjoying spending more time out and about in our town.

While summer has been warmly welcomed after a cold winter and spring in lockdown, allergy sufferers may find themselves succumbing to

symptoms such as sneezing, headaches, and itchy eyes.

However, the experts at Specsavers are here to help.

Ophthalmic store director and independent prescribing optometrist at Specsavers in Linlithgow, **Diana Kelly**, answers frequently asked questions regarding allergies and the effect on eyes.

Q. How do allergies affect the eyes?

Diana says: ***‘As well as sneezing and a blocked or runny nose, hay fever can also cause red, itchy or watery eyes.’***

Q. Are people who wear contact lenses worse affected?

‘Those who wear contact lenses may notice the vision through their lenses can appear smeary and eyes can generally feel uncomfortable. While it can be tempting to rub your eyes to ease discomfort, it's important to refrain. Try not to touch your face and ensure you maintain good hand hygiene, particularly whilst the pandemic continues.’

Q. What can contact lens wearers do to minimise irritation?

‘There are some things contact lens wearers can try to help reduce the irritation. Contact lens-friendly over-the-counter and prescription eye drops are available and can help to calm down any itchiness. Those suffering with hay fever could also try daily disposable lenses.’



Q. What else can specs wearers do?

‘Wearing prescription glasses – particularly wraparound sunglasses – can prevent pollen from getting into your eyes and taking oral antihistamines can also really help to minimise symptoms.’

To book an appointment at Specsavers Linlithgow, call 01506 534 484 or visit www.specsavers.co.uk/stores/linlithgow.

GARY CLINTON, MUSIC TUTOR

Music Is For Everyone

Now that summer has officially arrived, smoke and flames from BBQ's are filling the air with delicious burger smells, Scotland are out the EUROs and the schools have managed to stay open until the end of term, dare I say it – it feels more like normal. But what is normal? Isn't that just a relative term? Normal is meaningless. Nobody is normal. It's our unique and abnormal characteristics that make us who we are and certainly when it comes to music, I want anything but boring old 'normal'.

Parents have occasionally, over the years, projected slight anxieties to me about their child's, or their own, aptitude for music and whether they should take up guitar because 'they're not musical' or they might be 'tone deaf' or they might just 'not be able to do it'. And I often think prestigious and slightly stuffy schools of musical excellence (whatever that means) perhaps suggest music is only for the naturally gifted and super talented. Well that is rubbish. Learning music is for everyone.

I have students who learn guitar for a whole host of reasons and it's actually less common for it to be about shooting for the stars or aiming to go to Berklee or The Royal Conservatoire or wherever. Don't get me wrong – these are great institutions. I once actually auditioned to study Jazz at the prestigious 'New School' in New York (and amazingly I was accepted); however I want to dispel a myth that some people just aren't wired for it. Everyone can benefit and progress from learning music and one of my young students, Sofia Brice, is certainly no exception.

Student Diaries

Sofia (10, Linlithgow Bridge Primary School) is a delightful young girl and has been learning guitar with me since September 2019. She stands out as one of the most passionate, keen and committed students in her age group and in fact any age group. Often the younger ones haven't quite developed that 'passion' for music that say teenagers or adults have and whilst they enjoy and greatly benefit from guitar lessons, it's essentially one of many hobbies that children try out so it's great to see that love for music in someone so young.

Sofia does brilliantly in her lessons – she works very hard at practicing and repeating phrases; she meticulously counts every note and every rest often verbalising the counting (which I encourage everyone to do but not



many are as committed as Sofia); she is always so excited to start new pieces from her 'Rock School' grade book and impressively she is able to work herself through entire pieces without any help from me – I am consistently amazed by this.

Verbal Dyspraxia

What is also worth mentioning is Sofia has verbal dyspraxia and when I discussed with her and her parents whether or not she'd like to be featured in the Black Bitch they were all keen as it could help spread awareness of the condition and perhaps also encourage others with the same or similar conditions, who may think music isn't for them, to give it a bash.

Sofia's verbal dyspraxia is considered severe and when she began school she had only 20 words others could understand. When she began lessons with me her mum needed to translate; however at the time of the 1st lockdown (late March 2020) Sofia began sitting with me on her own via Zoom with no need for Mum and this has made me feel a strong connection to her as unless you know Sofia, you'd probably find it hard to pick up everything she says. This, in many ways, makes me feel very privileged as she has such a brilliant, funny and friendly personality that I get to experience every week that perhaps others don't! Having said that Sofia's progress with speech has been outstanding and her Mum says she's never once complained about the 400 hours of speech therapy she has attended and this positive, almost fearless attitude is present in her guitar playing.

Children with verbal dyspraxia also commonly have challenges with motor skills and co-ordination so guitar has been in no way easy for Sofia and she does face some extra challenges; however as a result of being taught '1-to-1'

she has nobody to compare herself to – except herself. And this is the perfect attitude not only to guitar but everything in life. I think we all tend to feel like we are in competition with others but ultimately, when all is said and done, we're only ever really in competition with ourselves.

