

BLACK BITCH



ANNIVERSARY

BITCH

ISSUE NO. 87
JANUARY 2022



BLACK BITCH WHAT'S IN A NAME? 8

ONE LINLITHGOW
SEASONAL REVIEW, CANAL
200th YEAR ANNIVERSARY 6

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- 3** In this issue
David Tait, Editor
- 4** One Linlithgow
Xmas roundup
- 6** One Linlithgow
LUCS marks anniversary as Union Canal celebrates 200 years
- 8** Black Bitch
What's in a name?
- 11** A Brief History of Humankind, Yuval Noah Harari
Book Review
- 12** Folk Fae Lithgae
Paul Charlton
- 13** Sammy McKee
Volunteer of the Year Winner - an insight
- 14** St Michael's Parish Church Spire
Fund raising and Donations

- 15** Sarah Currie
Mind Set and Life Coach, new business profile
- 16** Cycling without Age Scotland
A Hurl in the Trishaw around Linlithgow
- 17** West Lothian Chilly Dippers
As the temperature drops - membership increases
- 18** The Seik Fowk o' Linlithquho
Bruce Jamieson explores Linlithgow
- 20** Music Man, Gary Clinton
CD, Vinyl or both
- 21** Gala Day Plans
A welcome return for the event planned for Saturday 18 June
- 22** Linlithgow High Street
Linlithgow's Public Wells Laurie Alexander

- 25** Paul Rolfe Estate Agents
Property Market Commentary
- 26** Skin Happy
All about the Brows
- 27** New Hopetoun Gardens
Enjoying your Winter garden from your window
- 28** LADAS Oakwell allotments
Trimming hedges, Growing potatoes
- 30** Linlithgow and Bo'ness Probus Club
For friendship to grow and meeting points
- 31** Westport Vets
Meet Bella Cunningham



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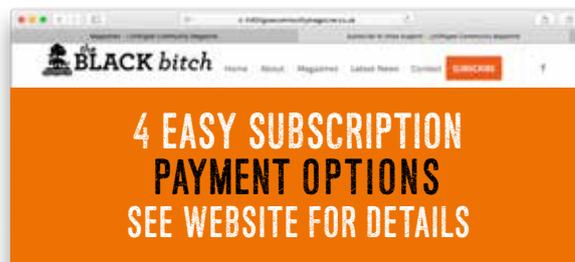


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DAVID TAIT
EDITOR
THE BLACK BITCH
MAGAZINE



CUSTOMER IS KING!

What has happened to that founding principle of all service businesses?

It is certainly not a guiding principle in the **Greene King** company handbook. “Customer is king” has been replaced with “might is right”.

In ignoring a petition of 11,000 signatures as well as explanations and protestations from across the Linlithgow community and beyond, Greene King, owners of the Black Bitch Tavern in Linlithgow and 2,600 similar business premises elsewhere, arrogantly presses on with plans to change the pub’s name.



The real issue of course is not only about the name of a pub but the belittling and undermining of the town’s regard for its own heritage of which our community is justly proud.

In this issue we’ve given space to review the attempts that are being made to introduce common sense and understanding to the process with Greene King.

Meanwhile in an unusually mild January – at the time of writing – we can hopefully look forward to more “normal” times or perhaps “new normal” times in 2022.

In particular, this year marks the 200th year in the life of the Union Canal and preparations for a major celebration of that event are well in hand. The town’s Linlithgow Union Canal Society will of course play a significant role in those celebrations and in this issue Mike Smith, LUCS Vice-Chair sets the scene with an introduction by John Smith.

The performing arts diary is relatively empty with Linlithgow Arts Guild one of the few with a winter programme of concerts in and around the town. Signs are encouraging though that this year should see a return of traditional events not least The Marches, Gala Day, Party at the Palace and others. Festive Forest held its second carefully controlled and highly successful pre-Christmas event at Beecraigs and will be looking to build on that success later this year.

Fundraising and volunteering are also featured in this issue with appeals for support by three organisations and a note of recognition of the award to Sammy McKee of Volunteer of the Year, in the 2021 Helpforce Champions Awards, a UK-wide initiative. Organisations starting the search for additional support include St Michael’s Parish Church which has a Spire to support, and a man with a mission, Paul Charlton, (also recipient of an “Award for Merit” for outstanding

service to Scouting) who is seeking to attract adults to assist with administration of the always popular 4th West Lothian Scout Group at Linlithgow Bridge. Lastly, a new initiative in Linlithgow is a branch of Cycling Without Age Scotland which is fundraising to purchase a “Trishaw” to transport those unable to get about to visit the outdoors.

And finally, welcome to 2022 to everyone who helps produce, fund and deliver the Black Bitch magazine with best wishes for the year to come. We are always interested to hear from folks who might like to help in one way or another whether with IT skills, delivery, social media, sub-editing or writing. If that person is you then please get in touch by emailing me at : on.a.lead@gmail.com

Our subscription project is always open using the online application forms via the links provided in the magazine. If you are not already a subscriber and enjoy reading the magazine please give consideration to becoming a supporter in that way. All contributions large or small are valuable and help us to keep the community informed.



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ONE LINLITHGOW

As we tiptoe gently into 2022 with careful optimism it's not hard to notice the difference in peoples moods the twinkly Christmas lights and joyful shop windows had.

Advent and Christmas felt almost normal again having some lovely new Festive lamppost light motifs, part funded by the Town Management Group. The two silver birch trees got a festive “glow up” with some brilliant white wrapped lights to frame our fabulous loyal pup and the Christmas tree stood tall and proud at The Cross, helped by the Rotary Tree of Light.”

Shops and businesses helped to foster tiny elves and the children went on elf hunting trips to see how many they could spot, shops and business windows were adorned with festive treats and decorated beautifully. The annual **Advent Window competition** was a tightly run contest yet again with winners crowned at the Advent Fayre. **1st Place – Fair Tradewinds, 2nd Place – Far From the Madding Crowd, 3rd Place – Tracey Victoria**



Interiors, 4th Place – Purely Patchwork and Highly Commended – Macs of Linlithgow, Complete Health at the Millstone, Jewellery By Design, Little Beau Peep, Bonnie Weddings and Events and Costa Coffee.



Late Night shopping was busy, cold but mostly dry, with shoppers out checking off their Christmas lists and bagging some bargains along the way! A bumper loyalty lottery draw took place on the night with six winners taking £50 each in local vouchers as prizes.

Advent Saturday brought crisp blue skies and although cold was a beautiful day, despite the amber warnings from the days before it, market stalls popped up brightly around the Cross, creative crafters set up stalls inside the Burgh Halls, live music and performances beamed from the stage and the Town was awash with families, visitors and our loved locals. **Santa appeared on a very eco mode of transport, elves and story telling by Far From the Madding Crowd** was in the Old Library.

When the time came to light the tree the High Street came to life as the **Reed Band** took a deep breath and paraded from Low Port to West Port and back to cheers and applause. Followed by Santa, a very festive looking horse and carriage with some local VIPs and of course the traditional wax torch bearers, over 500 people carrying flaming torches with their families and friends certainly added some flair to the event. It certainly brought a tear to our eyes!



With the help of the Gala Day Chief Lady Maisie and 2nd Lady in Waiting Grace, Provost Liz Parks pressed the big red button and the Tree was lit with some music from the Reed Band and a crowd countdown.



December brought us more late night shopping by our faithful shops and businesses, Special Sunday opening and lots of people loving local buying! It brought Beecraigs to life at night with the **Festive Forest** and lots of visitors discovering Linlithgow maybe for the first time or rediscovering it after a time away. It also brought the **Festival of Christmas Trees** back to St Michael's and it certainly boosted the festive spirit to those wandering round them. We had a tree with lots of present ideas from some of our local businesses, not to mention the gift cards and Christmas in Linlithgow Guide.

As the weather turns wintery around us and we are watching every news report carefully we can say we made it into January and can look forward to the spring and hopefully even more events to look forward to.



*From changes a-foot to First Footing, 2021 ended with our Manager **Eddie Linton-Smith** moving onto work in a different field (quite literally, heading towards a more agriculture direction!) We wish him all the best for his future and would like to thank him for his time with Town Centre BID and One Linlithgow BID. **Sally McIntosh Anderson** has stepped into Interim BID Manager to keep things ticking over and we are optimistically looking towards the New Year and what lies ahead!*



ONE LINLITHGOW

200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNION CANAL

Victoria arrives at Linlithgow



With 2022 marking the 200th anniversary of the Union Canal, Linlithgow Union Canal Society (LUCS) is on the cusp of a memorable year in a near 50-year history that has seen its dedicated band of volunteers successfully navigate their way through a long succession of challenges.

We carry a fascinating piece by **LUCS vice-chair Mike Smith** charting the society's passage from its launch in 1975, and the Herculean efforts of volunteers to overcome various hurdles - not least those presented by pandemic lockdown restrictions over the last two years.

Final plans are being drawn up by LUCS for the major role it is set to play in the 200th year celebrations in May, with a vast array of boats converging on Manse Road Basin in a grand flotilla for the once-in-a-lifetime celebrations.

Otherwise, the society's volunteers - whose ranks are always open to those of any age, background and ability - have planned a full programme for 2022.

All being well it is intended that the Canal Centre will be open, and town trips and aqueduct cruises will be running on weekend afternoons from April through September. Additionally, town trips on

Victoria will operate on weekday afternoons from 27th June to 14th August, and it is hoped to operate Falkirk Wheel trips on the last Sundays of the summer months.

Boats will be available for charter, Leamington can be hired for self-drive trips, and it is hoped that the society's "wee white electric boats" will be able to take to the water. And last, but certainly by no means least, there will be the Canal Fun Day, and the world-famous Cardboard Boat Race!

John Smith

DREAMERS AND VISIONARIES MIKE SMITH, VICE CHAIR LUCS

Dreamers and visionaries differ - visionaries predict what actually comes to pass. Of the small band of people who responded to Mel Gray's invitation to discuss how to transform the Union Canal from a hazardous eyesore into a popular asset for Linlithgow, how many even imagined the canal being fully restored?

It had been chopped up by roads into isolated stretches, Falkirk locks were long ago filled in, and the canalside buildings looked derelict rather than historic. The meeting saw the birth of Linlithgow Union Canal Society (LUCS), whose primary aim was to improve the Linlithgow stretch, but happy to make common cause with others.



Tam Dalyell and Mel Gray at the opening of the Museum

National support was lacking until the Millennium came over the horizon - but how to get Linlithgow folk onboard was crucial. The answer - make things happen in the local waters, get people afloat, make the site attractive and active, involve the schools, lobby councillors.

