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'GREAT ARTISTIC MURAL'
LOW PORT CENTRE MURAL,
A HIDDEN MASTERPIECE 3

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DAVID TAIT
EDITOR
THE BLACK BITCH
MAGAZINE

LINLITHGOW'S HIDDEN MASTERPIECE

"Given the intense interest within the community on the future of the Low Port Centre, we are reproducing below an article written for the magazine in 2016, by Sandy Wood, Collections Curator, Royal Scottish Academy of Art & Architecture. The article discusses the significance of the Low Port Centre mural 'Community: a Festival of Time' and the international standing of its creator, James Cumming RSA"

LOW PORT CENTRE

"Hidden away in Linlithgow's Low Port Centre is one of the great artistic murals of the late twentieth century. 'Community: A Festival of Time,' by renowned Scottish artist James Cumming RSA (1922-1991), it was completed in 1988 and remains as fresh as when it was first painted. It deserves to be rediscovered and celebrated as a masterpiece of contemporary painting in the town."

"In a town that is steeped in history I was surprised not to find signposts or information pointing out its whereabouts. Hopefully everyone in Linlithgow can now discover their twentieth century masterpiece, perhaps inspiring its location to be made more prominent in the future." Sandy Wood, 2016

The artist James Cumming was nearing the end of an illustrious career when he undertook the task of painting 'Community: a Festival of Time' for the architect Anthony Wheeler. Wheeler's Low Port Centre in Linlithgow had just been completed, and he was keen to adorn its stairwell with a bespoke artwork to bring an added dimension and celebrate the building's locality. James Cumming was the perfect artist; he was a painter of unrivalled technical ability and had taught mural painting at Edinburgh College of Art. Cumming's art mixed the abstract with the figurative, and he was a master of bringing together complex compositions using harmonies of colour and line.

It took Cumming nearly four months to complete the eighteen by twenty foot mural. He worked on it tirelessly, regularly ascending and descending eight feet of scaffolding, which for a man of 66 was no mean feat. Cumming lived at the Centre during the week and was to become a favourite with the people there, many of whom still remember his colourful wit and personality. He took the idea of developing a community mural seriously and was clear that it should be something that everybody could connect with and appreciate, no matter what their understanding of art was.

Cumming sought to present a timeless scene in the mural and embody the idea of a town's community. The character-led theme developed through consultation with the people of Linlithgow and the town is represented by a gamut of personalities who enliven the landscape. The foremost figures of the mural stand on the verge of the river of time – at the centre of them, holding a conductor's baton, is the character named "senior citizen." He sports Cumming's trademark moustache and is most certainly a humorous representation of the muralist himself, conducting the scene he has imagined. Certain figures have been drawn into groups and associations. One can find 'childhood' at the bottom left and follow it loosely up through 'youth', 'unemployment' and 'graduation' and then through the marketplace to 'outgoing' at the top right of the composition. Cumming has inserted wee puzzles and clues here and there, and no matter where the eye is drawn, there is something for it to be rewarded and intrigued by. This was the skill of Cumming as an artist in any scale: he could always tantalise and surprise. One particular enjoyment is finding the little animals, which are dotted around the composition. The mural is a conversation between a land and its people, its history, its identity, and its origins; in creating it, Cumming summed up his fascination with humanity and where we come from, the things we see and experience, and the means of communication we use to try and understand it all.

Earlier this year, the artist and his amazing mural were celebrated in an



exhibition from the collections of the Royal Scottish Academy of Art and Architecture in Linlithgow Burgh Halls. As Collections Curator at the RSA, I was inspired to create the exhibition after seeing the mural for the first time last year. In a town that is steeped in history, I was surprised not to find signposts or information pointing out its whereabouts. Hopefully, everyone in Linlithgow can now discover their twentieth century masterpiece, perhaps inspiring its location to be made more prominent in the future.

*Sandy Wood, Collections Curator
Royal Scottish Academy of Art
& Architecture, 2016*

1: James Cumming painting 'Community: A Festival of Time', 1988. Copyright the artist's estate, Royal Scottish Academy collections (Cumming Gift).

2: The artist at work.

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ONE LINLITHGOW

CHRISTMAS IN LINLITHGOW



Well, there could only be one leading article in the November edition! Especially after last year's enforced retail closures and event cancellations, we're doubly excited to be able to run events and be merry together once again!

But, first a predictable, but important cautionary note:

Since restrictions are (at time of writing) nowhere near as severe as last year, enabling us to better support businesses and community events, it's doubly important to be "covid-safe" when out and about. The virus is far from eradicated, so social distancing, sanitising, and wearing a mask are as relevant as ever... more so, if we're to continue to be able to organise events.

By the same token, please be patient when attending events: indoor venues will be operating at restricted capacity, so you may be asked to wait, or come back later. It's also impossible for us at One Linlithgow to predict changes to restrictions that may alter how the events are run.

We'll be glad never to have to write the words "social distancing" and the like, ever again, but until that happy day we must take every precaution, in promoting events, as well as running them - to be safe, and to keep the community safe.



ADVENT FAYRE

On to the fun stuff, then! We're delighted to announce that Linlithgow's Advent Fayre 2021 will take place in the town centre on Saturday 27th November.

The market will take place at the **Cross**, as well as indoors (numbers limited), at the **Burgh Halls**, from 10am on the day, along with the funfair.

The **torchlight procession** will be taking place at 5pm on the day. Torch tokens will be available from town centre businesses (details will be released by the time you read this, but at the time of writing, token vendors are - Far From the Madding Crowd and Taste Café Deli in the town centre, and PlayBugs at Mill Road Industrial Estate, with others TBC).

The **Reed Band** will be playing Christmas carols, and there will be performances by the **Bo'ness Belles** and other local performers.

To avoid queueing, there will be no torch tokens available on the day, so please get your token early to avoid disappointment. Please keep an eye on the "One Linlithgow" Facebook page for updates.

There will be loads more at the **Linlithgow Community Development Trust's Community Hub** (formerly Linlithgow Library at 6-7, The Vennel). This will be the "family zone" and will be hosting story-telling and Linlithgow Academy's mini F1 racetrack, and much more still to come!

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DAY

Back with a bang after last year's unfortunate cancellation, Christmas Shopping Day will take place on Thursday 25th November!

Your favourite shops, bars, cafés, restaurants, and services will be open all day until 8pm, with many offering special deals and treats to say thank you and Merry Christmas to their customers.

By the time you read this, there will be a list of participating shops on the "One Linlithgow" Facebook page and posters/flyers around town. There are also loads of shops staying open late all through the festive season or on a particular day of the week, every week, so look out for announcements directly from them, too!

We'll be running a special one-day only **Loyalty Lottery draw**, too... Just buy something from a participating outlet, get a stamp, and drop it into either Lilypond Crafts & Gifts or the One Linlithgow postbox at 28, The Vennel, for a chance to be among six lucky winners of £50 in Linlithgow vouchers!

High Street businesses, please don't forget, the festive window competition will be judged on Christmas Shopping Day. The theme is, of course, "festive," and it has been known to get pretty competitive, so good luck to all!

We're also hoping that Radio Grapevine will be able to confirm their attendance (we'll update on Facebook if they do!). They're rapidly becoming a stalwart of the event, blasting out the cheesy Christmas classics and bantering with passers-by, so we hope they can come along this year, too! Even if not, they'll be at the Advent Fayre for your aural pleasure. I don't want a lot for Christmas, there is just one thing I need...!

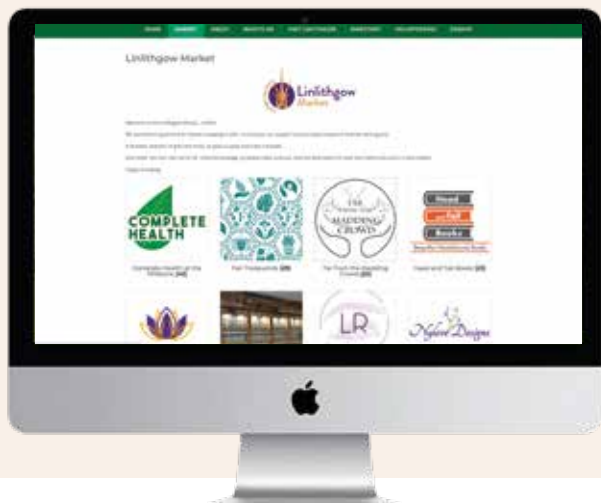


LINLITHGOW MARKET ONLINE

Already launched with hundreds of items for sale on mylinlithgow.com, the market lets you get your Christmas shopping done online, without feeling guilty about giving your money to the internet giants instead of local businesses! Sellers are 100% Linlithgow-based and have some fantastic gifts, whether that's for Christmas presents or just a treat for yourself!

Last year's inaugural digital Christmas market only ran for three days and made over £3,000 for local businesses, so it's now a permanent feature on the site, and will have special seasonal items throughout the year.

Since it's now going to keep running indefinitely, there's no deadline for local sellers to get involved, so if you have a business in Linlithgow, just contact us at office@onelinlithgow.com to take part.



MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM ONE LINLITHGOW!

We've plenty more to report, but we'll save the most of that for the next edition.

The Christmas lights are up and ready to go throughout town, with some new additions, too... and following the commission of the last camera at Regent Centre, the town centre public CCTV system is finally fully operational!

The festive season often, sadly, sees a spike in retail crime (primarily shoplifting and fake notes), so please let us (and the police) know straight away if you see anything suspicious.



Until next time,
a very Merry Christmas
to you, from all of us at
One Linlithgow!

TREES TO ENJOY, TO CELEBRATE AND TO SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE

That trees help capture carbon is a well-rehearsed argument, reinforced by the COP26 Conference in Glasgow. Trees also play an integral part in sustainable land use, including protecting and restoring ecosystems. This is a key theme being discussed by world leaders at the conference this November, helping to put the crises of biodiversity loss and climate change on an equal footing. Several articles in the Black Bitch magazine over the years have spelt out the importance of trees and what is being done locally. This article brings readers the latest news.

Fruit trees and their produce are to be enjoyed in several locations

These include the orchards at the Vennel and Leisure Centre, trees planted by Linlithgow Primary School children at Learmonth Gardens, while at Broomyhill Place and Beechwood, local residents provide care along with **Jon Brown's** expert pruning advice.



global warming and the risk of changing weather patterns, the tree is more drought resistant. It is evergreen and, unlike the English oak, a specimen of which we already have at Rosemount Park - is resistant to oak processionary moth, which has already arrived in Edinburgh. This celebratory tree will add to the developing Arboretum at Rosemount Park where already there are over 50 labelled specimens, including the latest of a Monkey Puzzle.

