



“A beacon standing guard over the ancient burgh.”

ASPIRE LINLITHGOW P 10.

LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY MAGAZINE
BLACK



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LINLITHGOW'S NEWS BY LINLITHGOW'S PEOPLE
BITCH

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JAN 2023

**COMMUNITY COUNCIL
FUTURE - APPEAL P6.**

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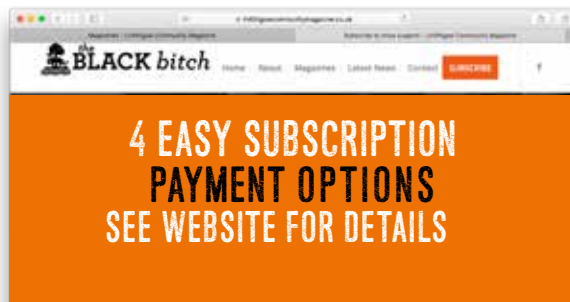
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**DAVID TAIT,
EDITOR**

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MAGAZINE**



Our main focus is of course on our Linlithgow community, however, as another “New Year” begins it is hard to ignore events dominating headlines outwith the town. But we’ll do our best!

And Linlithgow news doesn’t come much better than the story from **Aspire Linlithgow** – the successful fundraising campaign to meet the cost of repairing the “Crown” of St Michael’s Parish Church, feeling the effects, as it is, of time and weather. When first unveiled the Crown attracted a deal of negative comment but over time has become a symbol of Linlithgow itself, so widely has it been adopted. Very aptly described by Bruce Jamieson as “A beacon standing guard over the ancient Burgh” it is on schedule to be returned to its original 1964 condition by September this year.

Continuing the successful campaign theme, the magazine is keen to add to the team that produces and delivers each magazine. Design and printing apart, the magazine is exclusively managed, composed and delivered by 60-70 volunteers for any given issue. So if you enjoy reading the magazine, have an interest in Linlithgow and have a little time to spare to use your skills and experience to help the magazine grow then we’d very much like to hear from you.

We’ve listed below some of the areas of operation we’d like to strengthen. We don’t need to acquire all of these all at once but would like to continue making steady progress to broaden

the appeal of the magazine and access to it.

writing, editing, proofreading, photography, community engagement, advertising, distribution, community consultation, social media, website, admin, bookkeeping, fundraising.

If you’d like to find out more just email me at: on.a.lead@gmail.com and I will be in touch.

For now, back to this issue and an article by **The Friends of St Michael’s Hospital** highlights the dilemma facing decision makers and community – to close or not to close. **The Community Council** also makes a plea for new members to sustain it following the retiral of key members. There’s much good work to be done but in these changing times, who is to do it?

Under the heading “You don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone”, **Linlithgow Fairtrade Partnership** points to potential shortages in the foodstuffs we take for granted encouraging uptake of Fairtrade products to protect growers.

On the cheerier side **Bruce Jamieson** writes of two nineteenth century Linlithgow entrepreneurs – who, like many others, found their fortunes on the other side of the Atlantic. When he left for America John Stalker took with him one of Linlithgow’s well known trades – shoe making. The other, John West, started in sawmilling in Canada before moving via the goldfields of California to

inventing a salmon canning process with which his name is still associated.

Add to that the emerging talent of two young Academy writers exploring up-cycling and New Year resolutions, how to keep them; also with resolutions in mind **Linlithgow Athletics Club** reports on its expanding reach in the community; a new event facility at **Kingsfield Golf** for weddings and functions; and also based at Kingsfield, **Life Fit Wellness** updates on its range of services aimed at keeping golfers and others in good shape; and unusually for us a guest article from the **Hippodrome Cinema** in Bo’ness a big favourite amongst many Linlithgow film fans. Along with our regular contributors on property, gardening, music and events that should provide something for everyone.

As always, a big thank you to everyone who contributes in all different ways to making the magazine possible.

Over the past couple of years subscriptions have continued to grow and as costs have increased markedly we ask readers who have not so far subscribed to consider making a donation or setting up a regular subscription. At present subscriptions start at £2 per month and all subscriptions are greatly appreciated adding substantially to our ability to forward plan content.



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WEDDING WONDER

One Linlithgow is proud to have so many locally owned businesses in the town. Did you know, for instance, that you can get most of the things you would need for a wedding without any travel? Perhaps there's businesses here you had forgotten about, or you might point friends from out of town to something here.

Bella Bridal and **Kapital Kilts** are ready to get the main bridal party clad, while the mother of the bride would be using her time well visiting **Styled by Macs**. This is a special day, so perhaps a special piece of jewellery is required, and **Jewellery by Design** will be worth a visit. It's important to get the venue decoration right on the big day too, with **Flowers by Carolyn** and **Bonnie Events** both able to help.

As the big day comes closer, many will want to have favours ready. Two of the options available are chocolates and truffles from **Sebastian Kobelt** and gin miniatures from **Linlithgow Distillery**. Talking of tasty treats, there are some great wedding cake designers locally, including **Truly Scrumptious Cake Design**.

Great settings are all around the town, for a beautiful ceremony and reception. They all lend themselves to fantastic images, and with several photographers based around the town you won't be short of creative ideas.

Having had a great day, the wedding party will not want to worry about travelling far that night. There are many accommodation options locally, **Court Residence** is just one example.

The bride and groom may want something a little further afield the next day though, as they take a honeymoon break. Planning that with **Linlithgow Travel** will get you the special holiday you want.

Many of these businesses are hoping to be showing at the **Kingsfield Barn wedding fayre**, and are easily found in the town should you miss that day... and don't worry, there are plenty of fantastic cafes and bars of course for the flagging wedding planner needing revived. More on that another time.

Don't worry if your business hasn't had a name check today – we will be carrying more features about local services soon, whether that be visitor facilities, local crafters, our hidden businesses, food and drink, and more. Let us know what you would like to hear about.

YELLOW LINE FURORE

A set of plans have been drawn up by West Lothian Council for new yellow lines in parts of Linlithgow. This includes double yellow lines controversially included in Mill Road Industrial Estate.



Plans drawn up show double yellow lines down one side each of the main roads through the estate. Whilst forcing cars off the roads, there is very limited parking for many of the businesses, compared to the traffic they receive, and this has created worries about where the customers – and indeed some staff - will park.