Involvement had to be the driver, not commerce; optimism and enthusiasm the fuel, laughter the lubricant, lack of money the spur to creativity. Doing silly things, holding rallies, the annual Drambuie Marathon for outboard inflatables - never anything dafter nor better fun - except perhaps the now world famous Cardboard Boat Race!

Tempting people to join in what was being hugely

enjoyed by participants, the society grew with volunteers from all walks of life, bringing new skills or none, but all enjoying the camaraderie of the shared adventure. So LUCS expanded slowly from nothing - once sharing waters with the **Canoe Club**, and now **Linlithgow Kayak Racing**.

The arrival of the Victoria, however, really signalled the start of cruising as a main feature. She's 50 this year, still carrying passengers in the open air. Officialdom got the "Canals are Great" message, and the blockages were removed one-by-one.

The LUCS cruising range extended, with the M8 opening re-connecting Edinburgh.

In Linlithgow the Basin is transformed, almost entirely by LUCS members, the 1820s buildings restored to provide the tea room, and Scotland's only dedicated canal museum, and an education centre built in the yard.

The fleet grew to match the new water space - self-drive hire boat Leamington, canal maintenance boat "Colin G", St Magdalene, LUCS first 40-seater, now joined by the bigger St Michael, and Victoria, our flagship. Including our three electric powered

dinghies, our volunteers look after a fleet of nine vessels.

So, blessed with passenger capacity, shore facilities, lots of canal, and huge enthusiasm, along comes Covid-19, and almost everything LUCS did was banned or curtailed. The very life-blood of LUCS - the society of its members involved in shared enterprise - was reduced to a trickle. No livelihoods were at risk, but the wellbeing of the members certainly was.

Again, LUCS adapted, held Zoom meetings, reduced on-site work to the essential, restructured our booking system, and set up appropriate operational protocols. In 2020 Santa's arrival was made into a video viewed by 2,000 - and raised funds for other local charities. In 2021 he was able to greet his admirers afloat, which was wonderful.

I was once asked in a radio interview what LUCS actually did, and I replied *"We make people smile, and we love it!"*



Santa arrives at Linlithgow

Drambuie Marathon at Manse Road Basin

“YOU AIN’T CALLING HER A HOUND DOG”! LOCALS RALLY TO SAVE THE BLACK BITCH PUB NAME.



On Saturday December 11th, 200 Linlithgow people of all ages gathered outside the famous Black Bitch pub at the West Port in protest at the plans by the owners – brewing giant Greene King – to change the pub’s name to ‘The Black Hound’.

The issue had been bubbling under the surface since the end of May and had finally come to a head with an official statement by the Suffolk-based brewery on November 30th, announcing its intention to change the name of its tenanted pub as, they claimed, “the name now carries racist and offensive connotations”.

Company officials at the HQ in Bury St Edmunds further claimed that they had consulted on the name with a number of groups and organisations, both internally and externally, including the West Lothian Community Race Forum, and also undertook independent research, which showed many people would no longer feel welcome visiting a pub with that name, even if they knew where the name originated.

Local people were incensed. They said there had been no consultation in the town. The Black Bitch emblem has been used as a symbol of Linlithgow since at least the 13th century and those born here are very proud to call themselves “Black Bitches”. People were seething at the attempts to link the name with racism, and they camped up outside the pub to show their disgust. They saw the move as a direct attack on Linlithgow’s heritage and traditions. **“Hands Off Our History”** was the slogan on everybody’s lips.

Eight-year-old **Ruari Burns**, born in the family home on Golf Course Road, as was his elder brother, proudly held a placard declaring, **“I am a Black Bitch! – don’t hound me!”** He stood shoulder -to-shoulder with 90-year-old **Jean Old**, born in a house opposite the pub in August 1931. As hundreds of vehicles honked their horns in support, the protestors joined together to sing the campaign song written by **Martine Stead**.



“YOU AIN’T CALLING HER A HOUND DOG”! LOCALS RALLY TO SAVE THE BLACK BITCH PUB NAME.

Campaign song written
by Martine Stead.

CHORUS:

*You ain’t callin her a hound dog
That is not her name (x2)
She’s the Lithgae Black Bitch
Yeah, she’ll ayeways be the same*

*You said her name was racist
Well, that was just a lie
You said you’d replace it
Well, that was just a lie
You ain’t never gonna change her,
no, no matter how you try*

CHORUS:

*Our bitch, she is high class
The symbol of our town (x2)
Our bitch is faithful, and she never
lets us down*

CHORUS:

*You ain’t messin with our history
You ain’t messin with our home (x2)
Greene King, you ain’t welcome,
so leave us all alone*



7,000 people (over 11,000 now) in Linlithgow with this slur that they have put on the name of Linlithgow and the Black Bitch. If they’re going to be inclusive, they need to come and speak to us. We can come up with a compromise. We’re quite happy to change the signage to make it more explanatory of what’s actually there, so we could have something like ‘the historic Linlithgow mascot’ under the existing signs, then nobody can take offence from that. Greene King are taking it out of context and that is not on for the people of Linlithgow.”

On December 22nd, local campaigners met with Greene King officials Paul Wishart and Wayne Shurvinton in a licensed establishment in Grangemouth. The campaigners’ compromise of new signage “THE BLACK BITCH – LINLITHGOW’S HISTORIC EMBLEM FOR OVER 700 YEARS” was rejected out of hand.

As we went to press, the issue was still rumbling on, but Greene King bosses seem determined to have their way by the end of January.

Murdoch Kennedy



Local Member of Parliament, **Martyn Day**, was another of those holding a placard and he explained the background to filmmaker, **David McGowran**;

“This issue came up about six months ago when Greene King were, quite rightly, looking at names that could be overtly racist in light of the ‘Black Lives Matter’ situation. The name obviously flagged itself up. They got letters of submission from myself, and others and we explained the heritage, the culture, the medieval background, and context to the name. At that point in time, they seemed quite happy with that and said they had no plans to change it. Unfortunately, they have come back for another go. It’s completely misguided. It’s false virtue-signalling and it doesn’t reflect the reality of not just the historical situation, but the living history of Linlithgow, where the Black Bitch is part of everyday culture, so taking it out of context locally is very difficult. I really think they need to think again.”

“The plan has to be to get Greene King to back off and just scrap the daft idea. We’re telling them as strongly as we can, they’re hearing from a wide range of local society, covering all political opinions, all religious beliefs, all ethnic backgrounds that this is our Black Bitch, and we want it.”

One of the protest organisers, **Alistair Old**, secretary of the town’s oldest organisation, the Fraternity of Dyers, called on the Greene King management in Bury St Edmunds to speak to people in Linlithgow and listen to the 7,000 people (over 11,000 now) who had already signed an on-line petition. He decried their apparent attempt to link the Black Bitch name with racism.

“They said that they were inclusive and that the name was offending them. They’ve offended over

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUMANKIND YUVAL NOAH HARARI

Homo sapiens rule the world, because it is the only animal that can believe in things that exist purely in its own imagination, such as gods, states, money, and human rights.

This is the idea that ignites the spark of Yuval Noah Harari's retelling of the history of our species from his own unique perspective. Readers of this book are taken on a captivating journey through the evolutionary roots of mankind and then the different environmental, political, economical, and sociological pressures that influence the ways in which our species have evolved - and continue to evolve - its lives on this planet. The theories that Harari places forth are interesting, deliberately challenging and provide a version of the way in which life as we know it has developed.

Seventy thousand years ago, homo sapiens was still an insignificant animal minding its own business in a corner of Africa. In the following millennia it transformed itself into the master of the entire planet and the terror of the ecosystem. Today, it stands on the verge of becoming a god, poised to acquire not only eternal youth, but also the divine abilities of creation and destruction.

"Sapiens," the book, was first published in Hebrew after Yuval Noah Harari delivered a series of lectures at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. By combining profound insights and deductions - both subjective and academically informed - with a remarkably vivid language Sapiens has, in equal measure, either acquired cult status among diverse audiences or divided opinion, especially in the academic world. It is a book which is capable of transcending all levels of humankind, testing limits and pushing boundaries. Over the last decade, the book has subsequently been published in over 60 different languages.

The romantic contrast between modern industry that "destroys nature" and our ancestors who "lived in harmony with nature," is groundless. Long before the Industrial Revolution, Homo sapiens held the record among all organisms for driving the most plant and animal species to their extinctions. We have the dubious distinction of being the deadliest species in the annals of life.

Through "Sapiens," Harari sets out his principles that money is the most pluralistic system of mutual trust ever devised; that capitalism is the most successful religion ever invented; that the treatment of animals in modern agriculture is possibly the worst crime in history; and that, even though, we are far

more powerful than our ancient ancestors, we aren't much happier.

We have mastered our surroundings, increased food production, built cities, established empires, and created far-flung trade networks. But did we decrease the amount of suffering in the world? Time and again, massive increases in human power did not necessarily improve the well-being of individual sapiens, and usually caused immense misery to other animals.

Harari surveys the history of humankind in the Stone Age up to the twenty-first century, focusing on Homo sapiens, while referencing other species which were in existence over the millennia. He takes readers on a thought-provoking odyssey and divides the history of sapiens into four major parts covering the cognitive revolution (when sapiens evolved imagination and language), the agricultural revolution, the unification of humankind (through vehicles such as religion, capitalism and empires) and the scientific revolution (which covers the realms of the industrial, then information and biotechnical ages).

It is an ambitious book and no mean feat to attempt to cover the entire history of humankind within a finite number of pages. The theories explored by Harari are regularly epic and thought-provoking. They are current to modern trends and encourage a learning from the past in order to inform our futures. Harari encourages readers to take account of facts and known quantities, while applying logic with regards to socio-economic factors influencing humanity at any given time.

It is an interesting read and not one to be undertaken lightly; readers may find themselves absorbing sections and then returning, at a later stage, to digest another segment which, in my opinion, adds to the overall enjoyment.

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



Surely the customer should be king!

While the community was making its presence felt on the streets of Linlithgow other lines of approach to Greene King were being opened elsewhere.

As far back as summer 2021 the point had been made to Greene King that the planned name change risked inflaming racial tension to a level not seen before in Linlithgow. Over the past few weeks this forewarning is showing signs of coming true with the receipt by some members of the campaigning group of vile racial abuse via social media. At the time of writing, the Police are investigating.