As with many conditions that affect us, there is debate surrounding what is considered severe enough for a 'general dyspraxia' diagnosis. At the minute Sofia is out of this range and I think her unwavering and dedicated attitude to guitar may have been the best possible 'physio' for her left and right hand as what she has achieved in terms of chord shapes, counting and playing in-sync with backing tracks is amazing. Sofia is never disheartened, never fed up, never demotivated – she just loves it and approaches music and guitar with an incredibly positive attitude that I think everyone (including me) can learn a lot from.

So this brings me back to how I started this month's article – what is 'normal'? I suppose we all have to play the cards we are dealt and I often think if we can accept who we are, focus on ourselves, be humble and certainly take a leaf out of Sofia's book, maybe we can all be happier and healthier people. Learning music and guitar is a journey, not a destination and I can say for sure Sofia is really enjoying the exciting and very fun path she is currently walking. Keep up the great work Sofia!

Q&A With Sofia!

Q1: 'What is your favourite thing about guitar?' It's fun, learning new things and new songs.

Q2: What has been your favourite song you have learned? They're all good; it is a hard decision ... 'Ain't No Sunshine' by Bill Withers.

Q3: I know you always have a Friday movie night – are there any songs from these movies you like? All The Descendants songs! It was also cool when we watched School of Rock and Smoke on the Water was in it.

Q4: Favourite movie: The Descendants!

Q5: What would you like to be when you grow up? A science teacher





LADAS - HARVEST CELEBRATIONS

We are still hoping to hold our annual Harvest Celebrations on 25 July this year and to combine them with a 10th anniversary celebration of the opening of Oakwell allotment. We will know on 13 July following a review of restrictions by the Scottish Government whether our celebrations can go ahead as planned.



Benefits of allotments

A study by academics at the University of Sheffield outlines the wellbeing benefits of allotment gardening. The 163 volunteers in the study recorded *“high levels of social and community activities, including the sharing of surplus food produce, knowledge exchange, awareness and interaction with wildlife, emotional connection to their allotment, appreciation of time spent outside and aesthetic delight in the natural world.”*

According to one of the report's authors, there was *“quite a wide spectrum of mental health benefits”*. With loneliness a growing issue in the UK, allotments can provide a valuable community. One of the volunteers in the study said, *“It isn't necessarily about connecting with people who are similar to me – it's about connecting with people you have nothing in common with apart from growing”*. Proven mental health benefits of spending time outdoors are increasingly being heeded. The report notes that in Scotland doctors have piloted “prescribing” outdoor activities

In terms of physical health, the report notes that on top of the exercise involved in growing, people who have allotments are also “more likely to get their five-a-day fruit and vegetables than people who don't grow their own food.”

The findings have been reinforced since the pandemic. Demand for allotments has boomed this year, and many people must join waiting lists. The waiting lists “demonstrate that we haven't provided enough space nationally,” says the report's author. There has been a loss of allotment space in recent decades, with cuts of 65% since the 1950s. The losses, she says, have not been equally borne, with eight times more allotment land closure in the most deprived communities compared to the least. We need to provide enough land so that everybody who wants to participate in allotment gardening can.”

Things to do on your fruit and vegetable plot in July

Harvesting crops and keeping on top of weeding are the main tasks on your fruit and vegetable garden this month.

- >> Cauliflowers are very hungry crops and need to be fed weekly if you are to get good-sized curds
- >> Stop watering Shallots in week 2 and harvest them at the end July
- >> Stop watering Onions towards the end of the month.
- >> Early Potatoes should be ready for lifting this month. Try using your

hands to scrape away some soil from the plants to feel if the forming tubers are of a good size.

We now have over 30 people on our waiting list for a plot at Oakwell which may take several years to clear as very few plot holders are giving up their plots. For this reason we are reluctantly no longer accepting requests to be put on the waiting list for a plot. We will, of course, open up the waiting list again once we have dealt with the backlog of requests.