Future carbon capture and wind break at Triangle Wood

This embryonic wood lies to the west of the Leisure Centre with the Union Canal towpath bounding the southern edge of the Triangle and the A706 on the north. The land is owned by West Lothian Council and leased to Linlithgow Community Development Trust. As different habitats are formed from wet willow areas to drier hedgerows, there is an increase in wildlife, and gradually a network of paths expands to the joy of walkers. In time this new woodland will form a windbreak for the Cycle Circuit for which over £1.2m has been raised, with construction expected in 2022.

Over the past two years, thanks to the Woodland Trust, Burgh Beautiful has been responsible for the planting of over 1000 native sapling trees with rabbit guards for protection. Were it not for autumn bashing i.e. breaking down summer vegetation around the young trees, they would become swamped by tall grasses, willowherb and meadowsweet.



Celebration Tree for the Queen's Jubilee at Rosemount Park

A Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) has been chosen, because it is a long-lived tree. The specimen is already potted up and can, therefore, be planted at any time of the year convenient for us. In view of





A further 420 young plants, donated by the Woodland Trust, will be planted during the winter months. If you would like to help, watch out for the date which will be advertised on the Burgh Beautiful FaceBook page with contact details and further information.



tree, or more, at £5.00 a tree. Sponsorships at Triangle Wood have brought in nearly £1000 in the first year: much needed money to be shared between Burgh Beautiful and Linlithgow Community Development Trust. The former has used this money for tree labels, the Jubilee Tree and necessary stakes. For both organisations, funds raised help secure the future of more trees and encourage healthy lifestyles.

Sponsorship certificates can make a good alternative to Christmas presents or mark a new birth or anniversary. These can be purchased online and sent as emails, or as printed certificates. For trees sponsorships contact Tree Sponsorship (lbt.scot@sptrees).

For further information, please contact lbt.scot@burgh-beautiful.

Text contributed; photos by Averil Stewart and Margaret Harrison, members of Environmental Responsibility Working Group of Burgh Beautiful



WORLD CUP OF RAILWAY STATIONS

The World Cup of Stations is an annual event throughout the United Kingdom organised by Network Rail through their Railway Delivery Team and voted on by users of the Rail network.



The competition focuses on stations that play a vital role in supporting their local economy to recover from the pandemic by getting people back doing the things they love, whether it's going on holiday, visiting museums and galleries or dining out.

Linlithgow Station was selected in the final 40 in the category 'Nature' because of our surrounding areas of beauty, open spaces and great venues for picnics etc

We made it through to the final 16 (semi-finals) only to be pipped, or should that be by a whistle, by St Ives Stourbridge station who eventually won the competition.

Our position was achieved because of the sterling efforts of Linlithgow Community, various organisations, and friends and family who have a Twitter account, taking the time to vote for our station.

On behalf of my fellow Station Adopters and Burgh Beautiful a very big Thank You.

Sally Chambers



Not everyone is able to plant trees, whether volunteering with time and energy to spare, or within their own neighbourhood. However, there is the alternative to contribute by sponsoring a

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

ALL CHANGE FOR GALA DAY RETURN



After a two-year absence, the Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Children's Gala Day will make a welcome return on **Saturday June 18th 2022**, when the spectacular procession from the Brig to the Low Port and crowning ceremony in the magnificent setting of the royal park

at the Palace will, once again, be one of the highlights of the local social calendar.

The committee members were delighted to make this announcement after a recent meeting. They said:

"It's been a long two years and we are excited to be back."

The enforced lay-off due to the pandemic has given the organisers an opportunity to look closely at the way the Gala Day is run and significant changes will be made next year.

The committee explained:

"Covid has given us time to reflect on previous years. With this in mind, we have taken on board feedback from both children and parents over the last few years and have made the decision to change the age groups for children participating in the Gala Day. For 2022 and future years, the age groups will be –

Fairies & Junior Guards Primary 2

Flower Girls Primary 4

Main Retinue Primary 6

They continued:

"We believe that a post-Covid Gala Day is the best time to introduce this change. This has not been an easy decision, nor one that has been taken lightly and we realise that some families may be disappointed.

If anyone would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact us through the Gala Day mailbox linlithgowgaladay@hotmail.com. We are always happy to answer any questions that you have. We hope that 2022 will be a great year for the children of the town."



Murdoch Kennedy



A WAY FORWARD FOR THE ACADEMY THEATRE?

Linlithgow Folk Festival Association (LFFA) are currently planning for the next twelve months and are considering how they can continue and further develop their activities.

They are extremely concerned that, due to the changes that have been made to the hall at Linlithgow Academy – which for twenty years has been styled **The Linlithgow Academy Theatre** – this facility may no longer be fit for purpose, as far as they are concerned. They organised a site visit and were very pessimistic about the possibility of staging a major concert there – a **Barbara Dickson** or **Ralph McTell**, for example, as they have done very successfully in the past – or even the annual **Matt McGinn Tribute Night**, which is their biggest fundraiser of the year.

LFFA were very keen to hear from other regular users of the hall and to discuss how they see the future. They had

questions, such as - has the facility been completely lost as a viable venue for concerts and musical theatre productions?

Are there ways in which we can mitigate the changes, which were deemed necessary for the functioning of the school?

Representatives of nine local groups met at the Black Bitch Tavern on Wednesday October 20th and had a very constructive discussion, which was totally focused on finding a way forward. The following week, a meeting was held at the Academy with the **Arts Guild**, **LAMP**, **Folk Festival** and **Dr Elaine Cook**, the Director of Education at West Lothian Council and senior management members from the school.

There was a lot of common ground, and it was agreed that local groups would get together again to work out a list of areas where measures could perhaps be taken to mitigate the changes that have been made to the hall and allow groups to continue to



stage concerts and musical theatre productions there.

As we went to press, a further site visit had been arranged and there was great confidence that a way forward can be found. Time is very much of the essence. At least two groups are planning major events for the spring of 2022 and for them, there is no alternative venue.

Murdoch Kennedy



WET EATER? DRY EATER? WHICH ARE YOU?

AN EXPLORATION SOUTH OF THE BORDER

As the end of the year rushes up, our thoughts go to the short breaks we have had in the UK over the last year. These weren't "staycations," as we left home and took to the road to visit several gardens south of the border. One of the highlights was Raymond Blanc's Manoir aux Quat'Saisons near Oxford. You may have seen some of his TV shows recently. We had a wonderful lunch having been shown around the garden by his head kitchen gardener, and after he had given us a spontaneous ten minute potpourri of his life since he came to the UK, we got to thinking, is he a wet eater or a dry eater? The dishes we ate would surprisingly have delighted both wet and dry eaters, as plates contained wonderful mixtures of ingredients, but arranged so neatly and precisely.



Le Manoir's kitchen garden - surely a dry eater's paradise?

Perhaps we should remind you about wet and dry eaters. Wet eaters like their food mixed together with lots of sauces, this is what dry eaters might cheekily describe as nursery food, because they like their food arranged discreetly on the plate so they can choose what to eat first. Eating is such an intimate and personal part of our character that these preferences generally extend to the rest of our habits, especially our gardening style. Raymond left us guessing... his potager style vegetable garden was laid out in a very controlling style that would suggest the style of a dry eater. While many of the borders showed a contrasting style of relaxed intermingling plants, so loved by wet eaters.



Le Manoir's wet eaters borders along the entrance path



Auricula theatre

With 14 gardeners at Le Manoir perhaps his own preferences have had to be modified to some of the preferences of his team? Many of you may be married to a dry eater and you are a wet eater, and in this relationship the food that the two of you eat will be heavily influenced by whichever of you does most of the cooking! If you are unsure which you are, next time you eat out, choose what you want from the menu, and when it comes you'll be able to look at your plate and remind yourself whether you are wet or dry. There is an exception to

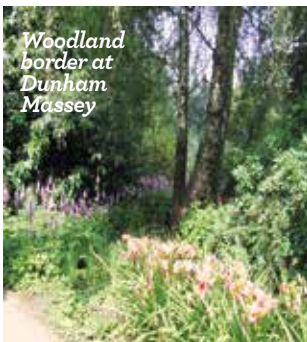


cottage gardening, is a delightful garden as full of plants as you could ever imagine and surely the garden of a wet eater.

Best wishes for a very happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year from us to all wet and dry eaters!

every rule, Lesley's Auricula Theatre could have been created by a dry eater, but both of us are wet eaters.

East Lambrook Manor in Somerset, where the influential gardener Marjory Fish lived and describes itself as the home of



Woodland border at Dunham Massey

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PEGGY AND JEAN REMEMBER THE OLD SHOPS



Mrs Janet Dowie outside the ladies' and children's outfitters at 83 High Street.

Earlier this year, 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 photographs from his late grandfather, Mr John Young, together with other memorabilia relating to the town. This includes programmes for the annual Riding of the Marches, going back as far as 1919.



I took some of the programmes with me recently on visits to two life-long residents of Linlithgow, 92-year-old **Peggy Dowie** and 91-year-old **Jean Edgar**, who both live at the Cross. Peggy and Jean were particularly interested in all the adverts for local shops and businesses, which are long gone, and seeing all the old names again sparked off some great discussions.

Peggy's first job on leaving school in 1943 was in **Mrs Janet Dowie's ladies' and children's outfitters** at 83 High Street, overlooking the Cross. She told me:

"I got 7/6 a week. The woman that washed the floor got paid off, so I had to do it and my wages went up to 10 shillings. I had to work until 8 o'clock on a Saturday night and if I wanted to go to the dancing, it was too late."

Peggy and Jean both worked in the office of the **SMT garage** next door to Mrs Dowie's shop and Peggy's brother worked in the garage itself.

Robert Blake & Sons (Bakers and Purveyors) was on the other side of Dowie's shop and Peggy has one abiding memory of it:

"During the war, we used to go along on a Saturday for the big pies. We had to queue up." Jean recalled brothers **Andrew and Neil Blake** and their families living in the two houses upstairs.

"They had the whole building above the shop", she told me.

Talking about Blake's sparked off reminiscences of other bakers' shops, such as **Porter's, Faichney's, J & G Steel and Younger's**, whose award-winning 'Lithca' currant loaves were legendary.

Both ladies recalled the various High Street premises which were owned by people called **Braithwaite**, including the grocery stores at 118 and 220 and the pub at 111 (The Cricketers' Arms).