Formal consultation ended on 31 December 2022, with many of the businesses affected having raised concerns. However, having spoken to one Councillor, it is clear the Council are still open to hearing better solutions to balance safety, parking and access.

One Linlithgow is currently talking to the affected businesses about what steps they would like to take to lobby the Council. Next steps will be agreed in the coming days, with an overriding goal of ensuring the best solution for the businesses, customers, and nearby residents alike.

This is the kind of issue our Community Council can raise on behalf of residents with the Council. The meetings are the last Tuesday of the month at the Burgh Halls, and residents are encouraged to come along and take part.



**SAT
4
FEB**

KINGSFIELD BARN

Kingsfield Barn is proud to bring the first Wedding Fair, taking place at Kingsfield Barn, Linlithgow, EH49 7LS on Saturday 4th February 2023 from 11am – 3pm.

Kingsfield Barn is a new venue at Kingsfield Golf and Leisure. The golf club offers a fabulous golf experience, home to an exceptionally maintained, 9 hole USGA specification course with Trackman Driving Range bays and

state-of-the-art Virtual Golf Simulators. Kingsfield is also home to Scotland's only TaylorMade Performance Centre – providing the latest equipment to assist with all your golf requirements, as well as Golf Tuition Studios with Golf Professionals who provide tuition for Golfers of all levels. Practice facilities at Kingsfield Golf and Leisure also include a short game area and fabulous Ochils Family Putting Green which is open for all to enjoy!

Kingsfield Barn has finally opened its doors after having to put all plans on hold due to Covid-19. Throughout the pandemic the Kingsfield team put all their time into the renovation of the barn to make it a truly unique and adaptable space.

A flexible space with many options for ceremony, reception, and dining. The Barn can comfortably accommodate weddings from 50 to 400 guests, with plenty of room for additional evening guests too. The exclusive use dry hire venue offers a blank canvas which can be transformed into a Fairy-tale wedding setting.

With a second barn joined on, it's perfect for having outdoor catering companies or street food suppliers set up next to it, without having to worry about the weather! You really can let your imagination go wild.

Set on a working farm, Kingsfield Barn is the perfect place for those looking for a memorable and unique wedding! The barn can offer an authentic farm ambience complete with an array of farm animals from Alpaca to Pygmy Goats and Miniature Donkeys to include in photos, adding to the delight of your wedding guests and to the charm found at the rustic wedding venue.

Kingsfield Golf Course is a perfect location for newlyweds to capture the special moments of their big day. Capture special moments with shots taken in scenic areas, or even hitched on one of our golf buggies - there's something at Kingsfield for every couple!

Looking for rustic wedding inspiration?

Kingsfield Barn will be holding a Wedding Fair on the 4th of February, allowing those to view the barn and meet a range of suppliers as well as chat with the team here at Kingsfield and see different ideas for a wedding at Kingsfield Barn!

Explore and chat with suppliers on the 4th February 2023 from 11am to 3pm. Book your free ticket at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/kingsfield-barn-wedding-fair-tickets-51140288807?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=escb>



Everyone welcome!

“ LINLITHGOW – FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL IN DOUBT

The future of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council (Community Council) is under threat following the failure to date to attract replacements for key retiring members when the current Chair and Secretary stand down in February.

The organisation is a statutory body and as such has an influential role to play in the welfare and development of the town - but could cease to exist in eight weeks' time unless new members can be found.

The Community Council is the town's only elected body with statutory powers and its prime remit is to represent the interests of Linlithgow and its people. A Community Council is the first link in a communication chain between members of the public and government via locally and nationally elected representatives. Its role is to understand the concerns of its local community and ensure that these are made known to the elected members of our Local Authority for appropriate action.

Our 3 West Lothian Councillors attend the Community Council monthly meetings and are very supportive of the organisation. They use the meetings to help develop an understanding of the views and opinions of the people of the town through discussion with members of the Community Council.

To facilitate this process the Community Council operates a number of sub-committees including the Planning Forum that has been instrumental in creating and circulating "Linlithgow A Plan for the Future 2022-2032" a document that was not just well received by the Scottish Government but held up by Councils across Scotland as a shining example of how communities can influence thinking amongst those tasked with planning the environment in which we all live and work. Following completion of ongoing development the final document will form the basis of Linlithgow's "Local Place Plan" which will require to be recognised in the preparation of the next West Lothian Development Plan.

Another of the Community Council's sub-committees is the lead organiser of the annual Advent Fayre that includes the organisation of the market stalls and Torch Light Procession, a much-enjoyed event in the town's calendar. The Community Council has also historically been the organiser of the Remembrance Day Parade held ahead of the service that honours Linlithgow's war dead. It has a statutory right to be consulted on all planning applications to the Local Planning Authority.

Current Chair, **Graeme Grant**, is making this appeal for anyone who is interested in local issues to consider coming forward to strengthen its capacity as a leading community asset.

He believes there are many people in the town with skills, experience and knowledge which could be of immense benefit to Linlithgow and its environs.

"We have a much higher average age than the rest of West Lothian towns," he explained. "That might suggest we have a wealth of older folk with some time and expertise who could do a great job through the Community Council in contributing to the betterment of the town."

If you feel you want to assist your community - and help retain the Community Council as a strong, influential body which can enhance and enrich the quality of life in the town - please contact **secretary@communitycouncil.org.uk** to explore how your involvement can help the town progress.

Graeme Grant
Chair Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council



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LINLITHGOW ATHLETICS CLUB & LET'S GO LINLITHGOW!

As a new year dawns, many of us are full of good intentions, whether it is to find a new pastime, get fitter, lose weight, improve our mental well being or meet new people. Our local athletics club, Linlithgow Athletics Club and it's sister group Let's Go Linlithgow can help you to do all of the above. With a regular programme of training sessions and social group runs happening every evening Monday to Thursday and a Friday morning, plus informal meet-ups at the weekend there is something for everyone.

Long gone are the days when running clubs were only for elite runners. Whilst getting faster will be one of the benefits of joining the club, there are no prerequisites for joining. The club has run a jogscotland group for the past four years, which offers regular **Couch to 5k programmes** plus a walk/jog group. The jogscotland group, known as **Let's Go Linlithgow**, offers 3 sessions per week and won the prestigious Scottish Athletics jogscotland award in 2021 for widening access and continued support of the local community during the pandemic which it achieved by offering virtual training programmes and online support.