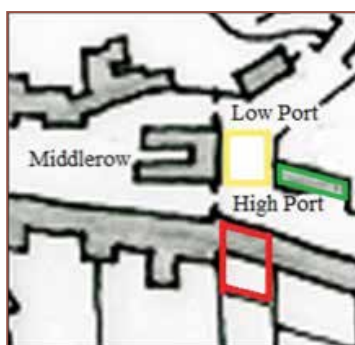
Paul Taylor Chair, LADAS



LINLITHGOW HIGH STREET, PART 2 – THE PORTS

THE EAST PORTS

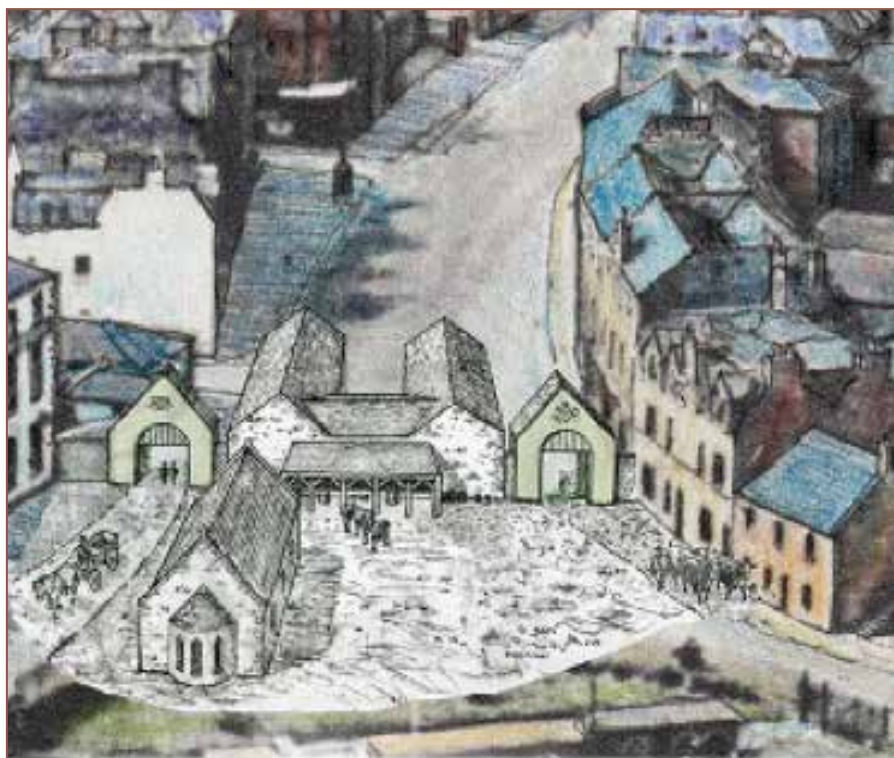
In past times the approaches from the east were guarded by separate ports on the Edinburgh and the Blackness roads. These were located on the east side of Middelrow (removed in 1798) which is shown on the Armstrong map of 1773, see inset plan. The area coloured yellow separated the two roads and it was occupied by a blacksmiths forge and the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The position of the Star & Garter Hotel is bounded in red.



My conjectural image of Middelrow and the High and the Low ports at the east end of the town has been added to an aerial view of the east end of the street as shown right. Items in the minute revealed that each port was arched and had a painted coat of arms, embellished with gold leaf, above the entrance. The Blackness Road was the route used to herd cattle to graze on the Burgh Muir. This name survives in Burghmuir Court, at the east end of the Springfield estate.

THE WEST PORT

The photograph below looks back from outside the old burgh wall towards Westport House. The superimposed old buildings* on the right were demolished to make way for the Westport Flats in 1937. The flats were designed by local architect **William Scott** and their style is less intrusive than the 1960's flats on the opposite side of the street.



THE EAST PORTS

* These are included in the List of the Burgh Roads which listed the burghage plots up to the Preston Road junction.

Although my image of the Port in the overlay is conjectural, it was based on a town council minute book for 1687. This gives a short description of the gateway as can be seen in the following extract;

'Upon ane petition given in by Robert Whyt, flesher, went to his house ... And visit the place where he intends to build a stair at his tenement at the West Port. They tolerate and appoints him to build to the wall of the port as high as the bartizine [see sketch] of the port'.

With regard to its exact location, the minute dated 26 February records that Robert Whyte* was permitted to build his stair against the wall of the port.



* The position of Whyte's house was identified from the List of the Burgh Roads.

This information, together with the description that the East Ports, high and low, had an arched entrance with the Royal Coat of Arms above, made it possible to suggest its appearance in what was originally a much narrower highway at this point. For some reason, this port, with its bartizan's, would have appeared more defensive than those at the east end of the town.

THE SOUTH PORT

An image of this port survives in a drawing included in John Slezer's 'Prospect of the town of Linlithgow' which is shown below. It was at the top



of St Michael's Wynd on the route to the south. Slezer's drawing is shown alongside and the port is shown in the bottom right corner of the view.

Laurie Alexander

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.

TAKE CARE ON COUNTRY ROADS

Over the past couple of months there have been several reports of deer and badgers being struck by motor vehicles, especially around dusk, during the night and the early morning.

At this time of year deer and badgers tend to be pushed out of the herd or set to make their own way in life, be aware these animals do not have much road sense.



Slow down and be aware, striking one of these animals can cause extensive damage to cars and sometimes to the drivers as they make efforts to avoid the collision.



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.

- >> Be on guard if someone turns up unexpectedly.
- >> Use a door chain or bar and keep it on whilst talking to callers.
- >> Always ask for identification.
- >> Do not feel pressured into agreeing to immediate work.
- >> Do not agree to buy from the first person who calls.
- >> Do not pay cash up front.
- >> Do shop around if you decide you need work done.
- >> Do report them. Don't ever feel embarrassed if you feel you have been the victim of doorstep crime.



Why not consider the council's Trusted Trader Scheme.

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.



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](https://twitter.com/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.