At an early stage an approach for assistance in mediating with Greene King was made to Sir Geoff Palmer, Chancellor of Heriot Watt University, well-known human rights campaigner and a grain scientist whose award winning researches into the brewing process had brought him into contact with Greene King previously.

He argued that for Linlithgow to accede to the name change would be to accept that the Linlithgow community believed that "Black Bitch" did in fact refer to a female of colour - at least in the eyes of the outside world. Hence Linlithgow could become known as a racist town. This argument, serious in its implications, was ignored along with all the rest of the explanations of the origin and use of the term Black Bitch in Linlithgow.

It is worth making the comparison at this point with an identical situation in relation to a pub in Newtown, Powys called the "Black Boy" owned by Wetherspoons. The company had initially decided to change the name but instead changed their minds when in a survey of residents 7,000 voted in favour of retaining the name. There had been no complaints about it and it was accepted that it was known locally to be a reference to a chimney sweep.

The article carrying this story appeared in the Independent newspaper and as Greene King is mentioned in the article it can be assumed that the organisation is aware that common sense can come in to any company policy or action.

Alongside Geoff Palmer's intervention similar explanations and appeals to reason have been submitted by our MP, MSP, our 3 Linlithgow Ward Councillors as well as several carefully argued submissions from members of the public some with many years of voluntary service to the community - all to no avail at the time of writing.

It seems incomprehensible that a commercial organisation can ignore the opinion of 11,000 petition signatories many of whom will be actual customers or potential customers. That alone should be a winning fact in the case for no change. If Greene King conducted a survey of their existing customers and 90% said they favoured a particular product would they stop stocking it? I think not.

As owners of three more pubs on Linlithgow High Street you'd think Greene King would be more sensitive to local opinion.

Is customer king?



David Tait



Photography: Martine Stead

PAUL CHARLTON IS A MAN WITH A MISSION.

He is looking for adult volunteers to get involved with the 4th West Lothian Scouts, which is based at the Mackinnon Hall in Linlithgow Bridge.

Paul has been part of the organisation for the last sixteen years and really enjoys it. He currently has three roles; he is the Scout Leader on a Thursday evening, assists with the Explorer unit on a Tuesday evening and as the overall Group Scout Leader, he helps to run the whole operation, in conjunction with the Chair, **Andy Paterson**. Paul recently received 'The Award for Merit' for

outstanding service to Scouting. It implies keen, conscientious, imaginative, and dedicated service over a sustained period of at least twelve years.

Like other Scout groups in the area, the 4th West Lothian have waiting lists and young people keen to join, but they are short of adult helpers, especially for the younger age groups, as Paul explained:

"At the moment, we don't have a Beaver Colony (age 6-8) up and running because we've got no Beaver leaders. We've got no Cub leaders, so the Cub Pack (age 8-10) is closed as well. We are desperate for adults to come along and help to re-activate these

sections, which feed into the older Scouts and Explorers."

"Where we are at the 4th West Lothian is that our Scouts (age 10-14) are going strong, our Explorers (age 14-18) are going strong, but we've got no feed into there. It means that children are missing out on the early years of the Scouting experience. We are trying to get people to come along, to listen to us, to hear what we've got to say and to find out what's involved in helping out."

I was interested to learn that Paul was never in the Scouts as a youngster and his own experience has shown him that you don't need to have a background in Scouting to get involved.

"People always say to me, 'I was never a Scout as a boy, I've got no experience'. I was the same when I started. All you need is the willingness to have a go and the enthusiasm to want to do it and get involved. The rest such as learning about Scouting can follow in due course. People can share a role, or take on part of a role, such as communications. There are many options available for people to get involved. Everybody has something to offer from their own life experiences and every volunteer has a unique skill set that makes them brilliant."

All adult volunteers receive full induction and ongoing training and support. The training has been recognised with a National Training Award by UK Skills and over 90% of volunteers believe that the skills and experiences they have gained through Scouting have been of relevance to their working or personal lives.

"Being involved in Scouting is a great distraction from the pressures of day-to-day life", Paul told me "And is a chance to 'escape' into your own bubble and just have fun. It is hugely rewarding and seeing the young people develop and grow, whilst at the same time having fun, is a great feeling."

The Scouts web site tells us that Scouting exists to actively engage and support young people in their personal development, empowering them to make a positive contribution to society. Paul said:

"It gives them skills for life. It teaches them to work as a team and that it's not all about the winning."

If you would like more information about the 4th West Lothian Scouts, please email 4thwls.chair@gmail.com



Murdoch Kennedy



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD FOR SAMMY



"I feel very lucky to have been able to help during the pandemic, I have truly found my volunteering calling and love every minute."

Sammy McKee

What better way to start off 2022 than with a feel-good story for this edition of the Black Bitch magazine. 2020 and 2021 have been tough going for everyone. The pandemic really has tested us all. We've coped in different ways. Some perhaps better than others. And although the virus has brought a common denominator into our lives, we all have a different experience and a different story to tell.

This piece is about one individual who has gone the extra mile during the pandemic and put others before himself. His community spirit and willingness to go out of his way to help and provide support to others during these times has not only been admirable but also invaluable.

Late last year, **Sammy McKee** was shocked to learn that he had been awarded **Volunteer of the Year, in the 2021 Helpforce Champions Awards**. This UK wide initiative, specifically recognises volunteering within the health and care sector, receiving nominations for various categories from across the UK.

When the pandemic hit, Sammy wanted to help in any way he could and saw an advert for **Ward Helpers for NHS Lothian**. Keen to support his local community and the NHS during the pandemic, Sammy started volunteering with the NHS Lothian team back in April 2020.

His contribution was utilised in areas that supported NHS staff, allowing them to focus on dealing with the difficulties that were being experienced from the effects of the pandemic. He has been involved with two main roles, one as a **Ward Helper** in a Care of the Elderly ward in Findlay House, and also as a volunteer in the Meaningful

Activity Centre (MAC) Unit at St John's Hospital. Alongside these roles, he has also volunteered as a Vaccination Clinic Guide.

The **Ward Helper** role supports positive health outcomes for patients, the majority of whom have dementia, by supporting day to day tasks and providing stimulation which frees up staff time to allow them to focus on specialist tasks. Patients within this area can have complex needs. Sammy would be involved in many areas from helping with meal distribution, providing company, encouragement, help and practical assistance. Sammy supports patients by chatting to them, listening, reading and playing games such as dominoes. There are even themed meal times with food from around the world. All of these help patients' physical health, improve mood, provide stimulation and distraction, so that patients have the best possible experience.

The **MAC Unit in St John's** provides a therapeutic environment for patients within the hospital. Patients with cognitive impairment such as dementia can become stressed in the hospital environment and volunteers can meet unmet needs related to boredom and lack of activity. Sammy would support patients one to one or in small groups through a variety of activities ranging from games, to afternoon teas, listening to music or just chatting over a cup of tea.

In addition to NHS Lothian, early on Sammy was also part of the **Linlithgow Coronavirus Support Group** where he was involved in doing deliveries and collecting prescriptions for individuals who may have had difficulties going out or were shielding from the virus. He also became involved with **Linlithgow Link** where he is one of their volunteer drivers and a member of the Committee.

Some of you may already know Sammy. He is very involved with our town, is a member of the Deacons Court where you may have seen him during Marches and was previously on the Children's Gala Day Committee. He is modest and not one to shout about his achievements but I think you'll agree that this is a story that deserves to be heard.



Of his experience Sammy said, *'I was extremely humbled to receive the award, there have been lots of people who have stepped forward to help the NHS and other organisations during the pandemic'*. One thing's for certain, Sammy has enjoyed his involvement with NHS Lothian, *'I've been volunteering in a variety of roles for over 15 years. None of them come close to volunteering with NHS Lothian. I feel very lucky to have been able to help during the pandemic, I have truly found my volunteering calling and love every minute. I definitely plan to continue.'*

Christine Evans



A SPIRE TO SUPPORT Alan D Miller, St Michael's Fundraising Team Leader

The Crown of Thorns spire on the tower of St Michael's Parish Church is an extraordinarily imaginative piece of public art. Yes, it has been called many other things in its 57 years: a rocket, left-over scaffolding or a wigwam. But through time it's become an iconic structure, reflected in the logos of several businesses or organisations. Its unique geometry features in many images of Linlithgow as well as attracting attention from both the M9 and the rail line.



Now, though, the spire could do with a bit of Linlithgow's famous kindness. The community have the chance to help rejuvenate this unique architectural symbol of the town for generations to come, as part of St Michael's 'Aspire Linlithgow' programme which will also see Cross House transformed and the church building safeguarded.

Some readers may remember the spire being installed in 1964. The original stone crown (think of St Giles in Edinburgh) had to be removed 200 years ago as its weight was endangering the church tower. In the early 1960's, the church commissioned sculptor Geoffrey Clarke to design a contemporary crown, which was then built of laminated timber clad with anodised aluminium and with all the work carried out by local firms. The design was inspired by the crown of thorns that the Bible says soldiers pushed onto Jesus' head before he was crucified. Cleverly, it incorporates 12 sub-points to symbolise Jesus' disciples.

Sadly, 57 Scottish winters have caused water penetration and damage to both the cladding and the underlying timber. There's

now an urgent need to replace the rotten sections of wood and replace the cladding with a weather-proof seam system. The estimated cost is £260k.

One interesting question concerns colour. Today, the spire looks matt silver. But when it was installed, the current cladding actually had a gold finish, which gradually weathered away. One option now is to install long-life bronze cladding that would match the original look.



Couldn't we just take the spire down instead? Yes - but in itself that would be a hugely complex and expensive process. And that would leave the tower looking stunted, and remove an iconic structure that is known and renowned both near and far.

The church has already received or been promised over £80,000, and we're applying for grant funding. However, we'd love to have the community's support in celebrating the spire and securing its future for the long term. Watch out for upcoming events including a silent auction, and a competition to portray the spire in any medium you like. Paint, Lego, cake - the choice will be yours!

Please go to www.stewardship.org.uk/pages/aspirelinlithgow to make a donation, or get in touch at aspirelinlithgow@gmail.com for further information.



Sorting the Crown of Thorns spire is only part of St Michael's 'Aspire Linlithgow' fundraising programme. We aim to resolve long-lasting water penetration and drainage problems in the church building, and then to upgrade the ageing heating system and to replace the pews with high-quality, flexible seating. We want it to be a special space for all, one that can host a wide variety of events.



We also aspire to convert Cross House - much used, but in need of major refurbishment - into 'a house for the town'. This will be a hub for community and wellbeing, working in partnership with several other local groups to serve the community.