Club member, **Karen** said "I took part in one of the first 'Let's Go Linlithgow' (LGL) couch to 5k programmes. I was made aware of this programme through my dad, **Angus Gallie** (LAC President). I have dyspraxia, which affects my coordination, however I find that this does not affect me for running. Although I had completed some 10k events before joining LGL, it was great to 'start again' by following the programmes, which build you

up gradually. I decided to join Linlithgow Athletic Club (LAC), to take advantage of other sessions which were organised by the club e.g. the evening 'paced runs'. It was nice to be a member of the club when I entered events, particularly the Linlithgow 10k.

I have made many friends through LGL and LAC and now we have formed social running groups where we meet once or twice a week for a run in addition to 'club' organised sessions. This has been great for me, since I prefer running with company and in the dark winter nights, I feel safer doing this.

Running with my friends makes it feel like a social occasion, we have good laughs and chats, and it helps me mentally too as both parents have health issues at the moment. My Dad is doing well, but it is good to chat about my Mum whilst running socially. I always feel better after these runs."

Age and gender are no barrier to club membership. The junior section, which meets on a Monday evening caters for 9-13 year olds, whilst older teenagers can choose to join the Monday night girls jogging group, a predominantly social group or the youth section which operates alongside the seniors Thursday night training.

Whilst historically many running clubs were predominantly male the adult membership is 50:50 male; female. Senior members span a wide age range from mid-twenties to early seventies. **David** who joined in 2021 said "I joined LAC 18 months ago, following the pandemic. A great decision. Despite being the wrong side of 60 I was made to feel very welcome. I have found it to be a very friendly and inclusive club that caters for all abilities and aspirations."

Other club members endorse David and Karen's comments. **Victoria**, known to all as Tor, who joined the club in January 2022 said "LAC is so friendly and welcoming. It's such a great sized club to get to know

others quickly. The sessions are varied and always suit a range of paces. Everyone is so supportive and encouraging and it's always lovely bumping into other LAC runners at races and parkruns."

Clair, who joined in 2019 said "I would never have thought I was good enough to join an athletics club until a friend took me along to a club session. I was immediately made to feel welcome and the coaching sessions and encouragement from my fellow members very quickly brought on my running and I have since completed 4 sub 4 hour marathons and this year I was delighted to win the club handicap championship."

So, whatever your age or level of fitness, whatever your running goals or your reasons for wanting to run, LAC and LGL have something to offer. Check out our website <https://www.linlithgowathletics.org/> or email letsgolinlithgow@gmail.com

Photo key:

Top. Club members at track night
Bottom left: Karen with her Dad, Angus after completing the Great Scottish run and obtaining a Personal Best. October 2022
Bottom middle: Linlithgow AC women at recent cross country event
Bottom right: Clair, competing at National Cross Country relays in October 2022

Jill Horsburgh
Linlithgow Athletics Club,
Let's Go Linlithgow





FRIENDS OF ST MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL DECISION TIME APPROACHES

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT 7 FEBRUARY 2023

In August 2021 the decision was taken to close St Michael's Hospital temporarily using emergency powers under pressure of short term staff shortages across West Lothian. The impression felt at that time was that the Hospital would re-open.

10 months later in June 2022 a report to the West Lothian Integration Joint Board contained two recommendations in relation to St Michael's:

1. That St Michael's should remain closed
2. That a public consultation be held with all relevant parties to review future bed space requirements at St Michael's.

The decision was taken to move the patients and Staff to Tippetthill Community Hospital in Armadale allowing the pooling of Staff. This allowed for some Staff to be re-assigned to St John's Hospital. There is a shortage of Staff across NHS Lothian.

St Michael's Hospital is a community hospital and the only NHS facility of this type based in the north of West Lothian. The Hospital provided end of life care, the care of patients waiting for care packages or a future placement to a care home. Patients were sent to St Michael's from St John's for these purposes so freeing up beds and moving patients away from a general

hospital situation. Bed blocking is an ongoing concern for hospital managers.

The Friends of St Michael's Hospital are in regular contact with the Head of Health and Social Care Partnership for West Lothian. The future of the hospital is under constant review and no decision on its future can be taken without holding a public consultation to test the arguments for and against closure.

As a preliminary to that public consultation a public engagement meeting will be held in Linlithgow on 7 February, 2023 at which interested organisations, stakeholders and members of the public will be provided with data and supporting information previously prepared for a meeting of the West Lothian Integration Joint Board (IJB), which will show how bed space at St Michael's has been used in past periods and how demand for the type of provision previously delivered at St Michael's has changed with time and practice. The public engagement will allow open exchange of views and ideas in relation to the future of St Michael's Hospital.

This will be the first opportunity for local community organisations and individuals to put forward their views about the hospital and its place in the provision of care in West Lothian. Feedback from this public engagement will be presented to the IJB Meeting on 21st March, 2023 to inform the subsequent public consultation meeting to decide the future of the St Michael's Hospital.



**TUES
7
FEB**

The public engagement meeting is to be held in St Michael's Kirk Hall on **Tuesday 7th February, 2023 at 7.00pm**. The meeting is open to all interested groups and individuals and it must be emphasised that as matters stand the following consultation will be the final opportunity for the Linlithgow community to have its voice heard over the future of the facility.

As time is short before the proposed decision-making IJB meeting it is vital that those with views on the future of St Michael's Hospital attend on 7th February and make their views known now and have their questions answered by the officials attending.

The Friends of St Michael's Hospital,
Charity No. SC028536



“A beacon standing guard over the ancient burgh.”

FROM ASPIRATION TO REALITY IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN!

“To rise high or tower” is one dictionary definition of ‘aspire’. When we launched the ‘Aspire Linlithgow’ fundraising programme for St Michael’s Parish Church, the name seemed apt, if also a step of faith. But one year on, the way our donated funds have risen higher and higher demonstrates just how aspirational our church and community are – and means we can crack on with the work.

Image: Martin Brown



The Fraternity of Dyers were very pleased to continue a long history of making donations to important infrastructure projects in the town with a donation of £1,500.

Back row left to right: **Alan Miller**, Aspire Project, **Margaret Henderson**, St Michael’s Church, **Raymond Corr**, Treasurer Dyers, **Alistair Old**, Secretary, Dyers

Front row left: **Crawford Flint**, Deacon of Dyers, **Rev Liam Fraser**, St Michael’s Church

One Year On

At the start of 2022, we had less than £20k net banked. As we reach the end of the year, our total net funding is close to breaking through the £200,000 barrier. We’re very grateful for the £40k grant funding the Church of Scotland nationally has promised; yet towering over that is the fantastic figure of over £150,000 raised locally!