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

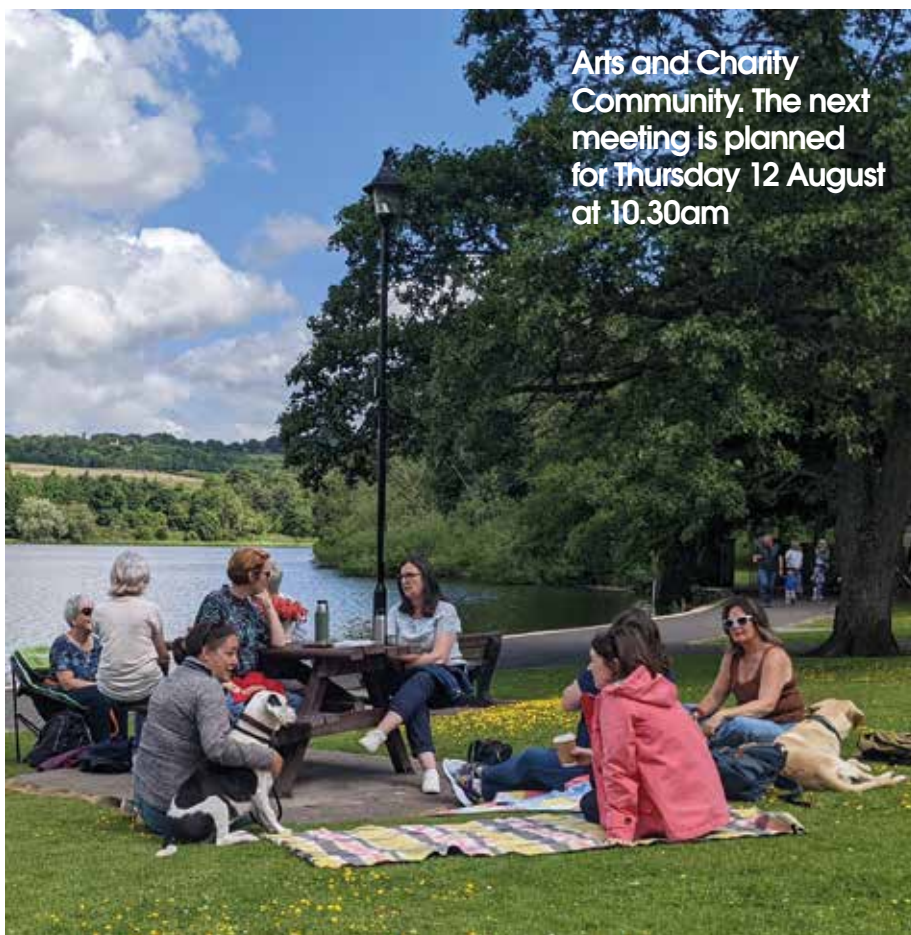
THE ARTS

"THE ARTS ARE COMING BACK!"

Pat Swan patswan@virginmedia.com.



Struggling for time to write my article, so I'm just sharing some information quickly this time round...



Arts and Charity Community. The next meeting is planned for Thursday 12 August at 10.30am

Arts Guild

It is really good news that the **Arts Guild** have started planning some real live concerts – at last!! Please refer to their website, linlithgowartsguild.co.uk, for up to date information especially as this is always subject to change just now. See the poster attached for the concerts running over the summer. Students and staff from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland will perform here thanks to a grant secured from Chamber Music Scotland.

Arts and Charity Community

Kathryn Welch has recently initiated an informal monthly meet-up for Linlithgow's Arts and Charity folk. Kathryn said *"the first meet up was brilliant! We had a nice turn out, really friendly people (and dogs) and lots of good chat in the sun. For an hour and a half, we chatted about our interests, connections and projects, made lots of recommendations, talked about the rhythms and challenges of working*

independently, and shared some hopes and ideas for projects we'd like to see in our town". It's a great idea and I hope to make it along if I can juggle my work days.

The next meeting is planned for Thursday 12 August at 10.30am and Kathryn asked anyone interested in joining next time to register at <https://forms.gle/cvILZCZywK94DQob9> so that the location and timing can be confirmed to everyone close to the time. Outdoor meetings will be the aim for the summer. Kathryn can also be contacted at k.e.welch@hotmail.co.uk.

Burgh Halls Gallery

There's an interesting exhibition on from now till September in the gallery. The exhibition of graphic designs for musical interpretation, with contributions by children from West Lothian is the culmination of an intensive Youth Music Initiative (YMI) project in schools. It has been produced and delivered by Limelight Music, Scotland's leading employer of musicians with impairments, through a series of video-led virtual

sessions shared in the context of the national lockdown and ongoing pandemic.

The work by the musicians is complemented by visual scores, works of art that direct music, of the artist and



printmaker **Jo Ganter RSA**. This project and exhibition are co-funded by Creative Scotland, YMI and West Lothian Council's Community Arts service. It's good to see something with local interest in the Gallery and great that it has now reopened.

Art in the Garden 2021 at New Hopetoun Gardens

features original outdoor art installed in their twenty display gardens throughout July and August. Limited to being a virtual display last year due to Covid restrictions, this year's event is very much a reality. The organisers are inviting people to follow the art trail, vote for their favourite artist and win a prize. Most of the artwork is for sale and all the artists take commissions.



Party at the Palace

At the time of writing PATP is going ahead – sounds unbelievable, but fingers crossed!