Because both buildings are A-listed, everything is complicated and expensive! We're stepping out in faith and hard work to raise a total of over £4 million, mostly through grant funding, to enable St Michael's to 'be kinde' to the changing needs of the community in the 21st century. But the starting point will be to restore the Crown of Thorns.

MINDSET & LIFE COACH, SARAH CURRIE

Who am I?



Hi there, my name is Sarah, and I am the Founder of Draw A Line Coaching. I have lived in Linlithgow for nearly 4 years now and really love it here. The sense of community is wonderful, and I would love that my business becomes part of this.



I first had the idea to start up my own coaching business around 4 years ago. Since then, I have been studying incredibly hard to get all my relevant qualifications so that I can launch myself knowing I am the best I can be to support my clients.

I am a certified Life Coach, Mindset Coach, Neuro-Linguistics Practitioner, Timeline Therapy Practitioner, Hypnosis Practitioner & Reiki Healer. Basically, what this all means is that I am fully qualified to be able to help and support our local community. My aim with Draw A Line Coaching is that I help to lift my clients up, guide them to draw that line, exhale out all the old & embrace the new. Truly finding their own way in life.



What is Coaching?

Many people ask me this question, as it's still very much thought of like therapy or counselling: it's not. Coaching is looking to the future & being assisted with any part of your life that's not working for you at that moment. This could be your career, money, love or just your general wellbeing. The aim with coaching is that there will always be a goal to focus on, and my role is to guide you there & to assist you with any hurdles along the way. I see myself as your gatekeeper to change.



Why did I start up Draw A Line?

My absolute passion is to help others. Coaching for me is the perfect way to support as many people as possible to feel more fulfilled with their lives.

Why? I hear you ask.

Because I was you. I've been where you are. I was riddled with self-consciousness & feeling as though I was never good enough. Repeating the same behaviours over and over...it is so exhausting right? Finally, I said enough is enough & I investigated how I could get help. A life coach presented themselves to me. They supported me to unshackle myself from a childhood narrative I was playing on repeat. The day I realised I had the power to transform my thoughts and therefore my behaviours, was the day I did just that! It was incredibly liberating!

And now I'm here to help you do the same.



Why would you come speak to me?

>> Do you feel disillusioned with the last 2 years of Covid and just unsure about what you are doing or where you are headed?

>> Do you feel stuck and unfulfilled, unable to make decisions about your life or what you want?

>> Are you fed up with hearing yourself make the same old excuses over and over as to why you haven't got your act together?

These are all valid reasons for coming to speak to me. I support on all levels and depending on what your reasons are, then I would look at the types of techniques I could use with you and talk you through how I would approach your sessions.

My aim with all my sessions is that I guide you from feeling lost to being on the right path.

I am happy to share that my current offer is called "Find Your Way". This is a 1-month package and is a combination of coaching calls, mindset work & reiki healing. It's a great combination of mind and energy to re-energise for this New Year ahead! If you are curious to find out more about this offer and working with me then please do get in touch.



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JEANS BANISH THE BLUES WITH A HURL IN THE TRISHAW!

In our last issue, we were delighted to report that a branch of **Cycling Without Age Scotland (CWAS)** had been established in Linlithgow.

The aim of CWAS is to enhance and enrich the lives of elderly and disabled people by giving them access to the beautiful outdoors through Trishaw rides. This access is denied to many people because of age or limited mobility.

A leading member of a global movement currently operating in fifty countries, CWAS holds the Scotland Country Licence agreement with the international headquarters of Cycling With Age, which is in Denmark. There are currently over fifty Trishaws running throughout Scotland.

The plan is for Linlithgow to have one of its own and an ambitious fundraising initiative is already underway to raise the £10,000 required to fund the project.

Various events have already taken place or are being planned and the coffers were recently boosted by a cheque for £1,000 from the Fraternity of Dyers, which is Linlithgow's oldest organisation.

The presentation was made by Dyers' secretary, **Alistair Old**, accompanied by long-standing member, **Malcolm Edgar**. They have been life-long friends since they started together at the old Linlithgow Public School in 1962. To mark the occasion, CWAS Linlithgow offered a hurl in the Trishaw to their Mums, **Jean Old** (90) and **Jean Edgar** (91), who are also life-long friends. They were near neighbours as children and went to school together. Born in Linlithgow, the two Jeans are very proud 'Black Bitches'!

CWAS Linlithgow activists, **Ellen Wilson**, and **Glenn Miller**, were on hand to operate the Trishaw and took the ladies for a trip along the Lochside, before stopping on the bridge at the west end. There, they recreated a photo from over seventy years ago when the two friends had crossed the bridge on their bikes.

Glenn Miller explained: -

"We stopped on the wee bridge, and you should have seen their faces when we showed them the original photo. It was so emotional, and we were all nearly in tears. This is the essence of the whole project, allowing the elderly to be taken back to places they remember when they were young. The



Photography: Andrew West



Trishaws can go to places where cars can't – round the Peel, along the canal, and round the loch, where people have always enjoyed walking and continue to do so until it becomes inaccessible due to age or health issues."

"The two Jeans were lovely passengers and we have already invited them to ride in the Trishaw at this year's Marches. We are really looking forward to getting the elderly out and mixing in the community again"

The CWAS Linlithgow group was only formed at the end of September, but they already feel that they are part of the community, having taken part in the Advent Fayre and torchlight procession and the Festival of Christmas Trees at St Michael's Parish Church. All donations would be gratefully received.

You can find the group on Facebook at **Cycling Without Age Scotland Linlithgow**, or at **EH49 Community Hub** (formerly the library at the Vennel). The email address is cwaslinlithgow@gmail.com



Murdoch Kennedy



WEST LOTHIAN CHILLY DIPPERS



This is the time of year when most of us are dreaming of cosy nights in with the latest Netflix box set and a warm drink in hand whilst storms are thrashing their way through the alphabet quicker than a blink of an eye. This hasn't stopped many of our brave West Lothian Dippers (WLD) though, in fact it's motivated them. WLD had such success with their charity challenge last year, they decided to do another one this year. The Chilly Challenge was created by the founders of the group to keep members swimming in the colder months when it's all too easy to hibernate, and return once the outside temperature is back to double figures later in the year. **Ninety-one dippers are taking part this year.**

The challenge is to dip once a week from 1st November through till 31st January, and to take a picture as evidence of this 'brehtaking' achievement. Each month there is a new themed photo challenge, and so far these have included a St. Andrews Day challenge where we've seen some of the dippers doing the Gay Gordon in the water and dressing up as Scotland's national animal, the unicorn, to mark the occasion. We've also seen "Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without....." Another one was the handstand challenge which added an extra layer of chilliness, nothing like

taking a challenge head-on, one might argue.

Dippers have paid £15 to take part, and with that they receive a stylish swim hat, a fantastic mug for keeping the drinks warm and an attractive pin badge. Any remaining money collected will go to local West Lothian charity, River Kids. This is a local charity which supports disadvantaged families in West Lothian and the wider community.

To ensure participants are getting plenty of opportunities to dip, the group has set up Social Sundays, where they meet up in different locations around West Lothian and beyond. My swimming buddies enjoyed a Social Sunday in Blackness a few weeks ago where they were blessed with a beautiful sunset for their efforts. I'm usually the first one to jump to any challenge that's thrown my way, but with work and travel commitments I was unable to commit this year. However, I've tried to join in with the Chilly Dippers as often as I can, and I am looking forward to breaking the ice, in the literal sense, with some of them in the near future.

The water temperature can vary this time of year, but one of the coldest dips so far has been a mere 1°C with an outside temperature of -3°C. One of the most important things to remember when swimming outdoors at this time of year, is to stay warm once out of the water. Layers are always a good idea, a hot water bottle, warm drink and perhaps even a wee fire, if permitted, to warm those bones.



The Chilly Challenge has not only kept existing members of WLD going, it has also brought some new recruits. In a recent event two newbies joined, and one woman who had never dipped before took part in a moonlight swim. The interest in wild swimming has skyrocketed in the last few months.

Since the last article I wrote about WLD in April last year, the number of members has gone up from 500 to around 1700. As the country opened up from lockdown in the spring, it has been fascinating to follow dippers' swimming journeys around the country and beyond. I took on a challenge of my own and did a couple of aquathlons which consisted of a 750m swim and 5km run at both Loch Lomond and Loch Morlich, which were very special places to swim in.

For anyone wanting to sponsor the Chilly Dippers, you can contact one of the admins of the WLD Facebook group for more details.

Amy Cornock



THE SEIK FOWK O' LINLITHQUHO

Bruce Jamieson

With the NHS so much in the news, I thought it would be interesting to investigate medical care in Linlithgow over the centuries. In the medieval period, the town had several caring establishments. In the Kirkgate there were alms-houses where local people in distress were given accommodation and care, paid for from the revenues of the pre-Reformation church.

A charter of King James VI confirmed that the annual rents of certain altars in St Michael's Church were to be used for "the poor of the hospital in the Kirkgate." The use of the word "hospital" at that time did not, of course, mean a health care institution with dedicated staff. It simply meant a hospice - a place offering shelter. However, it was an obligation of the Church to care for fellow Christians, and so medical assistance was frequently given.

There is evidence that the Carmelite Friary (off Manse Road) had an infirmary in which monks and lay members of the community were treated. The Knights of St John also offered some medical treatment in their HQ on Linlithgow High Street, the Mint.



The Mint - demolished in 1895

At the east end of the burgh, at St Magdalene's, there existed a Lazarite establishment dedicated to the treatment of leprosy and other diseases. It received funding from rich, local benefactors (trying to assure themselves of a place in Heaven) and from pilgrims who stayed the night before leaving the town by Pilgrims Hill, on their way to South Queensferry and a journey to the holy shrine of St Andrews.

A 1448 document records a legacy left to the "Toon's almes hooses and the Lazaretto." In 1496, twelve pence was left to help the "seik fowk o' Linlithquho."



St Magdalenes and the "Hospitium" from the 1897 OS map

How these "sick folk" were cared for is difficult to research. Recent archaeological evidence from the site of an infirmary in the Augustinian Friary at Soutra suggests that it involved massive bloodletting and tooth extraction (over 200 were found in one pit.) The presence of early surgical instruments and the remains of amputated limbs show that surgery was carried out, and an attempt was made at some form of sedation, using a mixture of hemlock, black henbane, and opium poppies. Jars were found containing arsenic-laced ointment to treat scabies and lice infections and also a mixture of liquorice and coltsfoot, which was given for coughs and bronchitis.