Events such as the silent auction in June, the quiz night in November and the Christmas hampers raffle have certainly

helped. Primarily, though, this amazing sum has come from you. People in the church and community have given more than generously to ensure that our unique Crown of Thorns spire will continue to shine, in Bruce Jamieson’s memorable phrase, as “A beacon standing guard over the ancient burgh.”



Shining Like New

And shine it will: this funding means the work will start in the Spring and be finished by September 2023. First, a lot of scaffolding will go up around the church tower, with a large platform around the top of the tower and further scaffolding to hold the Crown secure during repairs. The existing aluminium cladding will be removed, and rotten sections of the timber underneath will be cut out and replaced. Finally, new weatherproof gold-coloured bronze alloy cladding will be fitted to restore the Crown to its original 1964 colour.

The total cost is now estimated at £300k + VAT. We’re pursuing further grant funding, and expect to reclaim the VAT. And the community campaign continues: keep the date for ‘An Evening with Graham Spiers and Friends’ on 16th June as the acclaimed



journalist brings some big sporting names to Linlithgow. More details to follow.

And of course, we’re always delighted to receive further donations! This QR code takes you to our Stewardship fundraising page at www.stewardship.org.uk/pages/aspirelinlithgow, where you can instruct a one-off or regular contribution, and add Gift Aid. Gifts by cheque – made payable to St Michael’s Parish Church – are also more than welcome and can be popped through the letterbox of Cross House.



Beyond the spire, we’ve started the process of seeking major grant funding to transform Cross House into a community hub for wellbeing – a House for the Town – and to secure the fabric of the church as a special space for all. But for now, let’s celebrate that the aspiration to safeguard Linlithgow’s iconic Crown of Thorns spire will be fulfilled in 2023, thanks to everyone who has contributed.



Alan D Miller, Fundraising Team Leader, St Michael’s Parish Church

Aspire Linlithgow is the capital fundraising programme of St Michael’s Parish Church, Linlithgow.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT TILL IT'S GONE

Linlithgow Fairtrade Partnership



Cocoa, bananas and coffee could soon be much more difficult to find on our shelves, because of climate change – that's the statement being made by the Fairtrade Foundation this year. But could it be true? We already know that drought affecting the olive harvest in Europe will make olive oil scarce later this year, but are chocolate, bananas and coffee really at risk?

The Fairtrade Foundation says that climate change is making these crops harder to grow. Combined with deeply unfair trade, the communities growing these crops are being pushed to the brink. Most of our cocoa, coffee and bananas are grown by small-scale farmers in the tropical regions of the world. There, irregular weather patterns caused by climate change mean that crops can wither in the ground from drought or be washed away in a flash flood. What's more, hotter weather means more pests and diseases, reducing yields or killing plants. Since many of the farmers are small-scale and rely on traditional farming practices, they haven't the resources or expertise to do much about it.

That's why Fairtrade organisations round the world are working with farmers and producers to show them how to combat the effects of climate change and make their farms more resilient. Schemes like planting trees to form shade belts around the crops to protect them, and intercropping to make better use of the land and provide a secondary source of income, are already making a big difference to farms and their sustainability. Even cooking on a bio stove rather than a wood fire has the double benefit of preserving trees and providing ash for fertiliser. When you



buy Fairtrade you not only support this kind of practical advice and support, but you also ensure the farmer or producer is paid a guaranteed fair minimum price for their goods. And, in addition, they receive a share of the profits as a Fairtrade premium for their community to invest in improving the business or developing community projects.

So is that why Fairtrade goods are always more expensive?

It's true that paying a fair wage, promoting women's rights, stopping child labour and improving health and safety does come at a cost, but it doesn't always

mean that it's expensive. Look in ALDI or the Coop, for example, and you'll find quite a number of Fairtrade teas, coffees and chocolate at below the going rate elsewhere. And Marks and Spencer (will it really open in Linlithgow in 2023?) stocks competitively priced tea and coffee – and all of it is Fairtrade. Just look for the Fairtrade Mark or the Fairtrade Ingredient Mark.

But maybe you tried Fairtrade coffee years ago and didn't like it so haven't touched it since?

Well, in the very early days the coffee was pretty rubbish but Fairtrade has come a very long way since then. To give you a taster, and discover for yourself the high quality of Fairtrade foods, Linlithgow Fairtrade Partnership is arranging some taster sessions this Fairtrade Fortnight.

Book up to try some Fairtrade wines at a paired wine and food evening on 24th or 25th February, run by the Edinburgh Wine School. Or, if that's not for you, come along to Cross House on the morning of 4th March to try out some Fairtrade teas, coffees and biscuits for free – there will even be a drawing competition to keep the children occupied.

Fairtrade has changed a lot since it started 30 years ago. It is high quality, and there are now over 4,500 Fairtrade certified products for sale in the UK, covering a huge range of products. So if you haven't tried it for a while, why not come along to one of our tasting events, or perhaps buy a couple of Fairtrade products you haven't tried before and hold your own 'tasting session' at home?

When you buy goods with the Fairtrade Mark you know that you are doing your bit to support sustainable agriculture and help ensure that the coffee, chocolate and bananas we love will continue to be on our shelves for many years to come.



UPCOMING EVENTS:
WINE TASTING 24, 25 FEBRUARY
TEA, COFFEE, BISCUIT TASTING 4 MARCH

DONATING A GUITAR...

Back in September 2022 I received a really lovely email from a Linlithgow resident of more than 30 years whose husband had reluctantly decided, due to health reasons, his guitar was going to be of no further use to him and he wanted to donate it. The couple have asked to remain anonymous however they are happy for me to talk about the guitar which is a Squire Stratocaster.

The Life Of A Guitar

A guitar is much more than just wood and strings though and always tells a unique story. I think an instrument like this is incredibly interesting as I can't help wondering how it's been used. What music was played on it? Was it used live? How many hours did the owner spend with it? And I also can't help feeling a bit sad for the owner as anyone who has owned an instrument for almost 25 years will know we become attached to it. A guitar represents a little part of us. Or maybe a big part. It's how that person decided to spend a large chunk of their life, practicing and playing, honing and perfecting, for hours and hours – just them and the guitar – elation and frustration as the months and years go by and it's really nice that this particular guitar's life is far from over.