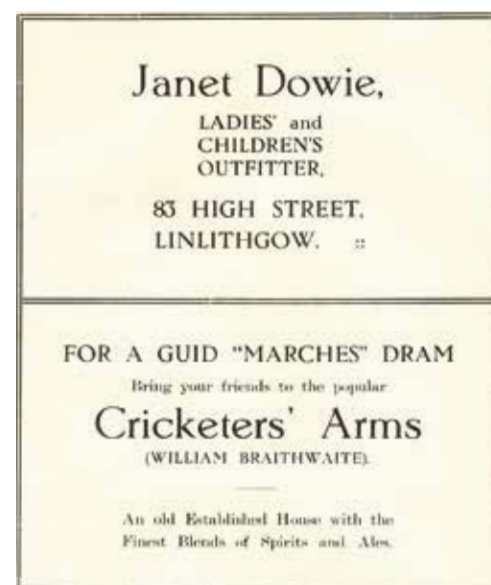
Peggy and Jean told me that half the site now occupied by the 'Golden Chip' was for many years the premises of **D. Grant & Sons, House Painters and Decorators**. 'Best workmanship guaranteed' was their proud boast.

Jean had very happy memories of **H. Shields & Sons, Family Butchers** at 62 High Street:

"The daughter, Hazel, was my pal and I was never out of there. I've even made a sausage!", she laughed. *"I lived just along the High Street, and we were never away from each other. We used to visit Hazel's granny, who lived out at the Lie on the Falkirk Road."*

Like his wonderful collection of photographs, Barry Mulholland's Marches programmes are a great source of local knowledge and Peggy and Jean certainly enjoyed looking through them and sharing their precious memories with me. I was particularly intrigued by their recollections of the buildings in the old Vennel, including **Meek's shoe shop, the Buttercup Dairy, the grocer Jessie Gentles** ('She sells lentils!!), **Hardie the barber, Veitch's gospel hall, C.D. George radio specialist, Robertson's paper shop, Willie Wilson the barber, and many more.**

Thank you, ladies, for this wonderful insight into our recent past!



Advertisements featured:

1. Mrs Janet Dowie's ladies' and children's outfitters
2. The Cricketers' Arms
3. Robert Blake & Sons (Bakers and Purveyors)
4. Faichney's
5. Younger's Bakery
6. D Grant & Sons Painters & Decorators
7. Scottish Motor Traction Co Garage, Motor Tours
8. A M Meek & Son Boot Manufacturers
9. J & G Steel Pies & Tarts
10. H. Shields & Sons, Family Butchers
11. C D George, Radios
12. J M Braithwaite, Grocers, Provisions & Wine Merchants

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BEECRAIGS FESTIVE FOREST

Excitement is building over the launch, in a few days' time, of the spectacular Festive Forest at Beecraigs country park near Linlithgow - and that's not hyperbole from local organisers Ewen McMartin and Roy Snedden of Rowen Events.

The enthusiasm over the return of the light and sound spectacular, due to run from December 3rd to Christmas Eve, has become apparent in a variety of ways. These range from buoyant ticket sales to the number of local people of all ages wishing to take part in the event and from the array of local businesses wanting to participate, to those helping support and publicise it.

Ewen said that he and his co-director, Roy, are "overwhelmed" by the support they have received from local people, which has more than compensated for the disappointment of having to cancel last year's Beecraigs Festive Forest, due to lockdown restrictions.

"Our recruitment night in the Burgh Halls on the 21st October saw a great turnout from local people from a wide range of age groups - some members of the original team from 2019 and some new friends wanting to come on board. It was a tremendous success, and all the successful candidates have now been notified."

Ewen said they have been really touched by the support they have received from general members of the public in putting up posters, leaving flyers visible in shops and cafes, etc, and allowing banners to be displayed on their property.

The response they have received from local businesses to take part in their BFF21 Best of Linlithgow Marketplace has been "absolutely fantastic," and would undoubtedly add to the enjoyment of the anticipated 25-30k visitors who will attend the Festive Forest this year.

Among businesses due to take part, he continued, are Playbugs (Mark Darragh), Linlithgow Distillery (Alyson Jamieson), Aran Cafe (Martin Pickersgill), Mrs Mack's Bakery (Kirsty McMartin), Macs Ice Cream (Grant and Hazel McMartin), Meg Wallace Art, and Marie Fielding Crafts and Jewellery.

Added Roy, *"We have also reached out to all local schools to run a BFF21 poster competition, as well as offering discounted rates for groups, etc. We really want the whole community to feel involved and behind us."*

The Festive Forest will feature **Scotland's longest light tunnel**, and it will be set in a 1.8km trail through Beecraigs forest. Rowen Events have engaged one of the country's most respected specialists to create breathtaking festive illuminations, special visual effects and sounds.

Along the way, there will be warming stations, 12 four-foot model elves, **"S-Elves"**, for youngsters to get their photographs taken with, the Cala Homes live stage, street performers, the Radio Forth silent disco, and also several of our favourite festive movie characters.

In Santa's village you will find **Santa's Grotto** with his cheeky elves and a welcome return of his storytelling experience. Children can also post their letters to the North Pole in time for Christmas.

Santa's village will also house our children's amusements, festive food, drink and market stalls, as well as mulled wine, cider, hot chocolate, and toasted marshmallows.

There really is something for everyone in Beecraigs Festive Forest!

Tickets are: adults-£18, over 4's-£12, family tickets (for four)- £57, and £9 (all ages) - to see Santa and receive a gift.

Tickets must be purchased in advance at: www.beecraigsfestiveforest.com

Note: Rowen Events are highlighting that due the density of the Forest, it can be hard to get a continuous mobile signal, and therefore card payments cannot be guaranteed. So please remember to carry cash, as there are no banking facilities on-site. Thank you.

**NOVEMBER
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XMAS AT THE ROSE.

Saturday 4th December

Hi-Definition Top Class
Vocal Harmony Duo
£37 per person, Dinner 7.30,
Carriages 12.45

Friday 10th December

Cabaret Show
Dynamix & Robert T ❄️
Leonard as Meatloaf
£37 per person, Dinner 7.30,
Carriages 12.45

Saturday 11 December

Cabaret Show ❄️
Saffron is Diana Ross
& Whitney Houston
£37 per person, Dinner 7.30,
Carriages 12.45

Friday 17th December

Cabaret Show
Jesse Garron, The Rebel Rouser
& Trina Milne, Little Miss Diva.
£37 per person, Dinner 7.30,
Carriages 12.45

Saturday 18th December

Hot 2 Course Supper; ❄️
Heather Dickson with
Cover Up 4 Piece Band
£30 per person
Dinner 7.30, Carriages 12.45
£20 per person deposit on
booking, balance due by
30 November.

TALENT CONTEST 2022

❄️
Commences
Friday 28th January
2022
Entries being sought

HOGMANAY PARTY

Sharon Hope with Malcolm
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Tickets £18.00 per person
9pm – 2am

MENU

Homemade Lentil Soup

*Pate & Oatcakes,
Bed of Salad*

Prawn Cocktail

Turkey with all the trimmings

Roast Gammon

Steak Pie

*All with seasonal veg and
roast potatoes*

*Apple Tart with Fresh Cream
or Ice Cream*

Cheesecake with Fresh Cream

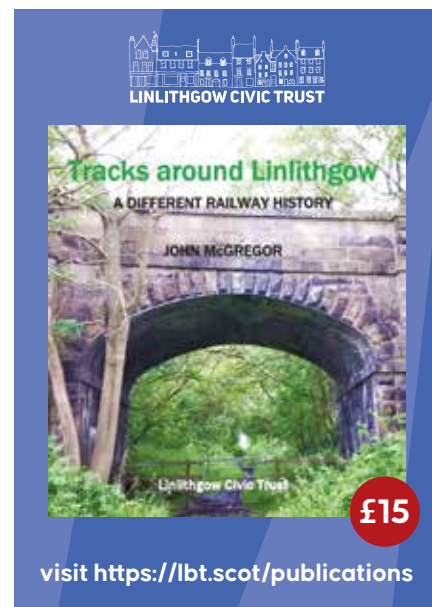
Chef's Homemade Trifle

*Tea, Coffee, Shortbread
& Mints*

*Special dietary requirements can
be catered for with prior notice
when booking*

PRESS RELEASE

Learn more about Linlithgow's railways and social history in John McGregors new book "Tracks around Linlithgow". The author is an established transport historian who for many years was an Open University tutor, and has published a number of successful railway books. This book is a fascinating piece of local railway history with a 19th century focus, and contains period maps and plans, old photos, plus a specially drawn map to encourage awareness of railway archaeology in the area.



Marilyne MacLaren, the Convenor of Linlithgow Civic Trust said, "We are delighted to have supported the publication of this book. John has been a long term member of the Trust, and all proceeds from sales are going to the Trust. It gives an interesting insight into early transport and what it meant for the town. A fascinating read for those interested in Linlithgow and Central Scotland history, and those interested in British railway history in general."

John feels that his book is not a conventional railway book, but something a little different from his usual more academic works, "it is my homage to the town and its history" explains John.

The book is on sale at a number of retail outlets including "Far from the Madding Crowd," Linlithgow Post Office and the Lilypond, and can be obtained direct from <https://lbt.sct/publications>.



Contact;

Marilyne MacLaren

Convenor of Linlithgow Civic Trust
Tel; 01506 845 275/ 07932 915 315

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LINLITHGOW'S ROTARY TREE OF LIGHT



Rotary is all about helping communities wherever they are in the world but, most especially, locally. The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange has supported local charitable organisations with its Rotary Tree of Light festive period fundraising initiative since 2016 and are doing so again, for the sixth year, in 2021. The event kicks off officially on the day of the Advent Fayre, and runs all the way up to the end of December.

In the early years, the Club used the tree outside the old Library at the Vennel. However, in 2019, West Lothian Council kindly gave permission for the town's Christmas tree at Linlithgow Cross to be used, and have done so again this year. The Club is very grateful for the Council's continued support. As a result, this special tree, placed right at the very heart of the community will once again provide a focal point for both remembrance and celebration.

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

on their services.

There is an African proverb that says, *"As long as you speak my name, I shall live forever."* This is the motivation behind the Rotary Tree of Light.

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

However, the tree can also be a tree of celebration - perhaps of a friend or family member past or present, or to celebrate a milestone event such as a significant anniversary or birthday, or even a new arrival. There will be many personal reasons to make dedications. Many of course are happy simply to give a donation in aid of the various good causes the event supports.

The Club hopes to raise a significant amount again this year for organisations working locally.

For 2021, the chosen charities are:

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

» **Linlithgow Young People's Project (LYPP)** is a youth project which was planted in the heart of the community 30 years ago, in partnership with the churches in Linlithgow. Its fundamental purpose is to support the young people of Linlithgow and the surrounding areas in all aspects of their development. Their primary focus is to foster a sense of 'hope' in the lives and circumstances of young people they come in contact with.

» **Positive Pathways Bereavement Support** is an informal, confidential support group facilitated by a team of trained bereavement listeners. There is no magic formula which will take away the pain but listening and sharing with others, it is often possible to lessen the sense of isolation, chaos and despair felt after the death of a loved one.