All that is left of Soutra "Hospital"

However, such monastic organisations all ceased to exist after the mid- 16th century Reformation.

A record exists of a Linlithgow Town Council document referring to the disposing of "the old place at Lowport which was once a Town Alms House and Infirmary."

Care of the sick passed into the hands of local authorities, aided by the church, under the Scottish Poor Law Act of 1579. Poor and destitute people who were fit enough to work were legally barred from receiving any assistance so the monies raised by collections in St Michael's were usually enough to cover the needs of the poor and the sick without having to use the provision of the compulsory rate allowed for in the Act. One Linlithgow resident, businessman and apothecary, Robert Mylne, was given exemption from paying taxes, as he had given his services as "the pair's doctor and seen tae some cases of French pookis" (syphilis).

Later acts extended the system, but it still relied on church collections and bequests, and the system was creaking. The Rev James Dobie wrote in the Old Statistical Account that there were many poor and needy in the parish, and the numbers were growing on account of the fact that there were funds available - a result of donations and income from church land to the east of the town. This had been acquired in the early 1700s and, leased out to farmers, brought in considerable revenue. In addition, the Town Council made money available to build a quarantine hospital on the Burghmuir and during epidemics of the plague, smallpox or diphtheria, the building was pressed into use.



Rev James Dobie's (d. 1827) headstone in St Michael's graveyard

The Rev Dobie also pointed out that many local trade organisations and fraternities held funds to help those in medical need. In the records of the Fraternity of Dyers, for example, we find references to helping members who were sick or who needed medical help - such as the "sixpence given to a poor girl whose leg was cut off." In 1832, the Dyers' Minute Book noted,

“the alarming disease of cholera which at present is sorely fatal in many parts of the country.” The Fraternity duly donated to the Board of Health which “has lately been established for the purpose of raising a fund for helping the sick and indigent.”



The earliest extant Dyers Minute Book dates from 1723

The epidemic and the economic depression from 1839-42 increased the need for government intervention to help those in need. The result was the 1845 Poor Law Act giving local authorities the power to create an institution to help the poor and the unwell. Consequently, in 1856, Linlithgow opened its Combination Poorhouse on Pilgrims Hill at the east end of the town. With room for 160 “inmates” in eight wards, it had fairly primitive provision for those who required medical assistance.



Linlithgow Poorhouse

The local medical officer regularly called in and gave treatment, but the standard of nursing care was unsatisfactory. As early as 1892, Dr Brock warned the committee that better hospital accommodation was needed.

Eventually, in 1886, a purpose-built hospital was constructed close to the



Linlithgow's “new” hospital

Poor House and named St Michael’s, after the town’s patron saint. Around 1900, a fever hospital was added to the site and used during World War I for soldiers returning from the trenches with a variety of filth-borne diseases.

The 1929 Local Government Act brought the Poor House and the hospitals under the control of the County Council. Each establishment had its own administration, but in 1948 the whole set up became part of the National Health Service with the Matron of the hospital, Miss C. R. Wright, being given combined charge.



Among those at the 1956 centenary celebration are Matron McMillan, previous Matron Wright, Doctors Reid and Macleod, Ward Sisters Wright and White and nurses Murphy, Mallon, Blake, and Miller.

By the mid-1950s, the staff of the combined hospitals numbered 61 full-time and 30 part-time employees – quite a change from the original five who had run the Poorhouse! But the former Poorhouse building was deteriorating and quite unsuitable for modern nursing, so the remaining residents were transferred to the newer hospital in 1961, and the Poorhouse, having fallen into disrepair, was eventually demolished.



The Poorhouse was demolished in 1969

The old Fever Hospital was superseded by a modern hospital unit in 1985 – and, despite several threats to its existence, it still cares today for those in need.



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GARY CLINTON, MUSIC TUTOR

Digital Vs Analogue

I thought my first contribution to our local community magazine for the new year should discuss an age-old question: what's better - digital or analogue? CD or vinyl? The quick answer is... is it too much to ask for both? The long answer is, well, there isn't really a black and white solution and it depends on a myriad of factors including an individual's lifestyle, what they hope to get from music and also if they are interested in hi-fi. So firstly let's look at the crucial differences and weigh up the pros and cons.

How Does Digital Recording Work?

The early 1980s saw companies like Sony, Denon and Mitsubishi develop technology to record music digitally. I want to avoid getting too technical however we need to think about something called sampling rate. You may have heard that a CD has a sampling rate of 44.1kHz? What this means is every second, 44,100 recordings are made and represented as 1s and 0s (binary). That's a lot of recordings I hear you say! But the problem with this is some information is lost in between the samples. Another sampling rate is 96kHz so it makes 96,000 recordings every second therefore more information is picked up. Analogue tape recording however can be thought of as having an infinite sampling rate and all the information is kept.

How Does Analogue Recording Work?

Top right is an old 2" analogue 'reel to reel' tape machine. I actually used machines like this when I studied audio many years ago which is pretty cool looking back. The 'tape head' uses magnets to organise tiny magnetic particles on the tape and this creates a representation of the music which is stored. When an audio engineer records to tape s/he can go 'into the red' and the result is a pleasing compression and saturation giving rise to vinyl's warmer tonal characteristics. (Listen to Jimi Hendrix's recording of the Dylan classic 'All Along The Watchtower' for this warmth.) If however a digital recording system is pushed into the red we immediately get distortion so it lacks that classic, vintage sounding character. So why did digital recording replace analogue I hear you cry!? Essentially money and convenience.

Innovation Can't Be Stopped

Analogue tape machines require a lot of maintenance. The tape itself is expensive and new tapes are required for every recording session. They also need stored somewhere and they are pretty big. Plus there are inherent issues due to



mechanical, moving parts like 'wow and flutter'. Ultimately digital recording was more reliable, required less maintenance and as technology developed it became

cheaper and if you were a recording studio still running analogue, in say the early 90s when the competition began using digital, and was therefore cheaper and faster, well for many it was adapt or die. Plus it opened up a world of digital editing.

You've all heard of auto-tune, right? When a dodgy singer's off-pitch vocals can be corrected digitally. Well that is an example of digital editing. When we hear a modern record what we're listening to is potentially the accumulation of many takes all edited together to form the 'perfect take'. Somehow, that doesn't feel as good, does it? For me, we've lost something in addition to the digital information that went astray. We've lost that honesty and sense of connection to the musicians in the studio - the human element. However its likely most modern consumers of music don't mind that. Let's face it, we all lead such busy and hectic lifestyles, the convenience of digital music is great.

The Convenience of Digital

Whilst I collect vinyl and love listening to records I also have a Spotify subscription. The thought of having almost every single song ever recorded at my fingertips is just too good to pass up. I can pop playlists on of my favourite artists whilst simultaneously leaving the house for a run or ask Alexa to 'play Black Sabbath' as I start to make my tea after a busy teaching shift. I can easily discover new music and artists and share it instantly with friends all over the world. However what about the issue of artist royalties...

Streaming Royalties

For a long time debate has raged about how Spotify, Amazon Music, YouTube, Deezer etc etc are not paying artists enough and the bottom of the music industry, financially speaking, has been well and truly taken out as a result of digital streaming. So I like to support the artists I love by buying their music directly - what better way to balance this cold digital world than with the warmth of vinyl.

The Theatre of Vinyl

When you show someone a vinyl record their reaction is always the same - wow! It's a truly majestic artefact and many album covers are works of art in their own right. Pink Floyd's 'Dark Side Of The Moon' springs to mind. The CD by comparison looks kind of pathetic plus the plastic cases crack over time, they are easily scratched and the teeny tiny artwork pic we see on Spotify is just sad.

Also when we put on a vinyl we are truly respecting the sanctity of music. It is a ritual. We carefully remove the record from the sleeve. Maybe dust it down with an anti-static cloth. Place it cautiously on the record player. Start the spin. And then painstakingly place the stylus over where we think track 1 starts before finally flicking the lever which begins the stately movement of the arm towards the record. We hear crackle and hiss. We see the record spinning. And then we finally hear the music via 'hi-fi separates' - an amplifier and two speakers. Much higher quality than any Bluetooth speaker on the market and don't even get me started on those who listen to music via a phone speaker!

We can get a sense of the musicians themselves in the studio and the connection between them, their instruments and ourselves. We are transported to their world. From here we must show respect and listen. One side of a vinyl is maybe only 3 of 4 tracks and then it demands our attention again. It needs turned and with a calm sense of care and intimacy. All of this ladies and gentlemen is pure theatre and whilst I don't plan on giving up digital music, I would never be without my vinyl.

If you are a vinyl enthusiast why not tweet me your favourite records or your hi-fi system? @garyguitar4



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

Twitter: @GaryGuitar4

Facebook: garyclintonguitartutor



QUICK ON THE DRAW GALA DAY PLANS STEP UP A GEAR



The reigning Gala Day Queen, Miss Hayden Dunlevie.



Photography: Andrew West

Hopes are high that the Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Children's Gala Day will make a welcome return this year.

Saturday June 18th has been pencilled in as the date when the spectacular procession from the Brig to the Low Port and crowning ceremony in the magnificent setting of the Peel will, once again, be one of the highlights of the local social calendar. The last full Gala Day took place in 2019. Like scores of other events all over the country, the Gala Day was cancelled in 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic. Last year, on the date in June when the event would normally have taken place, the 2020 Queen-elect, **Miss Hayden Dunlevie**, was crowned at a special ceremony with restricted numbers.

The committee members are working hard behind the scenes to get all the arrangements in place and the next big date in their calendar is the draw, when the Queen and all the other characters are selected. This will go ahead in the hall at Linlithgow Primary school on Thursday February 10th at 6.30pm.

While all the names are still drawn out of a hat in the traditional manner, these days the system is operated on the basis of an "opt-in", so that children selected have already submitted an application form saying that they would like to be involved. Children must reside within the catchment area of Linlithgow non-denominational schools, but do not have to attend one of these schools.

The forms were distributed through the local Primary schools before Christmas and were also available to access via a link on the Gala Day social media pages <https://linktr.ee/linlithgowgala>. The final date for returning them was Friday January 28th and only children with completed forms will be entered into the draw.

In a major departure this year, the main retinue will be chosen from pupils in P6, the Flower Girls from P4 and the Fairies and Junior Guards from P2. Gala Day secretary, **Anne Wilson**, explained: -

"The pandemic has given us time to reflect on previous years. With this in mind, we have taken on board feedback from both children and parents in recent times and have made the decision to change the age groups for children participating in the Gala Day."