Rebecca Marshall

As it happened one of my student's parents had just asked me for advice on an electric guitar for his daughter and I had sent over some examples of 2nd hand guitars that were suitable. Rebecca Marshall (11, Linlithgow Primary) has been regularly brought along for lessons by her Dad, Mike, since September 2021 however she wasn't a complete beginner. With her previous tutor, Rebecca was learning classical guitar however unfortunately due to the pandemic, lessons in Linlithgow were no longer possible. So Mike reached out to me and when a space opened up we began how I always get the strings going with new students – learning rock music!

This was a big change of pace for Rebecca however she adapted really well and really quickly and in March 2022 we started the Rockschool Grade 1 syllabus. I was really pleased about the classical background though for a couple of reasons. 1: I love classical guitar and regularly play and teach this style; 2: it meant Rebecca could read and understand musical notation which is typically an area that rock and blues based players struggle with. Rebecca chose the Booker T & The MGs classic 'Green Onions' to start with and by June 2022 was able to play this piece with the backing track. Very fast progress indeed for her 1st Grade 1 piece! Next it was the soothing arpeggios of The Man Who Can't Be Moved by The Script which again was learned to a really high standard with the backing track.



Sistema Scotland – The Big Noise

By this time, Rebecca's nylon string guitar was beginning to restrict her ever so slightly and this was the reason that we had discussed the possibility of getting an electric guitar which happened to coincide with the email I mentioned earlier. The timing was perfect and Rebecca was certainly a student who would get a huge amount from the electric axe. So dedicated parent Mike took Rebecca over to the couple's home in Linlithgow to meet and try out the guitar which was also coming with a small practice amplifier, lead, stand

and other accessories. The couple suggested that a donation could be made to a charity which we all thought was an excellent idea and I believe



Sistema Scotland – The Big Noise was chosen (makeabignoise.org.uk) which gives young children the opportunity to learn music from a very young age, improves lives and strengthens communities.

Happy Families

Rebecca was over the moon with her new instrument and immediately we could hear improvement in how she played. Due to the full size neck Rebecca could fret chords more clearly, the sound of it was amazing and more suited to rock music plus the techniques that are required at Rockschool Grade 1 are easier to execute on the electric. The anonymous couple were delighted the guitar was suitable for Rebecca and mentioned to me how nice they thought it was that it's now come around full circle given it was reading the Black Bitch magazine that got them my contact details initially. They told me they were very much looking forward to reading this article and I can't help feeling extremely humbled that my small contribution to the magazine has helped put a wee bit of good into the local community by making two families very happy and also supporting Sistema Scotland.

I would love to hear from anyone in the community who has their own music story – perhaps you've just played your first gig, passed a music exam, maybe you run an open mic night or have released some music. Feel free to contact me via my details below.



GARY CLINTON. You can keep up to date with Gary's tuition business through social media [@GaryGuitar4](https://twitter.com/GaryGuitar4) [Facebook: garyclintonguitartutor](https://www.facebook.com/garyclintonguitartutor)



All About Resolutions...

As one year flips to the next, many people are inspired to set a personal goal for themselves. Some changes to our lifestyle that we just haven't found the time or opportunity to do.

You're no doubt familiar with the concept and its accompanying cries of "this year I am going to go to the gym every week", "this year I'm going get to conversation level in a new language", "this year I'm going to read a book every 2 weeks" from either you or your peers.

Interestingly humans have been making these promises (or resolutions) to ourselves for hundreds of years! An early example of a New Year's resolution, dating back to 1671, can be found in the diaries of author Anne Halkett. On the second of January 1671, Halkett took a page titled 'resolutions' and wrote various pledges typically taken from Bible verses. For example "I will not offend any more".

By the 1800s the practice of setting resolutions appeared to be so common that some magazines were already mocking people's ability to follow through on their promises.

An article in the Walkers Hibernian Magazine from 1802 had a satirical take on resolutions for certain groups, joking that 'statesmen have resolved to have no other object in view than the good of their country'.

Returning to the present day, a recent report claims 80% of people fail to stick to their New Year's resolutions, with most people giving up by mid-February. So, if people have been trying, yet failing, at resolutions for hundreds of years, why might this be and what could we do to break the mould?

Although there is not one definitive reason for why resolutions may fail, it's commonly agreed some pitfalls are setting goals that are so high they are very difficult to achieve, or so low that they might induce boredom. People set idealistic goals around things they think they 'should' do or resolve to achieve hyper-specific goals that are simply impractical.

All of the example goals in the opening paragraphs fall victim to these trends, making them harder to stick to.

So how do you make it easier for yourself?

Reframe the resolution! Instead of saying "I'll go to the gym every week", a more realistic and achievable aim might be "I will explore and find a work-out routine that works for me." This simple and positive reframe means that you will be motivated to find different routines that work for you. While this might include going to the gym you may find that is not practical. Perhaps instead you might try jogging, testing out home workouts or even trying a new sport. Hopefully with this approach you are likely to find something that works for you and the core goal of 'exercising more' will still be achieved.

Of course, the new year is not the only time that we can introduce a positive change into our lives. Change is possible any time and any day, however, personally I rather enjoy the idea that there is a common time where millions of people across the world take time to reflect and try to better themselves. Even if the exact resolution does not stick 100%, a new mindset of curiosity and growth just might.

Calvin Sinclair [S4 Linlithgow Academy](https://www.linlithgow.academy)



LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST IS ALWAYS HAPPY FOR PEOPLE TO COME AND TALK TO THEM ABOUT THINGS THEY WANT TO OFFER FOR REPURPOSING.

UP-CYCLE LINLITHGOW WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

When we think of up-cycling, the first thing that comes to mind is giving an item a new purpose and use. Up-cycling is about taking something that we may usually throw away but instead positively affecting our environment by re-using. This is what **Re-Fab** [run by volunteer Susan White] and the **Tool Library** [run by a team of volunteers] are doing at Linlithgow Community Development Trust.

You may not be aware that up-cycling is an important part of the work currently being progressed by three groups within the Linlithgow Community Development Trust's Hub at the Vennel. The groups, the **Tool Library**, **Linlithgow Shed** [previously the Men's Shed] and **Re-Fab** are being organised by the Trust and all are working to repurpose old items that people no longer have a use for.