Do remember Artcycle which I wrote about in Issue 82. It's a great opportunity to get some exercise and see Art in the open air in a covid friendly way. If you can't find your paper copy remember that all past issues are available on the magazine website linlithgowcommunitymagazine.co.uk.



Please do get in touch if you know of anything that I could write about - patswan@virginmedia.com.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH
“art is the highest
form of hope”



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The property market continues to remain very buoyant, and house sellers are seeing some amazing results in prices achieved at the current time. This is not limited to West Lothian, we sell properties across the Central Belt and Glasgow, and we see similar patterns of demand and sale prices achieved right across the area.

More than 100 requests to view a property is not uncommon, and closing dates are an almost daily occurrence. As ever, presenting a property in first class condition is key to getting the very best price.

Thinking of selling?

If you are thinking of selling, we advise you to think carefully when choosing an estate agent. With high levels of buyer demand, getting a property sold is generally not a problem, however getting the very best price still requires the advice and service of a professional agency. We are hearing anecdotal evidence of buyers' enquiries not being responded to, or not

even getting an opportunity to make an offer, particularly where the agent concerned has a fee structure that in no way incentivises them to achieve the best price.

In Scotland average house prices were up 11% in the year to the end of March 2021, compared to the previous 12 months.

An indicator of pent-up demand is the fact that our levels of sales agreed and new instructions to the end of May this year are approximately 70% higher than the first 5 months of 2020.

Speaking to home buyers at viewings, it is clear there are various reasons for the high levels of demand.

High levels of demand

We see people wanting to move out of Edinburgh after 12 months or so, being largely confined to their flats, and buyers therefore wanting outdoor spaces. Also people are looking to relocate, because the office commute is no longer a consideration. We now see buyers coming from other parts of the country, as the companies they work for will now only expect them to visit the office occasionally, and so they will be working

from home. Those already working from home now need more internal space.

The consensus within the industry is that the levels of activity in the housing market and upward pressure on prices is set to continue, with some property market analysts reviewing their predictions for 2021 as a whole, to more positive outcomes.

Some predict that Scotland in particular will fare better than other parts of the UK, because of the lower average property prices relative to incomes compared to other parts of the UK, in conjunction with the increased demand from people looking to relocate to areas of the UK with less population density and easy access to green spaces.

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JULY PRIZE DRAW

LIN GIN JUNE COMPETITION WINNER RACHEL HOLBURN.



FROM “RAGING PICTS” TO THE SHALE TRAIL: ADVENTURES ON AN E-BIKE

LUCY NOBLE



I enjoy cycling and exploring the countryside and historic landmarks of our excellent county. But nowadays, with a dodgy knee and lacking the energy of youth, I find the distance I can go a little limiting. So when Transition offered me the loan of an e-bike for the day I jumped at the chance!

E-bikes not only make cycling accessible to people who might otherwise find it difficult, such as the elderly and those with health problems including asthma and muscle soreness, they also make the journey a lot quicker.

On my own push bike I bumble along like Miss Marple, admiring the scenery and going nowhere fast. In fact, my three speeds are: “Teeter”, “Ouch-My-Knees” and “That’s More Like It!”

On the E-bike, you choose how much assistance you want from the motor by selecting the power mode on an accompanying head unit. Ecco, Touring, Sport or Turbo* (*or as I like to call it “Now You’re Talking!”) It can also be cycled manually.

It was a glorious day with the mercury topping 23°C and a welcome gentle breeze. Taking the bike through its paces, I took the canal towpath east, pedalling in manual mode, switching to Ecco when my dodgy knee needed a break. Taking the path left at Philpstoun, Touring was enough to take me up the hill on Station Road as I headed for my first stop at **Abercorn Church**.

According to the Venerable Bede this little village was the site of an episcopal see in the late 7th Century. The Bishop Tramwin, or Tramwine, and his monks were forced to flee their monastery in 685 by “the raging Picts”! These days, thankfully, it is a very pleasant and quiet place, and the churchyard is a lovely spot to stop and enjoy the bird song and wildflowers that adorn the ancient graves. The 16th Century church still retains a 12th Century Norman doorway (now blocked) which led into the original 2 cell church.

Following the road round and uphill, using the Turbo function I joined the A904 beyond the Newton and picked up the cycle path that makes light of negotiating the spaghetti of junctions which service the Forth Bridges. Cruising down Bo’ness Road into South Queensferry, I remembered the strong advice to switch off power mode before descending a hill, thus avoiding my entry into the next world! Still, I really

appreciated the excellent disc brakes applied to pull me within the 20mph limit!

The cobbles of **South Queensferry High Street** made an uncomfortable ride, so I took a break to admire the view and answered questions from the many passers-by who expressed great interest in my machine. The consensus was that e-bikes are a great solution to reducing vehicle traffic and addressing Climate Change.

Now it was time to build momentum for the steep hill at Bankhead Road, moving from Touring to Sport and into Turbo, dropping gears on the slope to reach the summit with little effort. Another short stop to admire **Dalmeny Kirk**, one of the best-preserved Norman churches in Britain. This is a pretty little ‘planned village’, commissioned by the Rosebery Estate in the 19th Century when landowners began to display a social conscience.