She 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."

Following the draw on February 10th, a parents' information evening will be held in the Academy hall on Thursday March 10th.

Murdoch Kennedy



The old jingle 'Glasgow for Bells, Linlithgow for Wells', reminds us that the town had no shortage of wells, which were fed by an abundant supply of spring water permeating from the hills to the south. Moving westwards from the east end, the named public wells were mainly on the south side of the street unless otherwise stated. They were St Michael's Well, Cross Well (north side of street), Dog Well, Lion Well, New Well, Westport Well (north side of the street) and finally Paul's Well which was close to Katie Wearie's tree at the Westport. The minute books of the town council reveal that a high priority was given to the maintenance of the water supply and wells.

Additional information was found in the Treasurer's Vouchers, where the receipts for each year reveal that maintenance was constantly required on the supply pipes. These led from the supply point (often an underground cistern) to the well. The pipes were mostly lead pipes, probably made from flat sheets of lead crimped or soldered along the long edge, and therefore susceptible to leaking. To combat this, when a new pipe was installed, it was encased in clay with the aim of avoiding the leaking nuisance.

The wells were also provided with lighting (in addition to the oil fuelled street lighting) as confirmed in a minute of the date 28 February 1766. The author has done a reconstruction of the light (referred to as a globe in the minute book) at the Cross Well using the Hill and Adamson image of 1845. This is shown on the right with a globe added to the wrought iron work. (Notice that the water flow from the well was constant.)



The wells are now examined in more detail, starting from the east end and moving westwards. The dates that are given were mostly found in the TC minute books. Quotations from the minute books are shown in red.

ST MICHAEL'S WELL
(earliest date is unknown)



The image of the well shown on the left was taken in 1886. The WLC Libraries have the original (source Aberdeen University) which confirms this. It also shows the original buildings, later replaced, at the corners of the wynd.

This is probably one of the oldest wells but no date was found for its erection. It was originally located part-way up St Michael's Wynd (formerly called the Easter Wynd) and was moved to the

Street as described in the following council minute.

30.1.1720 'St Micheals Well to be erected lyke the New Well in the West Gate'

'the Councill considering the bad Condition that Saint Michaels Well is in ... They appoint the Spring of that well to be brought down to the High Street at the foot of the Wynd in leaden pipes and one well to be erected there of hewn stone after the form of the well in the west street called the new well'

19.11.1720 'St Michaels Well built and the Wynd repaired'

Approves of ane accompt of Two hundred and fifty two pound nine shilling Scots payed out be the Treasurer for building of St Michaels Well and repairing of the Easter Wynd.

In 1802 the council decided that the street would be improved if the well was moved 'a little east and south of the street' which is probably its present position. Its supply was possibly close to the Canal basin and this fed a reservoir or small storage tank which was replaced by a larger one in 1773.

James Beveridge, 1864-1947, mentioned a tradition that the well had been decorated and regarded as a healing or holy well in previous centuries. The only part that now remains painted is the shield.

THE CROSS WELL
(earliest date is unknown)



The well and fountain are synonymous making it unclear at times which one is being referred to in the minutes. Both were demolished by the English in 1650 and the former was the first to be replaced in 1652, partly at the expense of the local brewers who used the water and desperately needed reinstatement of the supply. There is no record of how old the demolished fountain was but James Beveridge* thought it might date from the first half of the 16th century and be a copy of the one in the palace. A minute dated 11 October 1628 describes the fountain as 'ane deid monument and necessary to be helpit for decorment of the croce' which tends to confirm Beveridge's assumption. In 1658 the council contracted with

James Thomsons, mason, (NAS ref B49/9/2) to rebuild the fountain which had been demolished on Cromwell's orders. Thomsons was to *'perfect and to mak it as guid as it was when it was first maid'* and by 1660 it was finished. At a council meeting that May the minute reads *'the fontane at the Croce is to be buildit pairt of new and pairt of old work which is unseimelie to be seen, theirfir it is ordered that the fontane be haillie colored with the oil of lintseid and wheit leid'* (NAS ref B49/9/3) indicating that the fountain was at one time painted white and this practice continued into the middle of the 19th century. The whole edifice was rebuilt and moved slightly westwards in 1807 by Robert Gray (see pages 47-8, Minute by Minute). A time capsule was placed in the footings (probably below the inscription on the west side) and this hermetically sealed glass urn contains an inscribed plate, the different coins of His Majesty's Reign (George III) and the latest Scottish and English newspapers. The capsule is presumably still there. The water supply has always been from the fountain-head in Rosemount Park by means of a lead pipe and latterly a cast iron pipe. The earliest confirmation of this is in a minute dated 11 February 1665 which records that Captain James Hamilton of Parklie had in 1629 given the town a wayleave for a track through his property. An underground cistern with a brick arched roof was later constructed, possibly in Rosemount Park, near to the canal and is possibly still there.

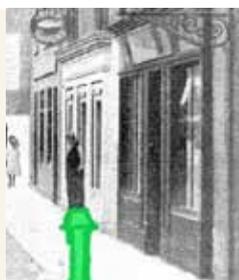
**All references to James Beveridge in this paragraph - see NAS ref GD215/1851)*

THE DOG WELL

(earliest date not found)



This well existed in the 16th century as it was named as the division between the west and east quarters in the list of the burgh roads. The stone structure shown above was replaced by a cast iron well in the 20th century – shown green in the next image.



It was being repaired in 1645, as can be seen in the council minute dated 13 January, viz

'Ordaines 20lib 12s that is in the kist in the councell hous to be given to Robert Bell deane of gild to be employed be him ... in repairing of the fountane at the croce burne'.

Bell owned the house on the east side of the Dog Well Wynd. His son George was later given approval to move the well two feet forward from his front wall because it was undermining and causing dampness in the wall, (NAS ref B48/9/3, 9.8.1673). This had to be done at his own cost and the well was to be built with dressed stone with the *'dog for carrying of the water on the north'*. The 'dog' (a type of lever or spout fashioned as a dog's head) suggests the origin of the name given to this well. It was supplied by means of a lead pipe that connected to the Cross Well. Use of this well was also interrupted by the English occupation in 1650 and the supply was not restored until 1653.

THE LION WELL (by 1765)



This view shows a symbolic monument that marked the position of the original well which was demolished c.1950. The stone and cast iron post came from the Westport Well where it was used to light the well – see below.



The original Lion well (no photograph found) was stone built in the manner of the New Well which is confirmed by the following item from the council minute book.

23.7.1803 Lion Well to be rebuilt. *Provost reported that he understood the Lion Well was in great disrepair. The council appoint John Gibb, mason, to take down and rebuild.* Only a dressed stone well could be dismantled.

THE NEW WELL (1690)



In 1690 the council thought there should be a well to serve residents living near to the west port, and so the New Well was built. Prior to this, water had to be carried from the Dog Well or from the Lady Well which was located to the south of Westport House. The minute dated June 30th recording this reads *'The Council appoints the Treasurer to pay to Alex'r Wilson meason the Soume of Ane Hundereth merks Scots money ffor bigging [building] the new well in the west Gait'*. The name stuck and it became the New Well. The well, which was funded by public subscription, was adopted by the council in 1690. Initially the supply came from the Lady Well, but this tended to dry-up in the summer and in 1745 water was eventually piped from Rivaldsgreen where an underground cistern had been built.

The 100 merks allocated by the council for the new well paid for the building work and also for *'furnishing all materials and for all other expences thereof, ther is already payed £20 [sterling] soe rests £46 13s 4d.'*

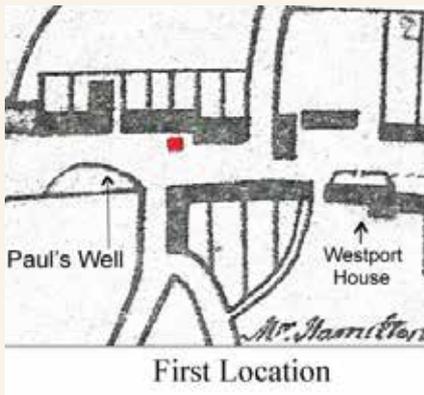
WEST PORT WELL

(c.1808, moved to this position c.1847)

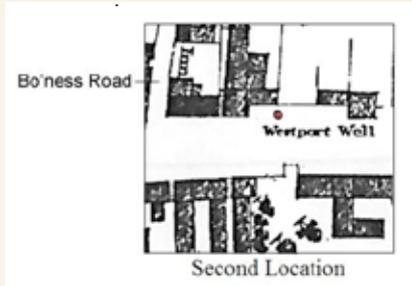


This well and the Cross Well were the only wells to have been built on the north side of the street. It was also the only octagonal well.

Initially it was erected in front of what is now 'The Black Bitch' public house and is shown (red) on John Lauder's 1808 map, below. Its date of construction was



not found but it was obviously prior to the map being published. In a minute dated 8 February 1817, the proprietor of the house on its north side complained to the council that his property was being adversely affected by the surplus water from *'the Well lately erected ... without the West Port'*. The council took immediate action and decided that the well should be moved east-wards to the front of a derelict building opposite to Westport House. The second location is shown on Wood's map of 1820 (below), and also in the photo above. When this building was rebuilt about 30 years later, the new owner requested permission to advance in line with his neighbour's frontage, but the well was in the way. It was rebuilt to a new hexagonal design as shown in the caption, on the understanding that it would be moved forward by 11 feet which would leave



a passage of 5.5 feet for pedestrians. However, it was built too close to the street and the council insisted that it was moved yet again to the position that had been agreed making, a total of four different positions for this well.

PAUL'S WELL (1756 - 1897)

This well, shown below, was outside the West Port beside Katie Wearie's tree and initially was the town's only public draw



well (i.e. requiring a rope and bucket to obtain water). It was hand dug and had a stone lined shaft. It was built in 1670 and survived for 36 years when it was converted to pump action. A minute dated 2.6.1812 states that the *'council authorize Baillie MacFarlane to take down the stones of the well commonly called Pauls Well and to preserve some for behoof of Town'*. This suggests that the well could have been similar in size to the New Well and that it had been replaced by the one in the photograph.

The well was to have been superseded by the erection of the West Port Well, which was subsequently moved further eastwards (see previous page). Strangely Paul's Well was not indicated on the Town Map of 1856, but reappears on the 1897 Ordnance Survey next to Katie Wearie's Tree. It has now disappeared from the street along with the Dog, the Lion and the West Port Wells which were demolished in the middle of the Twentieth Century.