» **Quiet Waters** provides counselling and bereavement support services to help those in need find a constructive way forward with their problems.

The Benevolent Fund of The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange will be able to disburse any Gift Aid received from these donations to all these good causes.

The Rotary Tree of Light is a community endeavour, and it will shine brightly again thanks to the generosity of **Alan Steel Asset Management, RGM Solicitors, Stewart Electrical, Cala Homes**, and other community-minded businesses and individuals. Their financial support ensures that every pound of public donations goes to the designated charities. Many other local businesses also rally round and support the project in kind. Dedication forms and envelopes will be found at a variety of shops along the High Street and other locations in and around Linlithgow. Look out for the Tree of Light posters displayed around the town for details of these venues. Several venues have also agreed to receive completed dedications and donations in sealed envelopes. These will be regularly uplifted and processed by members of the Club who will update the panels around the base of the tree and on the website. Alternatively, you can make donations by credit or debit card via the online donation platform Jumblebee at <https://www.jumblebee.co.uk/linlithgowsrotarytreeoflight>

The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange is proud to be able to promote and support these worthy causes but could not do so without the big-hearted folks of Linlithgow, a strong community which has proven time and again that they are more than willing to put their hands in their collective pockets when the need arises. The Club looks forward to the continued support of all you Lithgae' folks!

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

Allan M Robertson

The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange



Club of Linlithgow
Grange

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



We can genuinely change lives by setting up a branch of Cycling Without Age Scotland in Linlithgow (CWAS Linlithgow).

It's a fun, fulfilling and life-enhancing experience as we can give our elderly and/or disabled people of all ages and those with life limiting conditions an opportunity, as passengers in our amazing Trishaws, to get out into the fresh air, to feel and be a real part of their community, and to meet new people.

A leading member of a global movement currently operating in 50 countries, CWAS holds the Scotland Country Licence agreement with the international **HQ of Cycling Without Age**, which is in Denmark. There are currently over 50 Trishaws running throughout Scotland. CWAS Linlithgow is a community group of volunteers which will operate as part of the umbrella organisation CWAS. The aim of the CWAS Linlithgow group is to enhance and enrich lives by giving passengers access to our beautiful outdoors through Trishaw rides, access which is denied to so many people simply because of age or limited mobility. We will also robustly maintain the highest standards of safety in

all our operations, fully complying with the requirements of the Scottish Care Inspectorate. This will include insurance, PVG disclosure, full Trishaw and First Aid training for all our volunteers. Allowing all who join us to feel and be an integral part of a highly respected Scotland-wide movement.

Linlithgow has a great community spirit and the CWAS Linlithgow team is committed to adding to that and to make our community more accessible for all.

The cost to set up this project is £10,000, and we are looking to raise these funds from grants and donations. Sincere thanks to those who have donated so far.

We have already spoken to a local nursing home and housing association who, considering all the restrictions COVID has caused their residents, are hugely excited by the prospect of offering the service to them, to get them out for a breath of fresh air and chats with volunteer friends.

We hope to be able to have the Trishaw as a community asset which can be used to provide access for passengers to community events, such as the Christmas Advent Fair and Linlithgow Marches. We want, in the future, to be able to offer this life-enhancing experience to those who are house-bound; family members would be able to book a Trishaw ride for their loved one to enjoy a sociable and uplifting outdoor adventure.

Linlithgow Community Development Trust is currently working on a purpose built cycling circuit. From our conversations with them, we envisage that, in the future, the Trishaw will be available for trips around the circuit for passengers to experience and enjoy the nature projects that will be set up in conjunction with Burgh Beautiful. This CWAS Linlithgow group will also offer engagement for local volunteers,

either as Trishaw Pilots (cyclists) or volunteer travel companions. We have already spoken to 1st Step Linlithgow and they are keen to be involved.

A discussion with local councillors has shown that the project will be complementary to work that is being undertaken for people with dementia and other local groups in the town.

We held our first "meet and greet" session at Linlithgow Cross on Saturday 25th September, where we had a Trishaw on display and were able to talk to local people who were interested in the project. After a very successful day, we now have more volunteers and organisations willing to get involved.

Linlithgow Community Development Trust (LCDT) has been very supportive in this initiative. We hope to use the converted old library as our communications hub to raise awareness of both the Trishaw and CWAS Linlithgow itself. Looking to the future, LCDT will give us storage facilities at the new cycling track, for which we are very grateful, and allow the Trishaw to be used on the track.

We have an enthusiastic committee in place and we will continue to liaise with CWAS for best practice and regulations. We will also listen to the needs and wishes of the local community through CWAS Linlithgow's dedicated social media platforms and through on-going discussions with local community groups.



**Platform 3
January 6**

Our up-and-coming fundraising events will be a Walk for Jock quiz night in Platform 3 on Thursday 6 January, and a whisky tasting evening in February.

You can find us on Facebook at [cyclingwithoutagescotlandlinlithgow](https://www.facebook.com/cyclingwithoutagescotlandlinlithgow), or at EH49 Community Hub (formerly the Old Library), or email us at cwaslinlithgow@gmail.com, and find out lots more about CWAS at www.cyclingwithoutage.scot



MUIRAVONSIDE HOUSE

Bruce Jamieson

There's not much left of Muiravonside House today. Only the foundations remain of what was, in its heyday, a remarkable building with a long history and some fascinating occupants.



A building standing on a loop of the River Avon, just a couple of miles outside Linlithgow, first appears in the primitive map drawn by Timothy Pont in the late 16th century. A later mid 18th c map calls the site 'Neuk' meaning a corner or bend.

The first substantial edifice on the site probably dates to the 17th century when the land was acquired by the Ross family who also owned property in Linlithgow. The doocot which still stands at the Canal Basin is all that is left of their town estate.



The Ross Doocot

The Ross family held the property until 1700 when the estate was sold to Lieutenant-Colonel John Dalziel. Unfortunately, just four years later, he was killed at the Battle of Blenheim while trying to rescue a fellow officer of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. John Dalziel's widow and children continued to reside in Muiravonside

until it was again sold, in 1724, to John MacLeod – an ardent Jacobite who plotted to restore the Stuart monarchy to the throne.

When the wife of another staunch royalist threatened to inform the authorities of his intentions, she was kidnapped and brought to Muiravonside House where a mock funeral was arranged to persuade the anti-Jacobite faction that she was dead. In reality, she was smuggled to the Island of St Kilda. John MacLeod was arrested and held in Edinburgh Castle until the rebellion was over when he was allowed to return to Muiravonside.

John MacLeod's son, Alexander, was even more involved in the 1745 Uprising. As an aide to Bonnie Prince Charlie, he stood at the Prince's side on Culloden Moor before fleeing from the field and going into hiding along with *Dr Archibald Cameron* – the brother of Jacobite clan chief, Cameron of Lochiel. MacLeod managed to flee abroad, but Dr Cameron was arrested, brought to Linlithgow in chains and imprisoned in the Tolbooth. He was then taken to London where he was drawn on a sledge to Tyburn Hill. After hanging for twenty minutes he was cut down, still alive, and beheaded – the last Jacobite to be executed.



A contemporary etching of Dr Cameron on the way to his execution

Alexander MacLeod did not return to Muiravonside until he was pardoned in 1778. He died six years later amid rumours that he had been poisoned

so that he could not marry a servant girl, Louisa Mowat, who had borne him two sons. Marriage would have legitimised the claims of the eldest child to the Muiravonside estate and excluded Alexander's niece, Elizabeth Macdonald, who eventually did acquire the property. Unfortunately, her husband's extravagance saw the family in huge debt and they were forced to sell Muiravonside by public auction in 1799.

The purchaser was another Alexander MacLeod – a lawyer with involvement in slave plantations in Jamaica. There is evidence that he actually handled the sale of slaves when they arrived from Africa.

He retired to Muiravonside House and, using his wealth, had the building transformed into an elegant country house with elaborate gardens and a stable block. Alexander died in the house in 1839, at the age of 85.

The house was next purchased by Charles Stirling of Drumpellier, a businessman and partner in a Manchester-based cotton production firm. He also invested much of his fortune into the estate, introducing many new agricultural techniques, a limekiln and a sawmill. The still existing stables, coach house, washhouse and offices (now used as a visitor centre and café) all date from this period.



Charles Stirling and his wife, Charlotte

A summerhouse was also constructed, overlooking the River Avon and the ruins of Rab Gibb's Castle. Stirling married his cousin, Charlotte, who bore him sixteen children, the eldest of whom, Andrew, inherited the estate in 1867 and continued the tradition of entertaining the children of the Muiravonside Church Sunday school when they arrived at the estate by barge.



Sunday school children on a Union Canal barge

The house was considerably enlarged during this time, and it required a staff of twelve, including a housekeeper, a coachman, an estate overseer and three gardeners. Every Christmas, the servants and their friends were invited to a supper dance and consequent entertainment in the "Big House".



Four members of the Muiravonside staff

When another Stirling (John) died without any children to inherit the estate, a legal dispute arose which resulted in ownership being granted to a retired naval officer, Thomas Stirling, who decided not to stay in the family mansion. Instead, it was leased out to Thomas Gillespie who, along with Charles Chalmers of Longcroft, had established a paper-mill at Linlithgow Bridge.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Commander Thomas Stirling rejoined the Royal Navy and served in the Admiralty Operations Department until 1919. His eldest son, Lieutenant Robert Stirling, was killed in February 1915 at the age of 22, serving with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. He lies buried today in Dickebusch War Cemetery in Belgium. Thomas's other son, Captain Arthur Charles Stirling, ended the war with severe shell shock.

During the Second World War, the house was handed over to the Army. In 1941 it was used firstly by a contingent from the Argyll and Sutherland

Highlanders and then by members of a Polish anti-aircraft regiment.



Muiravonside House in the 1950s

By 1967, when Arthur died, the house was in a very poor condition. Another inheritance dispute arose with the litigation going on for ten years, by which time the house was decidedly the worse for wear and it was decided to sell. It took another ten years before the Falkirk Planning Department was able to purchase the building along with 170 acres of land which ultimately became a Country Park.

A sad end for a fascinating property with many stories to tell.



The house in 1978

The once grand mansion had considerably deteriorated and was considered to be unsafe and, in 1979, it was demolished – a sad end for a fascinating property with many stories to tell. The once grand mansion had considerably deteriorated and was considered to be unsafe and, in 1979, it was demolished – a sad end for a fascinating property with many stories to tell.