From here I took the Standingstone Road and then right onto Burnshot Road to reach **Kirkliston**. To quote an old ditty:

“If you’d seen these roads before we had ‘em you’d thank the Lord for Bob McAdam!”

However, I think these roads must have been laid by his brother Patch McAdam!

By the time I reached my next stop, my very teeth were rattling. It was only later I discovered there is an old railway path I could have used, though I cannot testify as to its surface, but it would certainly feel safer than having to negotiate potholes and traffic at the same time. This is where the e-bike gave me so much more road confidence than if I had been on my Raleigh town bike. At least I was able to zip past the rows of cavities on Turbo without worrying about oncoming traffic.

After a break for a (packed) lunch in a tiny corner park off the main road through Kirkliston, I headed to **Winchburgh to view Niddry Castle**, where George, 5th

Lord Seaton, welcomed Mary Queen of Scots after her dramatic escape from Loch Leven Castle in 1568. I have often admired this castle from the train and long had a desire to stand in front of it. The restoration from ruin to dwelling has been handled very sensitively and it stands very proud at the side of the golf course looking out over the shale bing; another monument from another historical age.

Talking of shale, I then proceeded along the canal towpath to **Broxburn**, reading the story-boards for the **Shale Trail** and learning how central West Lothian was to the energy economy of the late 19th Century.

The May flower of the Hawthorn blossomed very late this year but nevertheless has produced an incredible show, lining all the country lanes and especially the towpath, resembling great fountains of creamy white and rosy pink. The canal was like a mill pond and the sun split the sky with nary a cloud in sight! It was 5pm and time to head for home. I had used three of six bars on the battery meter and knew that I would need a lot of assistance to get back as my human energy tank was depleting.

The canal path was relatively quiet, so it was easy to switch up to higher speeds to push the miles under my wheels, easily dropping quickly down and into manual mode whenever a pedestrian or cyclist came within my sights. I’m old school and still dismount to go under bridges and this too was no problem as the disc brakes pull momentum down very quickly.

I arrived back at Linlithgow tired but happy having cycled 67 kilometres or 42 miles in old money. My knees were none the worse for it and I am happy to report no saddle soreness at all!

If you would like to try the e-bike experience contact Pamela Barnes of Transition Linlithgow: 07717 357997





A GOOD SUNSCREEN ISN'T JUST FOR SUMMER! HERE IS WHY...

"Wear Sunscreen. If I could offer you one tip for the future, sunscreen would be it." Baz Luhrmann

Do you want to know how to keep you and your family's skin safe in the summer sun and all year round? If so, taking a moment to read this article will give you the knowledge on how to tell if your sunscreen will give you and your family the best protection by understanding types of sunscreens, what to look for in the ingredients and why we should wear it.

Firstly, the misconception about sunscreen is that it should only be used in sunny conditions such as the summertime and on your holiday, right? Wrong!

Sunscreen should be worn every single day of the year. This is to benefit your skin health, not only will it protect your skin from the harmful UVA and UVB rays it will also slow down the rate of ageing skin, reduce the number of age spots developing, the chances of sunburn and skin cancer.

I FREQUENTLY GET ASKED A COMBINATION OF THESE QUESTIONS:

How can I stop age spots & pigmentation? / How can I stop/slow down the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles? / How can I slow down the signs of ageing skin or what is the best thing for anti-ageing? / How can I keep my skin looking young? / What is your top tip for good skin? / What is the secret to youth?

The answer to all these questions is sunscreen, sunscreen, and more sunscreen. A physical one with a factor of 30-50+.

WHAT ARE PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL SUNSCREENS?

There are 2 classes of sunscreens. Physical and Chemical sunscreens.

Physical sunscreens contain ingredients such as Zinc Oxide and Titanium Dioxide which reflect away UVA and UVB rays.

They are made up of large particles that are too large to be absorbed

any further down than the top outer surface of the skin known as the Stratum corneum (dead skin).

They are the most stable because they maintain their ability to reflect UV rays away and are not altered by UV light. Because of this, they have an excellent safety record and do not cause any human toxicity.

Chemical sunscreens are made up of smaller particles and are absorbed into the lower layers of the skin. They contain ingredients such as oxybenzone and octinoxate which absorb UVA and UVB rays into the skin and converts them into heat energy.

Several studies in the last decade have also examined the potential hazards of these small molecules being absorbed from the lower layers of the skin and traces have been found in plasma and urine.

Chemical sunscreens need to be re-applied more often than physical filters because UV light changes the properties of these chemical filters decreasing their effectiveness.

When UV light changes the chemical filter composition, they create free radicals. These are known to cause or are suspected to cause skin irritations, allergies, hormone disruptions, skin damage, premature ageing and be carcinogenic.

(EWG: Environmental Working Group, 2015. AlumierMD Educational Paper Sunscreen).

CHOOSING A GOOD SUNSCREEN.

A good sunscreen is a physical one containing Zinc Oxide and Titanium Dioxide.

Apply regularly and if you are out and about it is recommended to re-apply every 2 hours or sooner if you have been in water or are sweating.