The **Tool Library** currently has a very impressive 200 members, it costs just £25 a year to join. The **Tool Library** and the **Linlithgow Shed** work closely together at the EH49 Hub. **Linlithgow Shed** are looking for old appliances, wood panels and generally anything that can be repurposed. These items are then used for projects going on in the town, such as making the wooden frames that were recently used to make a tapestry for

the town. The hope for this particular project is that it will add some beautiful artistry to our town and possibly help older people and perhaps those dealing with dementia to recall some of their favourite memories of the town.

The cost of living crisis has many of us wondering how we will stay warm this winter. To help locals to cope, the Development Trust staff member and volunteer **Lindsey Campbell** has created draft excluders and draft excluder DIY kits from donated materials that can be made at home, helping to reduce heat loss and hence the cost of heating. Appliances and items can be borrowed from the tool library which is a great money saver instead of buying brand new appliances and materials.

Terracycle volunteers are collecting used medicine blister packs, tooth care items, writing instruments, contact lenses, makeup and even your empty Pringle tubes. Some of these items are recycled to be repurposed e.g. plastics turned into jumpers. Re-Fab's principal goal is to reduce the amount of items that end up in landfill and are detrimental to our environment. The organisation has been very successful, so much so that they have been able to collect roughly 5000 empty pill packets in the last year!

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Linlithgow Community Development Trust is always happy for people to come and talk to them about things they want to offer for repurposing. They encourage people not to throw things out, if you have something unwanted, ask if you can hand it in as they are keen to find a use for almost anything. They are also looking for volunteers to help with the **Tool Library** and the linked group "The Linlithgow Shed" is also looking

for members to help with toolmaking, woodworking and overall up-cycling of materials. The **Springfield School project**, which is part of the Linlithgow Community Development Trust remit is teaching kids to up-cycle in the hopes that encouraging the initiative of *reduce, reuse, recycle* will help our environment in the coming years.

Linlithgow Community Development Trust is also looking for people with craft skills, whether you would like to help with up-cycling items or maybe teach others your skills e.g. how to use a sewing machine.

From old fishing rods used to tart up trishaws, to hoovers that no longer serve you a purpose, there is a new use for everything. If you are interested in borrowing items there are Party packs, games and even tables that are available to borrow.

In conclusion, it is vital to our environment that we re-use what we can. Instead of going to the tip with something you no longer need, see if you can up-cycle it at the Community Hub at the Vennel on the High Street [the old Library]. Thereby reducing the rubbish that ends up in landfill and pollutes our oceans.

If you have anything to donate or would like to volunteer with any of the groups mentioned above then please contact: admin@trust-linlithgow.org.uk



Sophia Barr, S6
Linlithgow Academy

Folk Fae Lithgae Davie Paterson

SAT
18
FEB

Davie “Deep Sea” Paterson is Linlithgow’s Quizmaster par excellence!

Last year, he organised seventeen quiz nights in aid of worthy causes, including the monthly ones he runs in the ‘Platform 3’ pub. On the first Thursday, a different good cause receives the proceeds of the hotly-contested quiz and a whole variety of charities, both local and national, have received a cash boost.

Davie is also regularly approached to do quiz nights for local groups in other venues and he spends a lot of time compiling the questions. He always follows the same format, as he explained:

“I’ll compose the quiz for them. Keep it nice and simple, eight rounds of ten questions on all different subjects. I find out roughly the age bracket that’s going to be there, so we can have the right blend of questions. I do warn them, however, that if it’s on a Friday night for example, they are likely to get a few pranks played on people, but it’s all in good part and the main thing is that they have a good night and don’t take it too seriously.”

On November 18th, Davie broke all his records when thirty seven teams competed in the Rose Club quiz

organised by the Aspire Linlithgow project, which is raising funds to repair and restore the Crown of Thorns Spire at St Michael’s Parish Church. The quiz raised a whopping £1739 and Davie was delighted:

“The spire is such an icon of the town and it was great to see every local group and Fraternity represented.”

Margaret Henderson from the church expressed her thanks to Davie and told me:

“‘Deep Sea’ is a great character, one with a real heart for our Royal Burgh.”

Davie has run charity events in Linlithgow for many years. As well as his quiz nights, which have become a huge part of his life, he is perhaps best known for his involvement with the “Walk for Jock” group.

Davie walked the West Highland Way for various causes from 2008 onwards, but the loss of his elder brother Jock to cancer in 2012 led to the establishment of a fundraising group set up to honour his memory.

Jock joined Davie and other friends in tackling the 98-mile path from Milngavie to Fort William in 2011 and really looked forward to doing it again. Sadly, he was diagnosed with cancer a few months later and passed away on the day before the Marches in June 2012.

Davie was devastated by the loss of his brother at the age of only forty-seven and hadn’t the heart to tackle the West Highland Way that year. His friends, however, thought otherwise. He told me:

“My best mate, Les Pattison, said ‘Do the walk for Jock in his memory’ and that’s how we got the name. My cousin Audrey quipped, ‘It’s what you do’ and we turned that into our motto, ‘IT’S WHAT WE DO’.”

The group will be tackling the West Highland Way again this year on the first week in September and have a number of fundraising events lined up, including a concert with ‘North Sea Gas’ on April 22nd. In recent times, “Walk for Jock” has helped numerous local causes, including the Gala Day, Burgh Beautiful and Cycling Without Age. They are also kitting out all the local Primary school football teams.

Davie’s big quiz night for “Walk for Jock” will take place in the Rose Club on Saturday February 18th and he would be delighted to welcome as many teams as possible.

Murdoch Kennedy



SPORTS CHARITY AIMS TO INSPIRE, INCLUDE AND ENCOURAGE

Linlithgow-based charity, the Blue Eyes Sports Foundation, has recently celebrated its tenth anniversary and the trustees are very keen to heighten awareness of the work they do and the help they are able to offer.

BESF is run by the Brown family - husband and wife Alex and Carole and son Robbie. They sponsor individual athletes in need of funding, while also donating to teams who they believe are worthwhile causes in the form of an outright cash donation, or by helping with the purchase of new kit or equipment.



People receiving help have ranged from grassroots clubs all the way through to Commonwealth and Olympic athletes, such as the badminton player, **Kirsty Gilmour** and the T54 wheelchair racer, **Megan Dawson-Farrell**.