BLACK BITCH

HOURS: Monday- Thursday 11am-12pm, Friday & Saturday 11am-1am & Sunday 12.30am-12pm

BLACK BITCH ENTERTAINMENT

Sat 13th Nov Lynne Size fabulous female vocalist, 9pm-late

Sun 21st Nov Linlithgow Folk Festival Association 2-7pm

Sat 27th Nov Gerry's Karaoke **Sun 28th Nov** Pure Malt 5-8pm

Sat 11 Dec The superb sound of Cal Callaghan

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THE ARTS

"POSTCARDS FROM LINLITHGOW"

Pat Swan patswan@virginmedia.com.



The annual Postcards from The Line exhibition is open and what a show it is – small, affordable artworks in an amazing array of techniques, are squeezed into every available space of the gallery walls. Prices start at a very reasonable £20.

One of the artists exhibiting is Shan Press, a local textile artist whose work I have admired for some time. Shan believes that "Postcards" is a marvellous way for artists to experiment and show their developing ideas.



She has always worked with textiles and finds the way fabric and yarn can be combined and layered with other media fascinating. Shan is particularly inspired by the textures, forms and shapes found in nature and the environment and the way time and the elements distress and degrade these structures. Urban walkways, natural pathways, boundaries and protection are recurring themes in her work.

Shan says *"my work is developing with a range of mixed media techniques, and I am continually experimenting with new and different processes. My thoughts and ideas often lean towards the three-dimensional using transparency and shadow to provide interest. I am a member of, and exhibit with Edge Textile Artists Scotland, a group dedicated to*



promoting excellence in contemporary textile art in Scotland. It is so good to be able to show textile art locally to the public, albeit in miniature".

Shan also has a floor standing glass kiln at home and makes quirky fused glass items which sell well in The Line Gallery, especially at Christmas.

I urge you to see this exhibition which is on till 21st November. Start your own gallery wall at home with a 2021 Postcard.

Linlithgow Pottery Whilst visiting **The Line** you will see some of Zibah's work. Zibah from **Linlithgow Pottery** has been very busy of late getting ready for Christmas as well as stocking her online shop (linlithgowpottery.com). She'll be open for the late-night shopping event on 25th November and is usually open by appointment if you want to browse. Gift vouchers for taster classes make ideal gifts, or how about ordering a personalised dog bone ornament for a dog lover friend?

Linlithgow String Orchestra

(LSO) eased quietly into 2021, their 5th Anniversary year, having not been able to rehearse since March 2020. As restrictions relaxed, they were finally back together rehearsing on 30th August with a new conductor, **Dr Derek Williams** from the University of Edinburgh.

Their 5th Anniversary Concert was held on the **13th November at 7.30pm at St. Michael's Parish Church**. The programme consisted of popular works performed over the previous 5 years, including Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 and Grieg's Holberg Suite. The addition of more poignant pieces such as Elgar's 'Nimrod' and Barber's 'Adagio for Strings' acknowledged Remembrance Sunday, 21st November. The Centenary of the British Legion Poppy Appeal was marked by having a collection on the night.

It all started in 2016 with a post on the Linlithgow Facebook page to gauge interest in an adult string orchestra in the town for players grade 5+. After 49 comments on the post, the launch of a closed Facebook page for interested players, and a few emails, a committee for LSO started to take shape.

'Come and Play' open sessions followed. As luck would have it, their inception



coincided with the BBC's 'Get Playing' initiative to encourage adults back to playing music and by the 3rd 'Come and Play' rehearsal they were being interviewed for BBC Radio Scotland. Later that year they entered a video recording of the group playing along to Bizet's Toreador Song, which was selected to be included in the last night of the BBC Proms as part of their first ever virtual orchestra, conducted by **Marin Alsop**. Who knew 5 years later that virtual orchestras and choirs would be formed all around the globe to keep people involved in music-making and maintain a sense of community to get through the Coronavirus pandemic.

Their first public appearance in Linlithgow was an Open Door event at St Peter's Church, with the doors open so that passers-by could hear the music. The first formal concert at St Ninian's Church followed and the year was rounded off with an invitation to join Linlithgow Ladies Choir for their Christmas Concert.

In 2017, Linlithgow Masonic Lodge became home, and **Robin Foulkes** took over as conductor leading them through 2 years and 5 successful concerts. **Kate O'Hara** took over the baton in 2019 for 2 concerts and took them on a varied musical journey including the world of film music.

When the pandemic hit and rehearsals were cancelled, two projects were organised. A virtual project of an arrangement of 'Ode to Joy' by a local composer, **Suzanne John Parry**, involved 11 players sending in audio and video recordings which were put together by **Kenneth McColl**, and the recording is soon to be released on the LSO YouTube channel.

The second lockdown project was launched in January. It was aimed at the local community, particularly children, encouraging them to get creative in the snow, and to send in photographs of their creations for inclusion in a video, set to a concert recording of the full LSO playing an arrangement of Howard Blake's 'Dance of the Snowmen'. This recording will also be released in the coming weeks on the LSO YouTube channel in time for the Christmas season, so everyone who sent in photos keep your eyes peeled.

They're also members of makingmusic, a charity that supports amateur music groups across the UK, and were recently shortlisted for their 'Adopt a Music Creator' project, where composers are

paired with music groups to collaborate on a commission that will be recorded for broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Unfortunately they were not successful this year but maybe in the future they will be lucky.

It's been a busy and eventful five years establishing the orchestra.

Going forward, they aim to be at the heart of Linlithgow's music-making scene and welcome opportunities for collaborations with other music groups in and around the area as well as opportunities to perform in new venues. Players from Linlithgow and the surrounding areas are always welcome to go along and join in at the Monday evening rehearsals at the Masonic Hall (7.30-9.30pm during West Lothian School term-time). They can be contacted through their website www.linlithgowstringorchestra.co.uk, via email linlithgowstringorchestra@gmail.com or on Facebook. All in all a lovely community success story. **Happy Anniversary LSO!**

I hope 2022 brings more events to write about. If you hear of anything interesting on the horizon please do get in touch. patswan@virginmedia.com



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"a painter paints pictures on canvas and musicians paint their pictures on silence"

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GARY CLINTON, MUSIC TUTOR



Taking Up Guitar?

The end of the year is often a time to reflect on our lives, and perhaps take up a new hobby. So for my last contribution to our local magazine of 2021, I thought I'd provide tips on what gear to buy if you are thinking of starting guitar.

What Guitar To Buy

Firstly, there are 2 main types of guitar – acoustic and electric. In terms of acoustics, broadly speaking they are divided into two main categories: 'steel strings' are the go-to guitar for those interested in rock, blues, pop, and folk music, and 'nylon strings' are typically thought of as classical or Spanish guitars.



In terms of electric guitars, a small practice amplifier and guitar cable is also required. Which of these options you go for depends on your budget, age and experience.

Start On A Nylon

Typically, my advice for a complete beginner is to opt

for a nylon string, and you should spend somewhere in the region of £50-£120. The nylon strings are easier to push down hence easier to get notes happening, plus you don't need the extra expense of an amplifier, should the instrument not pan out longer term.

What Size Do I Need?

Approximately speaking, children aged 8 and above should opt for a 3/4 size guitar, and children from age 11 should opt for a full sized guitar. If you can make the 3/4 work for 6 or 7-year-olds, then go for that. (Go in-store to check). For those starting very young (age 4+), a half size guitar is the norm, but here is my top tip: buy a Yamaha guitalele.

I feel half size guitars are more akin to a toy guitar - they never stay in tune and I often feel the very young ones battle with the tight fretboard. The guitalele body is small but the neck is wider allowing them to have a fair chance at getting into frets – currently £65 at Kenny's Music.

What Manufacturer?

Stick with reputable companies like Fender & Yamaha and I have also seen surprising quality from more 'budget', entry-level companies like Encore & Valencia from as little as £50. Just be careful at this price point as some manufacturers cut corners, or occasionally a production run has issues, so ensure whatever you purchase has a warranty and preferably a 30 day, full refund, return policy.



For Those About To Rock!

It is entirely possible to start off on a steel string or electric, but this should only apply to students aged 16+, as the metal

based strings are harder on fingers, with steel strings being the toughest to push down. It will cost you more and there are some do's and don'ts, but if you have the budget, it's very exciting to wield a 6 string axe that looks similar to your guitar hero's signature model!

Do: Spend over £200, buy full size models, and try before you buy.

Don't: Buy 3/4 size steel string or electrics – always go for nylon.

The Go-To Electric

The Yamaha Pacifica is the 'no brainer' model I always recommend to new students looking to start on electric, or those looking to upgrade after paying their dues on a nylon string. The crucial thing about the durability of guitars is the wood. The Pacifica has an alder body, maple neck and rosewood fretboard, meaning it will literally last decades. Compare this with many other models around its £230-£250 price point, and you don't see that. The danger of inferior wood and composites is the warping of the neck – and then the guitar is pretty useless.

There are other good options from Squier, Epiphone and Ibanez, but read reviews and check the wood.



Amplifier

These days practice amps come with a host of built-in effects which are really fun, so I recommend picking one



up like this. Check out the Line 6 Spider V20, Blackstar ID: Core 10 and Peavey Vypyr all of which can be bought for around £110. Vox, Orange, Roland and Fender also have great models, and to be honest, when it comes to amps these days you can't go wrong if you spend over £100.

Do: Invest in your amplifier – your electric guitar can only sound as good as the amp.

Don't: Buy a £40/£50 practice amp as spending around £100-£120 easily gives you something more than twice as good. If budget is the problem, wait and save up for this next price point. Believe me it's worth it.

Where To Buy

Aim to go in-store, and try guitars out before buying – don't use Amazon, and try to support local and independent shops. In Livingston we have "Wall To Wall Music," and I like "Kenny Music" over in Dunfermline, as they are not one of the "big boys," like Guitar Guitar.

Having said that though, the range of instruments in Guitar Guitar is impressive, so why not make a day of it – go to a few stores, and grab a bite after – a great experience for young kids and adults alike! You'll see so many cool guitars, and maybe you'll set your sights on a dream model. My dream guitar is a '59 Fender Jazzmaster – a stunning 'off-set' from the golden era of guitars. Slightly over my budget though, at £16,378.28 plus shipping!

Have a great festive period when it comes, everyone, and keep an eye out for me at Tesco's, where I'll be buying the odd scratch card to try and afford that guitar!

You can keep up to date with Gary's tuition business through social media
Twitter: @GaryGuitar4
Facebook: garyclintonguitartutor



NAILS BY

Katie Pegg

KATIE PEGG NAILS

LOCATION

MJ Nail Bar

Highwell Station Road

Linlithgow, EH49 6BW

DISCOUNT

10% off appointment

when quoting code

KP10

SERVICES

Acrylic ~ BIAB ~ Gel



CONTACT DETAILS

Instagram ~ @katiepegg.nails

Facebook ~ katie Pegg nails

Email ~ katiepegg.nails@gmail.com



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MARKET CROSS?