UVA rays penetrate windows so wearing sunscreen as part of your daily moisturiser will protect you whilst indoors, especially if you are sitting or working near a window.

Many clients have commented how they have more age spots on the right side of their face than the other. This is usually from them being in the driver's seat where UVA rays penetrate the car window.

WHY WEAR SUNSCREEN?

Wearing a physical sunscreen will slow down the ageing process such as age spots, fine lines and wrinkles and it will also decrease your risks of sunburn and skin cancer.

After washing your face in the morning, you should put it on as part of your daily moisturising routine. This way you are protected without having to think about it.

Moisturising (un-tinted or tinted) sunscreens can be worn underneath makeup.

PURCHASING YOUR SUNSCREEN

At Skin Happy you have the choice of 2 brands of Physical sunscreens both containing Zinc Oxide and Titanium Dioxide. 1 by Lynton and 3 by AlumierMD:

Lynton Light Protect SPF 50, 50ml £26 (Can be purchased in-clinic or online via the Skin Happy shop).

AlumierMD SPF 40 and 42, 60ml £37.50 (Can be purchased in-clinic or via the online Alumier Portal which I can give you the link for upon request). These sunscreens are formulated to suit all skin conditions which are free from parabens and chemical filters. I can advise which one would be best suited to your skin type.

AlumierMD Clear Sheild SPF42 is oil free, great for oily, redness and acne prone skin.

AlumierMD Sheer Hydration SPF40 or Moisture Matte SPF40 are available as un-tinted or tinted sunscreens. Tinted sunscreen is great for using as a foundation or simply adding some colour to your skin.

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For more information and to book your consultation, visit the website.

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THE PLAYERS HAVE 'A LOT' TO LOOK FORWARD TO!



The Linlithgow Players are back! With a fun production called *'The Allotment'* by Gillian Plowman, which will be performed outside, at a farm near you, in early September.

"We are so excited to have found a short play that we can perform in front of a real live audience." said director **Liz Drewett**. *"The play is set on an allotment where four women are growing vegetables for soup kitchens."*

It's perfect for an alfresco setting!"

Liz approached local farms and allotments to recce the sites. *"Everyone has been very supportive, and loved the idea so we've had our choice of great venues. But we decided on Bonnytown Farm – it's perfect for the play."*

'The Allotment' is a great mix of comedy and drama – Marcie, Norah, Belle and Lorna are colourful characters who have bonded over their spades and trowels. As the play develops, we learn more about why they are there and how their time at the allotment helps them cope with their past. Then Daisy joins them, and everything is about to change...

Like many community groups, **The Linlithgow Players** had to adapt to an online world during the last year. August 2020 saw them launching a Monologue Competition, open to amateur writers throughout Scotland and judged by a scriptwriter of 'The Crown' and Linlithgow Player **Malcolm McGonigle**. The winning monologues were recorded in accordance with lockdown guidelines i.e. by the performers themselves, and presented online in a live show which proved to be very popular with viewers around the world.

Liz, who has also recently taken over as chair of The Linlithgow Players, talked of the challenges that the group faced keeping people involved and interested during lockdown. *"All our scheduled productions, including re-enactments at Linlithgow Palace and the January Pantomime at the Academy have not been possible. So instead, we've developed skills in writing as well as acting and directing online monologues. We also have to thank the Scottish Community Drama Association for their support and training."*



Tickets for 'The Allotment' performances on 3rd (early evening) and 4th September (matinees), will be available in August via www.linlithgowplayers.org.uk.

For more information contact Sue Vizard; susanvizard@yahoo.co.uk, Tel : 07711 700656



MARIA'S ISLAND

VICTORIA HISLOP

Inspired by a visit to Spinalonga, the abandoned Greek leprosy colony, Victoria Hislop wrote the internationally bestselling novel *"The Island"* in 2005. Through her sensitive and informed portrayal of the characters and their lives she is now an ambassador for Leprosy. This led her to create a version of her bestselling novel which could be retold in an understandable and accessible format for children.

The story is set in the Cretan village of Plaka, through the eyes of Maria Petrakis, one of the original children in the original version of *"The Island"*. This moving tale is written in the first-person and tells of how Maria's fate is bound to the island of Spinalonga and traverses across several decades of her life. Through her perspective we learn more about the ancient and misunderstood disease of leprosy as she patiently and gently guides her curious granddaughter through this period in her country's history, and of her own sacrifices. Maria tells a story of courage, injustice and sadness balanced by hope, kindness and understanding.

At the beginning of the novel, Maria has an idyllic life – apart from the horta and snails! She plays on the beach each day with her friend Dimitris, learning how to swim, skim stones and fish. Then sadness strikes her family and she has to learn to live without her beloved mother, who is banished to the island of Spinalonga because she has contracted leprosy.

"Suddenly I heard the latch being lifted. It was my father. I was sitting in a corner pretending to read and heard my mother breaking the news to him. In that instant, his face and hair seemed to turn grey. For a while they talked in voices so low I couldn't hear them. I think Dad's heart broke that day."