A number of private wells should also be mentioned, several of which are indicated in the Ordnance Survey map of 1856. Those that can be identified by name are as follows.

THE LADY WELL (1690)

One of the earliest wells, the Lady Well may originally have belonged to Hamilton of Westport and was located on that family's land south of Westport House, (it now lies under the railway embankment). The town initially got the supply to the New Well from the Lady Well, but after a major dispute during which Hamilton disconnected it, the Town Council appears to have become responsible for its maintenance. A minute dated 23 June 1666 confirms that the supply would continue to be through Hamilton's yard as *'always hither-tillis'* [as it was until now] and this is confirmed in a minute dated 1 May

1680. In 1740 the council were again complaining that Captain Hamilton had diverted the supply and was interrupting the flow.

When confronted, he assured the Council he was *'passive in the affair and had no inclination to encroach on the Town's rights'* (Minutes dated 12 July and 30 August). *The Hamiltons were not always unhelpful, and on 9 January 1808 the minute records that 'Mr Hamilton of Westport had in a very handsome manner agreed to allow the Town to erect a small Reservoir within the enclosure called the Captain's park for the purpose of gathering and collecting Water and to allow the Water to be brought from the said Reservoir to the Town'.*

The water was to supply the Lady Well and the park was on the south side of the railway. It is now mainly in residential use.

THE WANT WELL

The exact location of this well was not found, but it was used for a time as a

reserve supply to St Michael's Well, suggesting it lay to the south of it, possibly east of the canal basin. The latter had an underground reservoir or water cistern further up St Michael's Wynd; if the Want Well was to supply St Michael's Well, then it had to be still further up the hill.

THE FAIRY WELL

The well was to have been superseded by the erection of the West Port Well, which was subsequently moved further eastwards (see previous page). Strangely Paul's Well was not indicated on the Town Map of 1856, but reappears on the 1897 Ordnance Survey next to Katie Wearie's Tree. It has now disappeared from the street along with the Dog, the Lion and the West Port Wells which were demolished in the middle of the Twentieth Century.

***James Beveridge (mentioned several times) was the headmaster of Linlithgow Academy and was a prolific historian.**



Latest on the Housing Market

Firstly, a reminder of the new legislation coming into force next month in Scotland in regard to smoke alarms.

By February 2022 every home in Scotland must have:

- > one smoke alarm in the living room or the room you use most
- > one smoke alarm in every hallway or landing
- > one heat alarm in the kitchen

All smoke and heat alarms should be mounted on the ceiling and be interlinked.

If you have a carbon-fuelled appliance – like a boiler, fire, heater or flue – in any room, you must also have a carbon monoxide detector in that room, but this does not need to be linked to the fire alarms.

Help with costs

Older and disabled homeowners on low incomes can get help with costs (see below).

If you are a private tenant, your landlord is responsible.

If you are a council or housing association tenant, work is ongoing to make sure your home meets the new standards.

Two types of alarms

You can use either sealed battery alarms or mains-wired alarms.

Both types of alarm are interlinked by radio frequency and do not need WiFi.

What the alarms must have

If you use battery alarms, they must be sealed tamper-proof units and have long-life lithium batteries, which can be up to 10 years. You may be able to fit these types of alarms yourself and they do not need an electrician.

Mains-wired alarms are cheaper but if you use them, they must be fitted by a qualified electrician and must be replaced every 10 years. You may also need to redecorate after fitting them.

If you also need a carbon monoxide alarm and it is battery-operated, it must have a sealed battery for the duration of its lifespan.

You can buy both types of alarms online or in store from a number of retailers, and any qualified electrician can fit the mains-wired type.

You need to check that each alarm complies with the following standards:

- > smoke alarms BS EN14604:2005
- > heat alarms BS 5446-2:2003

- > carbon monoxide detector British Kitemark EN 50291-1

Housing Market Predictions for 2022

Opinions vary of course, but a lot of people involved in the property market think the housing market will remain strong well into 2022 at least. In Scotland, the earlier ending of the temporary reliefs on LBTT (stamp duty), than in England had no discernible negative impact on confidence levels in the Scottish housing market.

If anything, in 2022 the housing market might be a little less frenetic. This in itself may be a positive factor, encouraging more people, who might have been put off by strong price increases and the fast moving market of 2021, to move home in 2022, potentially improving the supply of homes coming onto the market. Rightmove reported that requests for property valuations via its website in December last year were up 19% on the same period in 2020.



ALL ABOUT THE BROWS!

Did you know that you can remove semi-permanent or permanent eyebrow tattoos using Laser Tattoo Removal?

YOU DON'T NEED TO SETTLE FOR "UNLOVED OR BAD BROWS". LASER TATTOO REMOVAL IS A SIMPLE, INCREDIBLY EFFECTIVE AND SAFE PROCEDURE.

It's not always common knowledge but most people who have had their eyebrows done before will also know that when they want to change the style or get new ones, they need to remove the old ink that remains first.

Like body tattoos, the demand to have cosmetic eyebrows is incredibly high and increasing daily, however with this popularity comes many bad decisions, regrets or they find the end results are simply not as they were expecting. (Buy cheap, cry twice as hard and buy tattoo removal!).

When cosmetic eyebrow tattoos are applied correctly by a professional (aka Lisa Ritchie Bespoke Permanent makeup artist) they can look amazing and can really help frame your face. Unfortunately, not everyone is as good as Lisa and when they are applied incorrectly it can be devastating for the individual; this is where Skin Happy can help!

COSMETIC V PERMANENT TATTOO REMOVAL

The main differences between cosmetic tattooing and traditional body tattoos are the techniques and types of ink used. Cosmetic tattoos are much easier to lift because the ink is not placed as deep into the skin.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The laser light passes through the skin and is absorbed by the tattoo ink, causing rapid thermal expansion and an audible shock wave that shatters the ink into smaller pieces all without burning or damaging the upper layer of skin.

It is then possible for the smaller pieces of ink to be absorbed by your body's natural immune defences disposing of the ink gradually over

time. Visually, we see the tattoo fading over a series of treatments.

WILL I LOSE MY EYEBROW HAIR?

Any hair loss resulting from laser tattoo removal treatment is minimal, possibly one or two hairs. Your eyebrow hair may discolour slightly because the laser can remove the pigment; it is perfectly natural, not permanent and will regrow back to its natural colour usually in 4-6 weeks.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT AFTER TREATMENT?

General erythema/general redness with some slight swelling is most common on the treated area but this is temporary and usually disappears by the time the client is leaving the clinic.

Occasionally some pinpoint bleeding occurs and may appear to be bruised with a grey or purple colour after treatment. This discoloration will usually fade during the next 1-5 days.

However if you use the given samples of Light Soothe (a fantastic calming serum) and sunscreen on the treated area this will aid in reducing the down time.

WILL THE INK CHANGE COLOUR?

Yes. The semi-permanent or permanent ink can fade down and/or change colour.

This can happen because it is common for cosmetic tattoo ink to contain iron. When it is treated with a laser, it oxidizes, turning the tattoo to a greyish or rusty brownish colour. Subsequent treatments will eventually remove the tattoo.

HOW MANY TREATMENTS DO I NEED?

It's hard to predict exactly as it depends on the type of pigment used and how it interacts with your skin. The compounds used in cosmetic tattoos do not have the same staying power as regular tattoos.

In most cases 2-5 treatments are enough to fade semi-permanent tattoos or for complete removal this can be around 8 treatments.

For permanent eyebrow tattoo removal it can be 5-8+ treatments.

Treatment intervals are spaced

at a minimum of 8 weeks apart.

HOW LONG DOES TREATMENT TAKE?

It's very quick and only takes a few minutes per eyebrow.

DOES IT HURT?

Some clients describe the sensation a bit like a flick of an elastic band. Most clients tolerate the treatment very well and comment that it was nothing compared to getting a body tattoo.

IF YOU WANT YOUR UNLOVED OR BAD BROWS REMOVED AN 'IN-CLINIC TATTOO CONSULTATION' CAN BE BOOKED VIA THE BOOK NOW BUTTON ON THE WEBSITE.

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ENJOYING YOUR WINTER GARDEN FROM INDOORS



*Alstroemeria
Indian Summer*

We are very lucky that we have a garden surrounding our house and have many different views of it to enjoy in the winter, especially as the days slowly lengthen through February. From the kitchen window, which looks onto the bird feeders and bird bath with the stone cat about to pounce, we were still enjoying the flowers of Alstroemeria Indian Summer at Christmas. This Peruvian lily is well named as it has flowered from Summer up to December. It is hard work keeping up with all the new varieties being bred, whether dwarf or tall, for borders and containers and all great for cutting, lasting a long time in the vase; this is certainly a winner with us.

Not having neighbours to the south, we tend to light the patio in the evening and keep the curtains open. Sometimes we'll have the candles lit or the globe fire pit burning, but in the daytime your eye is caught by the Hellebore flowering in the border. Helleborus Maestro is one of many Orientalis hybrids that have been bred in recent years, it's another winner for us as it flowers from December to March and is very easy to grow in sun or partial shade in soil that doesn't get too dry. It has lovely evergreen leaves for the rest of the year.



*Helleborus
Maestro*

Looking to the west is the statue of Astrid, a Christmas present from Lesley, Dougal spotted her at the Chelsea flower show in September, although it took a while to find her again and show her to Lesley along with her creator Laura Jane Wylder. Astrid was a Scandinavian goddess and



Astrid

her Norse name means 'divinely beautiful.' Looking out to her, it is hard to miss the fresh yellow flowers of Jasminum nudiflorum, the winter

jasmine that flowers on naked stems from November to March. It is hard to kill but, if not cared for, can look a bit of a messy tangle. Tie it into a trellis with garden twine, and clip it back to 10 cm (4") from the trellis when it finishes flowering. New wands will grow all summer and flower in the winter, looking tidy and stylish all year round.



*Betula Snow
Queen*

Our final view, conjuring up memories to share with you at this time, is the view to the north of the Clematis Roundel given to Lesley when she retired from the Beechgrove Garden programme. In the evening we have the multi stemmed silver birch, beyond it uplit by a couple of solar powered spotlights. The white branches of this exceptional tree, Betula Snow Queen, create a graceful sculpture, and the stems take on their white colour in only three years, which is fast compared to most birches. It is another one of our winning plants for all seasons. *Are you enjoying a memorable view from your home this month?*



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and Lesley Watson**
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FOR YOUR GARDEN THIS SPRING?
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GET SOME INSPIRATION
AND SOME WONDERFUL PLANTS!**

LADAS - OAKWELL ALLOTMENTS, JANUARY



Oakwell allotments in January

Trimming the hedges which surround two sides of Oakwell allotments has been the main task this month for plot holders, a good number of whom turned out to help. We were joined by the young son of one of our plot holders who volunteered to help as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award.