Laurie Alexander

All that remains of the market cross of Linlithgow is its name which lives on as the designation of the square in front of the Town Hall. Built on the site of the weekly market, it became the focus of other civic activities including the reading of proclamations. Symbolically it was of greater importance in that sense than the neighbouring fountain which is the only monument to have survived.

My search of the council minute books revealed that the town council decided at their meeting on 25.9.1779 to demolish it, viz ‘... a good part of the parapet wall of Avon Bridge has fallen down ... needs repair ... stones may be furnished from the Cross head which the Council are unanimously of Opinion ought to be taken down ...’. It beggars belief that stones from this ancient treasure were used to repair the bridge over the river Avon at Linlithgow Bridge.

Fortunately, there is a possible survivor in the Linlithgow Heritage Trust Museum, where a stone with a Black Bitch carving is thought to be from the ‘Mercat Cross’. It had found its way to Pitmedden House, Aberdeenshire, and was finally returned to its rightful home in 1995.

When Oliver Cromwell decided to garrison troops at Linlithgow in September 1650*, he fortified the palace by building a defensive wall on the west side of the outer entrance gate. The stone came from buildings that were demolished to provide a clear line of sight to the High Street. This included all of the houses on the west side of Kirkgate and Cross House. All of the public buildings were also demolished on the east side which included the grammar school, the old tolbooth and at the square, the fountain and the market cross. The only buildings to survive were the houses on the east and west sides of the public square (the Cross).

**During the English occupation of Scotland.*

My information for this article comes mainly from the town council minute books which are held by the National Archives in Edinburgh and date from 1620. The minute books record the following approximate restoration dates for the structures that were raised;

The fountain 1660 (The trough or well was completed earlier in 1653)

Tolbooth (mostly as extant) 1670 - the steeple was finished in 1673

Grammar School 1671

The actual date for rebuilding the market cross, along with its booths or shops on the east and west sides, was not found. As this was the location of the weekly market, its significance and symbolism must have made its replacement a high priority. The first reference to it in the minute book was 29.9.1655, which mentioned the let of the booth on the east side of the market cross, which implies that it had been rebuilt as a priority (the well certainly was). Unfortunately the ink is badly faded on the pages that record the minutes for the period January 1654 to July 1655 making them virtually unreadable, which explains why the actual date was not found.

The exact location of this edifice is ambiguous as testified by the following extracts from four historians who had recorded the history of the town.

1710 Sir Robert Sibbald, History of the Sherifffdom of Linlithgow

‘at the foot of the lane [Kirkgate] is to be seen a foursquare place, in the middle of which is another curious fountain ... this square has fine buildings on all sides...’ There is no mention of the market cross by him apart from the following reference in the introduction to his book where the town’s origins are described. ‘The town of Linlithgow is an ancient Royal Burgh: if we may believe the report of some ancient inhabitants, there was a cross in it, erected by our King Achaius ...’. If Sir Robert saw the market cross, he would surely have been more specific about it (only mentioned in the past tense), which leaves us to wonder at this seeming omission.



NB. Linlithgow's Cross was described as containing two booths for letting on market days. The interior was also large enough to accommodate the town council when they annually drank a toast on the monarch's birthday (following the toast, glasses were smashed against the interior wall).

1737 George Crawford, History of Linlithgow, p.26.

'At the Market Place is the cross which resembles that of Edinburgh (shown below) and had by it a curious fontaine in imitation of that in the Palace curiously cut into a great many figures.' The words 'had by it' confirm two separate structures, but there is no clue as to their positions. The Linlithgow structure may have been larger than the Edinburgh market cross.

1868 Adam Dawson, Rambling Recollections of Past Times.

'The structure containing the cross, which stood so as to be visible from the porch of the palace-yard, and within a few yards of the street, was an octagonal erection resting on a flight of steps, and surrounded with a bartizaned wall. In the centre another building arose, which supported the sacred symbol. The space within the bartizan afforded room for the magistrates, town council and principal inhabitants to assemble and "drink the healths" on the King's birth-day.' This description, if one allows for the booths previously described, suggests an amply sized structure and must be regarded with some caution. It also places it in line with Kirkgate, i.e. on the west side of the fountain.

19 James Beveridge, Market Cross Shops, National Archives of Scotland, ref GD215/1697

'The Market Cross of the Burgh stood a little to the East of the Cross Well, and as was common in burghs in olden times a Booth or Shop was placed on the East and West sides of it. ... The Market Cross itself had disappeared by the beginning of the Nineteenth Century.' These are the only clues given by him as to the composition of the market cross, and it is significant that his research led him to believe that the site was on the east side of the fountain.

So here we have it, to think it was in line with Kirkgate, one believes it was on the east side of the square and the location is not mentioned by the fourth. To add to this confusion, the first Ordnance Survey (OS) map mentions the Cross and Well and a map drawn by Armstrong in 1773 shows two structures. The OS drawing, see fig 1, states that the 'Cross Well' was "on the site of the Market Cross," whilst the Armstrong's drawing - see

fig 2, shows the cross on the east side of the fountain.

This is the only evidence I found which points to the location being as given by James Beveridge (confirmed by the fig 2 map), but is this the end of the story? I think that the OS map has it partly correct in that the fountain, shown in fig 1, was built on the east part of the market cross. In this position, the cross would have been visible from the top of Kirkgate.



fig. 1

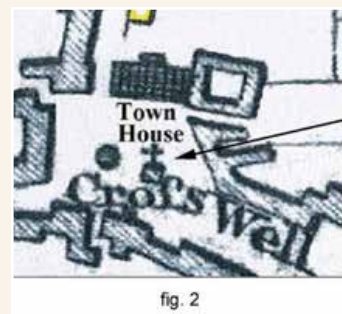


fig. 2



Symbol above indicates the Market Cross

Our best clue as to the location of the Market Cross comes from a minute in 1807 which records that the fountain was rebuilt because it was too decayed to repair. The location is described thus, '... adjoining the Town House of Linlithgow, and a little to the Westward of the old one...'

It was built by a one-armed mason called Robert Gray who strapped his hammer to his stump. The photo below shows the fountain with the ghost of its predecessor added in the position described, leaving little space for another structure on its east side!.

As to the position of the Market Cross, my view is that it must have been on the Kirkgate axis.



Fountain with the ghost of its predecessor.

Are you thinking of moving in the New Year? ...

Latest on the Housing Market

The Scottish Executive issued a report on the housing market to the third quarter of 2021. Some of the key points reported are:

>> The number of recorded transactions in Q2 of 2021 was 26,324, an increase of 181.9% on the same quarter in 2020. No surprise considering the 2020 lockdown, but still up 2.2% on the previous 4 year average for Q2.

>> Another useful measure is the recorded revenue from LBTT, (stamp duty as was). In August this year it was 8.3% higher than the same month in 2016 to 2019.

>> Average house prices increased 10% in Q2 of 2021, compared to the same period in 2020, with the strongest growth in prices seen for detached properties.

Thinking of Moving?

Are you thinking of moving in the New Year? The housing market remains very busy, so this might be the right time to take advantage of the high levels of demand for property. There are record numbers of homebuyers looking right now, so make sure you give yourself the best chance of attracting them – and getting the best price for your property.

Choose a professional estate agent who clearly demonstrates commitment to their first duty, which is to get you the very best price. Choosing the right agent can have a massive impact on the outcome for you.

Here's a list to help you know what to look for:

>> How experienced are they in your area?

>> Have they successfully sold properties similar to yours recently? Find out how long it took them, what prices

were achieved, and what the difference between their initial asking price and the sold price was, if any.

>> When it comes to the fee the agent charges, usually the most important things to keep in mind are:

1. The amount of money the house sells for: the sold price minus the agent's fee.
2. How quickly the sale will happen.

In other words, going with an agent who charges slightly less commission, but ends up taking much longer to sell your property – and then achieving a lower price – may be a false economy.

Dealing with an estate agent who provides a great service, is responsive, proactive, and an expert in your local area, will make a huge difference to the whole experience, and will most likely get your house sold faster.

Get the price right

Don't be necessarily swayed by the agent promising the highest price for your home. It's tempting, but if you end up over-pricing the property, it will only prolong the process, and you'll have to reduce the price further down the line anyway.

A recent study carried out by Rightmove found that you were twice as likely to sell your home if it sold based on the first listed asking price. Instead, ask the agent to provide evidence to support why they recommend that asking price. And again, look at their recent history in the area.

The first two weeks your house appears on property portals is usually when it gets the most attention from home-hunters – especially during this busy period. So, if it's priced correctly, with the level of exposure it could be getting, you may even end up with an offer in the first couple of weeks.

Here are some basic ideas to make your home look amazing when it's on display:

1. Make it light and airy

Darker rooms generally look smaller than lighter ones, and this can be a big turn off for potential buyers. So we'd suggest making sure that blinds are open, and curtains are apart, to flood your home with light.

2. Keep the garden tidy

The front garden is the first thing that a potential buyer will see, so make sure that you give them a reason to smile straight away. Similarly, the back garden can be a deal clincher, and an impressive outdoor space could set your home apart from the rest. Here are some suggestions for things to tick off your list.

3. Bathrooms and kitchens

These two rooms are the most expensive for a buyer to upgrade. However, if you've made an effort to clean and declutter them, you'll be giving potential buyers another reason to be positive about your home. So, here are some of our top tips:

Bathroom:

- > Making this room mould-free is a must
- > Store toiletries away where possible
- > Clean shower doors
- > Keep the toilet seat down

Kitchen:

- > Keep worktops tidy
- > Keep utensils organised and food in cupboards
- > Put washing up away
- > Clean the windows
- > Tidy away any indication of pets being in the house, as your prospective buyer may not be a pet lover.

PATSY AND HER PURSE

A Linlithgow resident has been left stunned by an act of kindness by a stranger who she desperately would like to thank for what they did for her recently. **Patsy Baxter** said she "stupidly" left her purse on a Saturday railway replacement bus from Edinburgh to Dunbar, and had immediately panicked about cancelling bank and other cards.

"Imagine my amazement to get home on Sunday afternoon and find that someone had put it through my letterbox. I have no idea who it was."

Added Patsy, *"I wanted to put something in the Black Bitch magazine in the hope the person lives in the town. But he or she may live a distance away. I would just like them to know how grateful I am for their act of kindness."*



VIRTUE MINE HONOUR: CHARLES MCLEAN'S WAR

A new book tells the story of a young Linlithgow man's war – and his tragic death in 1941 at the age of twenty-four.