The charity was set up at the time of Alex's 50th birthday in August 2012. Instead of receiving gifts, he asked friends to make donations towards the establishment of a sports foundation. The aim was to raise and contribute £50,000 for children in sport. As of the tenth anniversary last year, they have actually contributed over £130,000.

At first, the main focus was on providing free football coaching, but the emphasis is now on helping as many different types of sports as possible.

The mission statement says:-

“Through the Blue Eyes Sports Foundation, we aim to Inspire, Include and Encourage young people to get involved in sport, leading to a happier, healthier life”

The long and impressive list of funding recipients over the last ten years includes dance groups, boxing clubs, disabled curlers and a table tennis club. Recent beneficiaries in the Linlithgow area include the sprint kayaker, Findlay Lewis, the golfer Andrew Benson, floodlighting for the West Lothian Cycle Circuit at Kettilstoun, the Academy ladies hockey club and the George Allan Memorial Football Festival for the local Primary schools.

Alex has always strongly believed that there is a direct link between the skills gained from taking part in sport and success in life. Coming from a tough upbringing, having lost his Mother at the age of only 11, Alex found solace in football, which he says gave him a focus for his whole life, and provided him with discipline, as well as drive and determination. Alex played junior football for nearly two decades including spells at Bo'ness United and Linlithgow Rose.

As the managing director of a major company in the construction industry, Alex's work takes him all over the world. Without football, he believes that he wouldn't have achieved the success he has in business, as sport allowed him to gain and develop skills such as teamwork, discipline and a strong ethos for winning with integrity.

Individuals and groups wishing to apply for funding from the BESF should contact **Carole Brown**. Carole explained the significance of the name, which many people mistakenly think has something to do with Frank Sinatra!



“Alex's dad was a key figure in his life and as a typical Bo'ness man and miner at Kinneil pit, he liked the occasional “flutter” on the horses. His nom de plume (betting slip name), was “Blue Eyes” and as a wee tribute to him, that's what we called the foundation”.

If you are an athlete or part of a team in need of funding, or know of a good cause, please send your inquiry via the contact section of the website blue-eyes-sports.com Alternatively, you can send an email to Carole at thebrownz12@btinternet.com. Please make sure that the subject heading includes the words **BLUE EYES FUNDING REQUEST**, so the group can keep a log of your email and get back to you as quickly as they can.



Murdoch Kennedy

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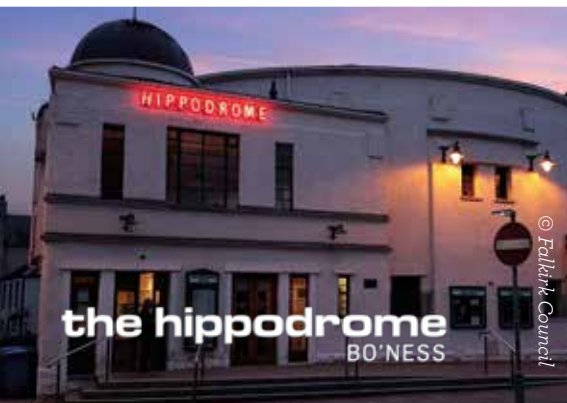
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More than 100 years of the Hippodrome



Black Bitch introduction: The Hippodrome has been a cultural hub in the centre of our near neighbour - Bo'ness - for over a century, welcoming audiences young and old through its doors from far and wide including a large regular contingent from Linlithgow. In this "guest" article the Hippodrome Team takes a look at what makes their cinema unique, as well as offering a flavour of what's coming up this year.



ABOUT OUR CINEMA

Built in 1912, the Hippodrome is the oldest purpose-built cinema in Scotland. An A-listed historic building (the brainchild of film-maker Louis Dickson), it was designed by local architect **Matthew Steele** (who designed many other buildings in Bo'ness). It operated as a cinema for many years before closing down in 1970's, briefly operating as a bingo hall, and finally reopening in 2009 under the management of Falkirk Council following a full restoration.

It's kitted out with both digital and 35mm projectors and a state-of-the art sound system to offer the best cinematic experience. There's also a licenced café and bar, serving a wide range of snacks, popcorn, ice cream, hot, cold and alcoholic drinks.

The Hippodrome is Scotland's number one 'destination' cinema and winner of Best Cinema Experience in Scotland 2019.

FROM FAMILY FILMS TO THE LATEST BLOCKBUSTERS

The Hippodrome is a wonderfully relaxing cinema, with beautifully restored, red velvet upholstered seats that provide great views of the screen, with a fantastic selection of different films and special events to enjoy from our packed year-round programme. Screening some of the best new, recent and vintage cinema, highlights coming up include Chinonye Chukwu's heart-breaking true story **Till** and Sam Mendes' new film **Empire of Light**, starring Olivia Colman.



Young audiences are well catered for, with family-friendly films being screened each week. On selected Saturdays we also host a 'Jeely Jar' Screening which is a throwback to the cinemas heyday when children could get their cinema ticket in exchange for a jeely (jam) jar.

Our sing-a-long screenings of musicals are also very popular. In December we screened a sold-out **Calamity Jane** - with lots more planned for 2023! And where better to watch the latest National Theatre Live streams than the glorious, glamorous Hippodrome! A proper theatrical experience, complete with the opportunity to buy interval snacks and drinks. Coming soon are Shakespeare's **Othello** in February and **Good** (starring David Tennant) in April.

HIPPODROME SILENT FILM FESTIVAL

Taking place from 22 - 26 March 2023 is the 13th edition of the annual Hippodrome Silent Film Festival (HippFest). Scotland's first and only festival of silent film, centred in and

inspired by Scotland's first and oldest cinema, featuring exceptional screenings with live music, Gala red carpet events, new commissions and fun workshops. Each year the Festival attracts a broad audience of cinema-goers, music lovers, and industry professionals, cultivating an international community with an adventurous appetite for extraordinary cinema. Passes are available now, from the Box Office (details below), and the programme will be announced in early February.

PARTIES & HIRES



If you're planning a birthday party for a loved one, or looking to host a special private event, we can help. We can offer the film of your choice, refreshments, and exclusive use of the building. Powerpoint and internet access is also available for corporate and business events.