Growing big Potatoes in containers

Here is a method of growing baking-sized or jacket Potatoes that I used last year which gave really good results. (Thanks to Tony O'Neill from Simplify Gardening for the tips).

Use 30 litre (5 gallon) containers

Fill one third of the bucket with compost and work in a handful of one part each of a mixture of fish, blood and bone, Growmore and organic potato fertiliser and a handful each of 6X manure and Vitax Q4 organic fertiliser. (If you are growing organically replace the Growmore with an extra handful of Fish, blood and bone).

Plant two maincrop potatoes. Use a suitable variety such as King Edward, Desiree, Vivaldi, Sarpo Mira, Picasso. Rub off all but two chits or sprouts to grow large potatoes. I chit my maincrop potatoes so that I can see where the sprouts are.

Cover the potatoes with compost to two thirds full and add a handful more mixture – fish, blood and bone, Growmore and organic potato fertiliser. Then fill to the top of the container with compost. They will need no more feeding but must be kept moist, not soaking, throughout the growing season.

Things to do in your fruit and vegetable garden in January

>> Peppers have a long growing season, so

it is best to start them off this month in a heated propagator or in a warm place in the house.

>> Prune Blackcurrant bushes by cutting out about a quarter to a third of old wood.

>> Remove dead wood and low-lying branches from Gooseberry bushes. Prune all side shoots by cutting them back to one to three buds from the base. Shorten branch tips by one quarter, cutting to a suitable outward facing bud.

>> Cut all autumn Raspberry canes to ground level if you did not do this last month.

>> January is a good time to plant fruit trees.

>> You can sow lettuce, summer cabbage and cauliflowers, round varieties of carrots, spinach, salad onions and turnips in pots or seed trays on a bright, cool windowsill. You can sow tomatoes this month in a heated greenhouse or propagator; the optimum air temperature for germinating tomato seeds is 85°F (29°C) although they will grow in temperatures above 50°F (10°C).

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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LINLITHGOW AND BO'NESS PROBUS CLUB



Probus Clubs are clubs for retired or semi-retired people from all walks of life and may include business or professional people. The Probus Club movement was formed in the United Kingdom in 1965 and now operates worldwide.

The purpose of Probus is to provide a regular meeting point for people who appreciate and value increased social contacts in their retirement and the opportunity to meet others in similar circumstances. Linlithgow and Bo'ness Probus Club has been in existence since 1976. During Covid restrictions the club was one of the few Probus clubs in the country to continue meetings using Zoom. The club has restarted 'live' meetings, but depending on current restrictions may have to revert to Zoom.

The club meets every second Wednesday from September to May at 10 am in Linlithgow Rose Social Club, where we are fortunate to have excellent facilities and a welcome reception. Our programme mainly involves talks on a wide range of interesting subjects. Some of these talks are given by our own members, but most are from guest speakers. We also organise group quizzes, fun games mornings and visits to places of interest. In addition we have social events to celebrate Burns Day, St Andrew's Day and Christmas, which partners are welcome to attend.

The club currently has about 40 men and women members and guests are also welcome. We are particularly keen to welcome new members, so if anyone is interested, please come along and join us for coffee/tea and biscuits, prior to any talk. Our current programme is available on our website at bolinprobus.org.

Details are sent to members a few days prior to each meeting, so to be kept informed if meetings are going to revert to Zoom, please contact our secretary at labprobus@gmail.com.

The photo shows some of our members who attended a recent talk.

Jim Hannan

LINLITHGOW, WE ARE LISTENING



A community initiative of
St Michael's Parish Church

A new listening service was launched on the week beginning 27th September 2021, under the auspices of Love Linlithgow (a community initiative of St Michael's Parish Church).

Many will be aware that for some years now we have had a Pastoral Visitors service at St Michael's. A team of dedicated and trained visitors have regularly supported a number of people in the congregation who have need of pastoral support, including emotional support, befriending and practical help on occasions. Those receiving the service have for the most part (but not exclusively) been elderly and often housebound, or limited in what they are able to do independently.

Even prior to the Covid 19 pandemic, we have had a vision of extending this service in a number of ways. The vision included a notion that we should extend our pastoral care outreach beyond those who are church members, and indeed to those of any age and who are not necessarily housebound, but who have a need for emotional support and someone to listen to them for a period of time.

Our experience of the Linlithgow Coronavirus Support Group gave impetus to this. This initiative demonstrated a willingness across a range of groups in the town (church groups and many others) to work together in the interests of the community.

To this end, we are now proposing to launch a Listening Service available to all in the community. This new service will be available to all in the community (not only St Michael's members) and volunteers who deliver the service need not be St Michael's members, or indeed members of any church (though members of other churches will be made most welcome). Requirements of volunteers will be the same as those for our pastoral visitors, i.e. they will require disclosure/PVG checks, will require training (which we will provide) and will require to be interviewed by a member of the St Michael's Parish Church ministry team and a member of its pastoral care team.

We would emphasise that this is neither a counselling service or a befriending service but a listening service. Users will be supported for a time-limited period, and if their problems are such that require a different service, we will provide signposting to these services.

This service is available to all irrespective of beliefs, sexual orientation, race, etc. It is free, confidential and non-judgemental. We will listen to your anxieties, concerns and issues. We can meet you over coffee, go for a walk, use Zoom or telephone, or come to your own home. In the future, we may be able to meet in Crosshouse.

Anyone interested in using this service or indeed becoming a volunteer, should contact us by email- linlithgowlistening@gmail.com or by telephone on 01506842188.

Tom Brown



**LIN GIN COMPETITION
WINNER NOVEMBER**

**KAREN PALMER, 85 PRESTON
ROAD, LINLITHGOW**



**Hello
I'M BELLA
CUNNINGHAM**

Bella is a Boxer who turned 11 years old on Christmas Eve. Bella's owners adopted Bella from Boxer Welfare Scotland when she was only six months old.

Her owner says she really is a wee gem, and she never stops wagging her tail. She loves a bit of cake, and she stamps her feet to get a treat if she thinks she is being ignored!

Her favourite toy is her Kong elephant, she adores it and has great fun throwing it about and tossing it in the air. She also loves lying behind her owner's husband on the sofa.

When Bella joined the family they already had an adopted Boxer, who was also white in colour and from the same rescue, called Bonnie. Bonnie and Bella loved each other from the very first day they met. Sadly the family lost Bonnie when she was 12, and they all miss her terribly.

The family have such a love for the Boxer breed and have had four others previously. They say Boxers are their favourite, because they are incredibly good natured, are so much fun to have around and for these reasons would recommend boxers to anybody!

Bella's owners are the kind of owners every dog should have! They are well educated in the breed they share their lives with and understand the full needs and requirements of the breed they own.

Even within a breed category every dog is an individual. Knowledge and education is one of the most important parts of being a pet owner, and something which should be continued throughout an animal's life. For example, healthcare and behaviour science and its studies, are constantly updating and changing what humans know and understand in animals.

There are excellent resources available to the public, for all species of animals, which are free to access. We recommend ensuring any information you look up or research is from a reputable source and UK based. This is to ensure you are directed appropriately, as the

vast and endless information available can be conflicting and many methods or advice may not be verified, up to date, or in fact legal by UK pet owners and welfare standards and law.

Pet ownership is a big commitment, and not one that should be taken lightly. Rescuing pets is also a wonderful way to commit your life to an animal, however a lot of consideration should be taken to any additional needs that may be involved. Where possible, find out as much as you can about previous history for the animal and, always, ensure your source is a reputable one.

Buying pets on the internet can be very tempting when photos are seen with sad stories, however there are so many scams; sick and stolen pets in circulation, and it is your responsibility to ensure you check the sources are genuine and that they adhere to Scottish Law. If in any doubt - don't do it! Also many scams are extremely clever to lure you with false photos and a lot of fake sob stories, so seeking pets online is a minefield which should be tried very carefully.

Well established rescues such as The Dogs Trust, SPCA, Cats Protection, etc have strict rules and procedures in place, because this is in the best interest of the animals. Some rescue organisations will even pair the best suited pet to you and your lifestyle, which is an excellent way to ensure a match made is the most appropriate and successful.

FOR RESCUE - you can check a reputable UK rehoming organisation is a member of the Association of Dogs and Cat Homes.

FOR BUYING - you can check a reputable supplier such as a Kennel Club Assured Breeder. Advice is available from the Dog Advisory Council, Dogs Trust, Kennel Club, PAAG, and RSPCA.

>> Always view the animal and its documentation before you buy - if it was born outside the UK, it must have either a pet passport or a veterinary certificate.

FOR BREEDERS - ask to see the local authority licence details for commercial dog breeders. Licensed dog breeders must show puppies with their mothers to prospective buyers.

IF YOU PLAN TO BUY A PUPPY OR KITTEN - you can use the puppy contract or the kitten checklist from the RSPCA and Animal Welfare Foundation information.

>> Always see the puppy or kitten with its mother and any litter, and if possible, in the location it was born.

>> Never buy a puppy or kitten younger than 8 weeks old.

>> If you require dog walkers, pet sitters or help for the care of an animal, we recommend getting this organised before you get your pet. There is a high demand for many pet care giving sectors, and if this is in your requirements for ownership, it is best to ensure you will be able to fulfill this need before bringing an animal into your life.

>> Pet Insurance - some new and some breeder policies have a 2 week lag time, so this should be obtained ideally before a pet is in your care.

Guidelines for getting pets, in accordance with the law, are all available on Gov.uk website.

If you have any questions or enquiries about your pet or owning a pet, please email the Westport Team who are happy to assist: surgery@westportvets.com

In case of emergency or if you have any concerns please call the Westport Vet practice on 01506 844165.



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Apology to Patrick Stewart

Issue 86 Correction: Primary Schools Art competition - we offer apologies for our proofreading error to Patrick Stewart whose entry gained class winner prize representing Linlithgow Primary in the Primary Schools Art competition, November 2021. Editor

The Linlithgow Community Magazine (aka The Black Bitch) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO): SCO42542 Find us on Facebook, Follow us on Twitter.

The paper we are using is FSC approved.

Images: A big thank you to all our photographers who support the magazine throughout the year.





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