Charles McLean was born in Linlithgow in 1917. His father, Donald Archie, came to the town from Tíree and joined the Lothian police, reaching the rank of Deputy Chief Constable. His mother was Euphemia Stoddart, whose family ran a number of quarries around the town.

When Charles left school he joined the Commercial Bank in Linlithgow, but was called up by the RAF just before the war and sent to Hastings on the south coast of England. His training as a navigator lasted seventeen months before he was posted

to 217 Squadron Coastal Command, flying Bristol Beauforts out of RAF St Eval in Cornwall.


Charles was a prolific correspondent, his letters home rich with details of daily life: *'Yesterday we emptied our palisades and filled them with fresh straw. The Bedroom smells like a stable now.'* He made friends easily. One wrote to him: *'Fate has had so many chances to get rid of you that He must give it up as impossible by this time.'*

It was not to be. On 15 November 1941 his plane did not return from a night-time sortie over the Channel. The bodies of two fellow crew members were washed up on the Dutch coast, but Charles and his pilot were lost in action. Charles McLean's name is on the Tíree war memorial. His war had lasted just six months. Indeed, of

his initial training group, only two in ten survived the war. When his plane did not return, the families of the crew supported each other. Margaret Halley, the mother of the pilot, wrote to Charles's father: *'Our dear boys have given their lives in all probability for their country, and all that their country stands for just now. Since we must all die, there are worse ways of dying than that.'*


The book was written by Dr John Holliday, who runs the museum on the island Tíree and Charles's niece, Fiona Wilson.

Virtue Mine Honour: Charles McLean's War by Dr John Holliday and Fiona Wilson is available from Far From the Madding Crowd, 20 Linlithgow High Street, price £12.





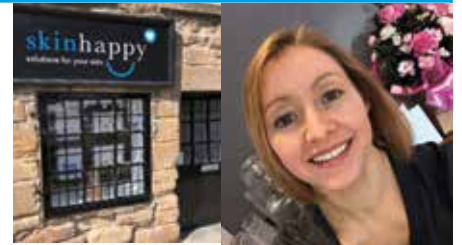
ENERGY CLINIC & DOCTOR BIKE

SATURDAY December 4th 2021
10am till 2pm
At: Old Library (EH49 Hub), 6-7 The Vennel, Linlithgow, EH49 7EX



- ✓ Come along to find out about the free & impartial energy advice and information on funding available from Home Energy Scotland, and arrange follow-up support
- ✓ Learn about Linlith-Go-Solar enterprise and how we are supporting our community towards a low carbon future
- ✓ Get your bike fixed by 1st Step's expert bike mechanic at the same time
 - ✓ For any household, business, group or organisation
 - ✓ Prizedraw



GOOD SKIN CARE = HAPPY SKIN AND HAPPY YOU.

In recent weeks I've had several new and existing clients asking me for help and advice with their skin which they feel has suddenly got away with them and not looking or behaving like it use to.

Because skin care does not always fall high on people's priority. They don't usually look for advice until a problem arises. I have seen clients skin problems improve after a consultation with me. I find out what their routine is, what products they use at home and how they use them. Sometimes with simple suggestions and occasionally asking them to stop using certain products their skin has quite literally shouted "Finally! and Thank you!" and within days their skin is looking and feeling better.

There are many in-clinic options too that can help and improve the appearance of your skin but to ensure a successful long-term result, it is always better to establish the root cause of any skin problem before offering options. Sometimes this may mean a visit to your doctor or dermatologist to discuss underlying problems that may be causing it other times it may be more straight forward and easier to manage.

Knowing how to listen to your skin is also key. Charcoal scrubs for example have caused a number of my client's skin problems to become worse, not realising that using them too often can cause irritation and exasperate the problem.

CHOOSING GOOD SKIN CARE PRODUCTS?

Finding products that work with your skin, however, can be challenging because there are far too many products out there claiming all sorts of wonderful cures but where is the evidence? **Medicines go through strict clinical trials before they are approved for use. Medical grade skin care goes through similar processes** with a huge budget on clinical testing before they become available. They contain active ingredients meaning they too need to be prescribed by a medical grade skin care practitioner (like me) before use to avoid unnecessary and undesirable reactions from improper use.

For more information and to book your consultation, visit our website. We restore radiance back into your skin to help you feel confident, carefree, and skin happy.

CLEANSERS

4 types to suit all skin types from sensitive, Rosacea, dry-normal, normal-oily, ageing and acne-prone skin. Gentle yet deeply effective PH balanced.

Removes environmental pollutants, impurities and excess oil.

ESSENTIAL SERUMS

Potent antioxidants to reduce visible signs of ageing for all skin types caused by free radicals, pollution and Advanced Glycation End products (A.G.Es).

Retinol Resurfacing Serums – (0.25%, 0.5% and 1%) improves skin tone and texture reduces blemishes. Increases elasticity.

SUNSCREENS

100% Physical sunscreen containing both Zinc Oxide and Titanium Dioxide

Can be used as your daily moisturiser. Tinted and un-tinted options

Five different broad-spectrum SPF 40 sunscreens. For most skin types. sensitive/dry/normal One broad-spectrum SPF 42 un-tinted sunscreen. OIL FREE A lightweight, non-comedogenic sunscreen for sensitive, redness and acne-prone skin.

EXFOLIATORS

4 types to suit most skin types, from a brightening solution, a gentle exfoliating scrub (1-2 times per week) to a highly effective fruit enzyme exfoliator Great for weekly home pampering use or a pre-event.

TARGETED SERUMS

7 types for Sensitive and Rosacea skin, Hyperpigmentation, Acne skin, General skin health and/or Ageing skin. Reinforces cell protection and turn over, manages bacteria, Antioxidant protection, rebuilds hydrolipidic barrier. degrades pigment, stimulates collagen & elastin.

Medical grade skin care works wonders for all skin types, problematic or not, slowing the signs of ageing and maintaining youthful skin for longer.

Alumier MD products are free from parabens, sulphates, dyes, artificial fragrances and over 1500 other ingredients that are unnecessary and purposely excluded.

The results are amazing and can be life changing for clients with previously problematic skin. The blue box gives a very brief introduction to a range of medical grade skin care products available.

HOMECARE SELF-CARE KITS
It's not all about in-clinic treatments.
'At Home kits' or individual products are available to purchase after a consultation (in-clinic or virtual). These can be used as stand-alone home-care use or in addition to in-clinic treatments to enhance long term results.

WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

At skin Happy we only choose clinically proven and medical grade providers. Improving your skin and educating you on the importance of skin care.

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

If you or someone you know needs a little TLC or want to find out more on how to improve or kick start a good skin care regime - **A no obligation consultation can put you on the right path to being skin happy.**

GIFT VOUCHERS

Vouchers can also be purchased for your special someone who needs or deserves to be treated to some TLC. They can be put their vouchers towards in-clinic treatments, homecare kits or individual products.

Skin Happy, 42 High Street,
Linlithgow Tel: 01506 888138
www.skinhappy.co.uk
E: info@skinhappy.co.uk



SkinHappy skinhappyme

SMALL PLEASURES CLARE CHAMBERS

'Small Pleasures' is a historical romance and mystery novel set in Kent during the late 1950s. It follows a series of events leading from a seemingly innocuous newspaper article about parthenogenesis in sea urchins, frogs and rabbits. In the novel, readers of the North Kent Echo were driven to indignation over the melodramatic headline: 'Men No Longer Needed for Reproduction!' They wrote to the newspaper's letters page in their droves to loudly protest their views on the matter. One letter alone stood out from all the others, with the writer claiming that her own child was a result of such a phenomenon.

Journalist Jean Swiney - "features editor, columnist, dogsbody" is given the unenviable task of following up this outrageous claim. She meets the family and becomes enchanted by their life, researching people and places from their past in order to fully understand the situation. The woman making the claim is a Swiss-German seamstress called Gretchen Tilbury who is married to a quiet, older man called Howard. Gretchen is charismatic, outgoing and charming. Jean - pragmatic, calm and resourceful - finds herself drawn to her as a moth to a flame. Gretchen's daughter, a ten-year-old called Margaret, is equally charming and sweet-natured. Although Jean endeavours to maintain a professional, objective stance, she increasingly finds that she can find no obvious motive nor subterfuge behind the claim that Margaret was delivered to Gretchen by angels.

The novel is well-written and offers insightful details on what life was like for women during the post-war period. All of the characters are well defined and endearingly portrayed. Many comparisons are drawn between the lives that Gretchen and Jean lead, and the expectations placed on them by society. It is a story of love and loss, betrayal and compassion, and the relationships we have with others and also with ourselves.

"Previous experience taught her that the pain would not be unending - but neither would it subside smoothly, incrementally, but rather in a series of crashing waves, some of which might still knock her off her feet."

Jean is a solid and dependable protagonist for the story. As an unmarried woman approaching 40, there is a general sense that her prospects have begun to fade, which is in keeping with the tone of the time period. She lives a humdrum life caring for her aging mother,

who is suffering from a plethora of neuroses which ensure she is increasingly dependent on her daughter. The technicolor juxtaposition of Gretchen's vivacious personality and easy life, filled with

family and good times, seems almost dazzling at times to Jean who has seemed to settle for an altogether more drab existence. It is only as the novel progresses that we catch a glimpse beneath the surface and understand that all is not as it seems in paradise.

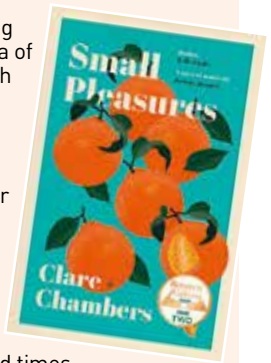
"Never before had she considered that all these experiences that had nearly demolished her had built her into something better."

Author Chambers took inspiration for her novel from a similar, real-life series of events which took place in 1955 following a national newspaper's Christmas-time appeal to find a real-life example of a human immaculate conception. Similar to the novel, after conducting a series of tests, scientists were not able to reach a consensus over whether a woman named Emmimarie Jones was able to conceive a child immaculately while confined to bed in a German sanatorium.

It is an interesting subject upon which to base a novel and Chambers expertly weaves a plausible narrative around which is surely an impossible situation - or so we conclude with the wisdom of our 21st century knowledge. Chambers works to advantages in science and technology, such as DNA testing being beyond the advancements of the times, to keep readers guessing to the final paragraphs about the ending of the story. The ending was not what I expected, and it ensured that I continued to think about the events for a long time after I had finished reading which, to me, is always the mark of an interesting novel and one which I highly recommend.

Lisa Nettleton

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



DRAMFOOL, WHISKY AND PELE

An incredible global fundraising event by a small Linlithgow company has helped raise over £20,000 for the favourite charity of Jim McEwan, a legend in the Scotch whisky industry, who retired recently after 58 years.