Despite the shame cast over the family, Maria keeps in regular contact with her mother through the letters they write and learns much about life on the island, some of which is surprisingly normal. Eventually, Maria herself



moves from Plaka to Spinalonga when she catches the disease and she works in the hospital tending to those who are at a more advanced stage of sickness. Maria studies and learns more about leprosy and, although she is frightened, agrees to become part of a drug trial to find a cure.

"Everyone on Spinalonga knew that this was our only hope. All the ones chosen knew it was a risk, but they were willing to take it. They did it for the rest of us."

Through this work of historical fiction, Hislop explores the themes of shame, stigma and the treatment of those who are different. Issues such as fairness and honesty are explored in a way that children can understand. Hislop's novel is well written with defined characters and personalities to bring the narration to life. Readers will not fail to be enthralled by the descriptions of warm family life alongside the vibrancy of the surrounding landscape and glistening blue sea.

"I began walking back towards the quayside to wait for my father to return. I looked down into the water at my feet, turquoise and sparkling, and wondered what the future held."

This novel for children is beautifully illustrated by Gill Smith and helps to power the imagination through time and space, to the beautiful Greek landscape and Mediterranean seascape. They are the perfect accompaniment to this story, containing thoughtful detail which adds depth and understanding to each scene. This is a wonderful, short novel – a tale of life, adversity, love and family – and one which I would recommend for children and adults alike.

Lisa Nettleton

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



Mr Flash is an 8 and a half year old Border Collie rescue dog. Before he found his forever home in Linlithgow, Flash did not have a good start to life. He was kept in a tiny crate for 16 months by previous owners who were very unkind to him. After a failed attempt by previous owners to end his life, he was removed from the property by a dog warden and spent 4 weeks in a dog pound. At the end of this 4 week stay he was due to be euthanised. The Dogs Trust heard about Flash, contacted the Schmids, who were looking for a Collie rescue, and saved his life by bringing him up to Scotland to be rehomed with them.

His owners describe him as a character who lights up every room and brightens every day. With his expressive face and colourful character, it's like living with a cartoon, so happily animated in everything he does.

Mr Flash makes different noises depending on what he wants and loves to howl-sing when he is excited. He gets his humans attention to inform them if they are in 'squirrel territory' and enjoys the challenge of 'saving' fallen trees to bring home.

His favourite toy is a giant horse soft toy the same size as him, he watches TV with it, snuggles with it and every night after his dinner he makes his bed into a big toy fort with all his biggest toys.

His cheeky habit is telling the whole neighbourhood when the postie arrives.

Aside from giant toys he loves to play keepie uppie with balloons, catching doggy bubbles and the garden hose. He also thrives in daily zoomies with his little sister collie, Miss Darcy.

His happy place is wherever his owners are, he especially loves time spent with them up hills and time on the family farm.

Over lockdown his owner says the dogs were such a blessing and they used the lockdown periods to make the very most of the extra

time they had together. His owners received many messages over lockdown, from people who had been following Mr Flash and Miss Darcy online.

His owner Carena says:

'It is incredible how many people Flash made smile, made laugh and how many people sent messages to us to say how much they look forward to their daily 'Flash fix' throughout the pandemic. We received messages from literally around the world and it's quite moving to know how many people he makes happy just by being himself.'

Sadly, Mr Flash's life ended suddenly last month when his immune system failed him without warning. They did everything they could but unfortunately and devastatingly his life was cut short. The family are now doing everything they can to help their other collie cope with the big changes to their life without him.

It is incredibly tough when owners lose their beloved pets - it is sad, difficult and often traumatic - and can be even more so when it happens suddenly or without warning.

Feeling grief and sadness is a normal reaction to a great loss. It can also have a big effect on other pets in the household. Time and care should be taken to help pets adjust and ensure they are able to cope with the changes that follow a loss.

Grieving pets may experience loss of appetite, change in sleep patterns, crying or increases vocalisation, searching, a need for extra attention, a generally sad demeanour, experience behaviour changes and show signs associated with stress. However, any concerns noted in their health should be checked by a vet.

Dogs and cats are creatures of habit, so keeping their routine as close to normal

as possible is a good way to avoid the stress of disruption. Comfort your pet if they come seeking attention.



When a pet passes away it can be tempting to get another quickly so your surviving pet will have another companion - however this is a big decision and one which should not be rushed.

The Westport Team are available to offer support and guidance for grieving owners. The following organisations are also great sources of information:

The Blue Cross. Their Pet Bereavement and Support Service offers guidance (free) from volunteers who are dedicated to support with pet bereavement.

Phone 0800 096 6606 Email pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk

Online <https://www.bluecross.org.uk>

The Ralph Site are also a valuable source with information online and can be contacted directly via their website: <https://www.theralphsite.com>

Westport Veterinary Clinic also has a Pet Memory Wall on the website, free for anyone to use, where photographs and stories or messages can be added. This can be accessed free from any online device: www.westportvets.com

The Westport Team are always available to help and offer support.

Email: surgery@westportvets.com

If you have any concerns about your pet please call 01506 844165.

Photograph: Mr Flash (front) & Miss Darcy, one of the collies' photographs featured on the BBC website over lockdown.



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