Local whisky enthusiast and collector, **Bruce Farquhar**, who owns Dramfool along with his business partner, **Colin Fraser**, hosted an online "master class" by the man from Islay he dubs "the Pele of Scotch whisky."

The event on Zoom featured eight cask strength whisky miniatures shipped by Dramfool to 260 enthusiasts in 16 countries, and was held across eight time zones.

Said Bruce, "It was a huge logistical exercise, but it was a tremendous success. Between that and £50 extra we charged on just over 300 exclusive bottles from a single cask, we labelled 'Journey's End' whisky in Jim's honour, raised £20,549 for his chosen charity, Scotland's Air Charity Ambulance, which provides a vital lifeline to Scottish islands like Islay."

Bruce said that Jim had retired in May after many years as distillery manager and master blender at Bowmore and Bruichladdich

on Islay, before spending a number of years as a whisky consultant.

"I approached Jim and asked if Dramfool, which I set up in Linlithgow to bottle single cask whisky under our own label, could buy his personal collection of 40 casks. I went into partnership with Colin, and we set about raising what was a substantial sum of money."

Bruce said that he was still working as a commissioning engineer at Sullom Voe oil and gas terminal on the Shetland Islands, but lockdown had meant he had been travelling there less often. He and Colin were continuing to operate Dramfool online, and business had been going well.

Added Bruce, "I think it's great that a small company in Linlithgow like ours has been able to raise such a substantial amount of money for a very worthy charity. We went over to Islay recently and handed the cheque over with Jim McEwan being there - and had a special dram to mark the occasion!"

L to R: Bruce Farquhar, Jim McEwan, Katherine Urquhart, Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance representative on Islay, and Colin Fraser.

John Smith



LADAS - OAKWELL ALLOTMENTS, NOVEMBER



Oakwell allotments in November

Work has slowed down at Oakwell allotments as most crops have now been harvested, and the plots are being prepared ahead of next year's growing season. The main job now for plot holders is spreading or digging in compost bought in bulk from Garden Solutions. We are expecting a delivery of manure for plot holders to use. Wood chip delivered free from the Skye man (thanks Derek), is being used to renovate paths and can also be used as a mulch.

West Lothian Council Food Growing Strategy

West Lothian Council Executive have approved the West Lothian Food Growing Strategy 2020- 2025, which identifies sites that can be considered for different kinds of food growing, promotes community involvement and will help the council to plan for potential future growing sites. As part of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, each local authority is required to prepare a Food Growing

Strategy and review it every five years.

The West Lothian Food Growing Strategy highlights the benefits of food growing, lists all the potential methods of community growing and provides a summary of the existing community food growing position in West Lothian.

It also highlights the current barriers to food growing and outlines key actions to make it easier for people in West Lothian to grow their own food, in a way that is most suitable for them.

Executive councillor for the environment Tom Conn said: *"I welcome the adoption of the West Lothian Food Growing Strategy, which clearly sets out how we will support community growing locally. Community growing has huge benefits to our society, including keeping people active, social mixing, and of course, producing healthy food on our doorstep."*

For more details of community food growing in West Lothian, including allotment sites, community gardens and contacts, please visit

<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/foodgrowing>

Things to do in your fruit and vegetable garden in November

>> Keep hoeing weeds as they appear and dig out perennial, deep-rooted ones.

>> Now and next month is the time to prepare your vegetable bed for next year's growing season by spreading compost or

manure and either digging it into the top 8 inches of soil or leaving it for the worms to work in. Do not add compost or manure to where you intend to grow carrots or parsnips next year, as rich soil will cause them to fork.

>> Plant autumn varieties of garlic this month if you did not do it in October. Give the garlic some protection over winter with cloches or horticultural fleece, if you can. An alternative is to mulch the garlic with a thick layer of grass clippings, provided that the lawn has not been treated with weed killer.

>> Seed catalogues will be arriving over the next few months, so start planning for what you are going to grow next year.

>> Now is a good time to plant blackcurrants and gooseberries. This can be done at any time over the next few months.

>> Leeks, kale and Brussels sprouts could be ready for harvesting, but these vegetables can be left to stand over winter and be used as required.

As we have a long waiting list, we are no longer taking requests for new plots at Oakwell allotments. Please contact West Lothian Council to request an allotment plot; there are two Council owned allotment sites in West Lothian at present, and it is hoped that more sites will become available over the next couple of years.

Paul Taylor,
Chair LADAS



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PRIMARY SCHOOLS ART COMPETITION



An art competition aimed at increasing awareness among young Linlithgow pupils of the Royal Burgh's rich heritage has been voted a great success by the wide range of organisations involved in the project.

In a keenly fought creative contest involving P7 pupils in the town's five primary schools, **Cirsten Murray** of Linlithgow Bridge became

the first winner of the striking trophy featuring the legendary Black Bitch from the coat of arms, cast in silver.

The awards ceremony took place in Linlithgow Burgh Halls, and Cirsten, who is taught by Mrs Knox, also received a cheque for £300 for her interpretation of the Black Bitch. In second place, winning a cheque for £200, was **Annie Morrison** from Low Port Primary, who is taught by Ms Susan Johnston.

The three other class winners, **Patrick Stewart** from Linlithgow Primary, **Rebecca Carlisle** from St Joseph's, and **Megan Connor** from Springfield, each received £100. The five schools were also each given £100 for participating in the competitions.

Also present at the ceremony was the silversmith who crafted the trophy, **David Ramsay** of the prestigious Edinburgh jewellers Hamilton and Inches. He was accompanied by the company's Sarah Donaldson, who lives in Linlithgow.

The competition was organised by Linlithgow & Bo'ness Rotary, and the ceremony in the Burgh Halls was compered by member **Ian Gibson** in the absence of president David James, who had another engagement.



Ian told the audience, including the winners, parents and teachers, that the competition had arisen from the success of the Public Art Project, which has seen sculptures of the Black Bitch and St Michael erected in the town. The project had been partly funded by One Linlithgow BID and the Town Management Group.

At the end of the project, and *"after much hard work by Ron Smith"* - convener of Burgh Beautiful and a driving force behind the Public Art project - the town was awarded a grant which was then given back to the funders. Due to the interest from local schools, the idea had been hatched for a schools art competition, with funds received going towards the trophy.

Ian added that the competition prizes had been funded by The Deacons Court, The Dyers of Linlithgow, Linlithgow Round Table One Linlithgow BID, and the Rotary club. The trophy itself was being put on display in the Burgh Halls, with the winner's name and school engraved on it. The intention is to have it competed for annually.

After the ceremony Ron Smith said it had been "fantastic" to see the Public Art project taken further and into the town's schools in such a creative way.

"One of the main aims of the Public Art project was to increase awareness of Linlithgow's amazing heritage, and this is certainly doing this in a way that's also encouraging creativity among young pupils. The standard of the entries has been very impressive."

Evelyn Noble, chair of One Linlithgow, which represents businesses throughout the town, said the Board had been delighted to support such a

worthwhile, and creative, competition. Ms Noble, who was one of the judges, said the standard of entries had been very high, and had left her and her fellow judges with difficult choices to make.



The Scottish Gin Awards

It was a good night for Linlithgow Distillery who collected 2 medals. A gold medal in the Flavoured Gin category for the LinGin Colours Coconut edition and a Silver medal for the limited edition

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This month's Westport Vet's Pet of The Month is Bulldozer Buchanan. Bulldozer is a 16-year-old Devon Rex cat.

His family describe Bulldozer 'Bully' as a curly cat - like cotton wool and velvet - who is warm to touch, because he doesn't have guard hairs (the ones you see on your jumper when you cuddle a normal cat). His reduced insulation makes him very people-oriented.

Devons are quite 'dog-like' with their behaviour. Bulldozer used to play fetch in his younger days - dropping hair ties on his owner's face while they were lying in bed, so they could throw them for him. He can sit and come on demand, and he even used to use a human toilet! With an appetite like a Labrador, he would eat till he exploded!

Bulldozer is 16 now, so his favourite things are all about eating and sleeping. He occasionally goes out the front of the house to taunt Lucy and Angus, his neighbour's dogs!

Cheeky habits include sitting on his owners' faces while they're reading in bed, or on the laptop keyboard, when they are trying to work.

His favourite game to play is 'stair attack' where he likes to grab his owners through the railings and his favourite place is where there is sun shining.

Being a more vintage model at 16 years old, his family have had to make some lifestyle adjustments to assist his aging process. His owners now have a litter box for him to use instead of the toilet. Bulldozer has become grain intolerant, so grain free food keeps him happy most of the time.

Like other animals, cats are susceptible to the many symptoms of aging, however cats are experts at hiding any issues. This means owners must be extra vigilant to try and identify signs of aging, or spot any issues with their cats' health.

Here are some key things for owners to look out for which are predominantly associated with aging cats.

Signs of vision problems include excessive blinking, pawing of the eye, eye swelling, prominent blood vessels in the whites of the eyes, pupils that remain dilated in light, cloudiness of the eye, or any changes or unusual markings.

Eye problems can present as a primary condition, or may be secondary to a larger health issue. These include elevated blood pressure and kidney disease.

If you notice increased drinking, thirst, urination, or weight loss, owners should seek vet advice.

Access to water, away from their food bowl, is essential not only in the prevention of kidney disease, but also constipation in older cats.

Switching to senior cat food ensures your cat's requirements are met. Being lower in calories and higher in fibre helps prevent weight gain as they age. Often coming in smaller pieces makes it easier to eat and digest. According to petMD, as many as nine out of 10 senior cats show evidence of arthritis when x-rayed, but it is not easy for owners to spot. The most important thing owners can do to prevent the pain from arthritis, is to keep your cat at a healthy weight.

Dental disease is extremely common in aging cats. Often there are no clear signs of dental disease, however, some owners may notice weight loss, poor coat condition, bad breath, picky eating, or their cats being a bit grumpy. Painful holes, broken teeth, gum disease and oral tumours all significantly affect their quality of life. Infections in the mouth can slowly affect the liver, kidneys and heart. Routine dental care and regular veterinary dental checks can drastically improve your cat's quality of life, even extend their lifespan.



Environmental enrichment is an essential part of your cat's quality of life. All cats need places to climb, places to hide, things to scratch, and ways to hunt and play, which help your cat stay physically and mentally stimulated, as well as healthy. As your cat ages, ensure play objects, food, water and a draught free warm bed remain accessible.

Regular health and weight checks are the most important thing a cat owner can do for their feline friends. As your cat ages, make sure these become more frequent, and with the help from the Westport Team, management of the aging process should maintain your cat's best life!

If you have any concerns about your pet, in an emergency please call Westport Vet Linlithgow on 01506 844165.

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Questions?

Answers

Paul
Rolfe 