WHAT AUDIENCES HAVE TO SAY

We love hearing from our audiences, here are just a selection from Google Review and Trip Advisor:

"Great atmosphere, great popcorn, comfy seats. Fantastic local cinema." Google Review, 2022

"My mum, granny and I attended the Hippodrome's Grease Sing-Along and we LOVED it!" Trip Advisor, 2022

"The first time that I have been to this cinema, and I will definitely go again. For anyone that hasn't been before it's a hidden treasure." Google Review, 2022

AND FINALLY

With a full programme of films six days a week there really is something for everyone at the Hippodrome, from the latest blockbusters and releases to family films and foreign cinema.

To keep up to date with our latest news, make sure you follow us on social media (@HippodromeFilm).

Here's to the next 100 years!

The Hippodrome Team

The Hippodrome, 10 Hope Street
Bo'ness EH51 0AA
@HippodromeFilm

UNION ROAD RESIDENTS CALL FOR ACTION

Residents on Union Road are calling for far better signage to make vehicle drivers aware of the very narrow thoroughfare and its unsuitability for larger vehicles.

This follows a recent incident where an iron gate and its stone pillars were knocked down by a van driver, causing damage which is likely to cost upwards of £10,000 to repair.

At the moment, there is one sign outside St John's Church and another at the top of Dogwell Wynd stating, "Unsuitable for commercial vehicles". These signs are not easily seen and give no indication as to the narrowness of the road, which is difficult even for smaller vehicles. The sign at the church is potentially confusing, as it could refer to the church car park and not to Union Road.

Amanda Brown of 3c Union Road told me:

"This was an accident waiting to happen. We get numerous vans along Union Road. Their sat nav sends them along and none of the drivers see the sign at the bottom of the road beside the church or figure out that the road is too narrow until it's too late."

Amanda's husband, Martin, added:

"I think since people started using their sat navs more rather than following their eyes we'll have two vans a day that will come along, get so far, and then just reverse back. We've probably not noticed it until lockdown happened and we were both in the house. We would hear the 'beep, beep, beep' as vans reversed."

Amanda said that sometimes drivers appear to be completely lost and their sat nav has just taken them along Union Road:

"We've sometimes said to them, 'Where are you off to?' and they've said Oatlands Park or something. I think what they have meant to do is go under the bridge at the end of St John's Avenue and head along Royal Terrace. They've not been paying attention and have just cut up here and they don't see the 'Not suitable for commercial vehicles' sign outside St John's Church. A neighbour told me she was shocked one day to find a van on the narrow bit of Union Road that leads to the steps under the railway!"

Martin believes that the problem has got much worse:

"We have noticed it more and more and I would say that certainly over the past two years, you would be well into double digits for the number of times our gate posts and our neighbour's gate posts and walls have been scraped. The latest incident really took the biscuit, however, I heard a large crash and looked out the window to see a van stuck between the railway wall and our gate. By the time I got down, the gate had collapsed and the driver had driven off. I managed to catch up with him as he headed down Lion Well Wynd."

In recent years, Linlithgow has been no stranger to the problems caused by sat navs and there were a number of well-publicised incidents involving articulated lorries attempting to manoeuvre over the narrow canal bridge at the bottom of Manse Road.

Amanda and Martin Brown believe that the signs currently in place on Union Road are totally inadequate. They told me:

"We really need someone to understand that something needs to be done. Proper, unambiguous signage that mentions the narrowness of the road and can be properly seen would be a start"

Murdoch Kennedy



Images: Martine Stead



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LIFE FIT WELLNESS, KINGSFIELD GOLF CENTRE, LINLITHGOW

Life Fit Wellness, Kingsfield Golf Centre, Linlithgow is now firmly established in West Lothian as the provider of exceptional Physiotherapy, Pelvic Health Physiotherapy and Sports Massage. In addition to our healthcare services we also offer Pilates classes and one to one sessions, and specialist golf assessments.

Physiotherapy for back and neck pain, joint and muscle injuries, and orthopaedic rehabilitation is delivered by our expert Chartered Physiotherapists **Emmet Kennedy** and **Morven Murray**.



The Pelvic Health Physiotherapy service is delivered by our highly experienced Advanced Practice Chartered

Physiotherapist **Kate Leishman** who can help with urinary and faecal incontinence, pelvic pain, pelvic floor prolapse, pessary fitting and various post-natal issues.



Sports Massage is delivered by our specialist soft-tissue therapist **Brian Doyle**, who has many years of experience treating all levels of athlete and the tight painful muscles of non-athletes!



The Pilates service is delivered by our specialist Pilates expert **Valentina Pintus** and Chartered Physiotherapist **Morven Murray**.

The team at Life Fit, Kingsfield look forward to welcoming you to the clinic and helping you with whatever issue you have. Remember Kingsfield Golf Centre has plenty of free parking, a fantastic on-site Café, 9 hole golf course, outdoor bays with trackman, indoor bays with trackman, state of the art indoor Putt View lab and conference room!

Life Fit, Kingsfield is the sister clinic of the long established, award winning Life Fit Wellness, Falkirk. In addition to the services offered at Kingsfield, a variety of additional services are available at our Falkirk clinic. These include Ultrasound Scan and Injection Clinic, Shockwave Therapy, Pilates Reformer, Ear Wax Removal and Brace Fitting.

For more information on all of our services please see www.lifefitwellness.co.uk or phone our reception team on 01324 614044.

Appointments can be made by calling 01324 614044, online here <https://lifefitwellness.connect.tm3app.com/> or through our website.

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WE'RE now more than half way through the current school year, a great time to take stock of your child's progress and make sure they have all they need to reach their full potential.

If you haven't done so already, make sure your child is up to date with eye examinations to ensure any undiagnosed eye conditions aren't hampering their development.

If they haven't had their first eye test yet, you may be unsure about what age they should start visiting an optician.

Specsavers typically advises that children should have their first eye exam before the age of eight, as there are some eye conditions that can be corrected with early intervention.

Myopia in children

One key condition to keep an eye out for in children of school age is myopia, more commonly known as short-sightedness.

Diana Kelly, store director at Specsavers in Linlithgow, discusses the warning signs.

She says: *'Myopia is a common condition that causes people to struggle to see objects in the distance and is usually corrected by glasses or contact lenses.'*

'Key signs to look out for include the inability to see into the distance, headaches, eye strain, and even fatigue. Your child may struggle to read what's written on the board at the front of class or see the detail in presentations.'

Look out for hidden signs

'Even if your child does not complain about their eyes or headaches specifically, there are other key signs you can look out for, including clumsiness, lack of concentration, 'naughty' behaviour and falling behind with schoolwork or some developmental milestones.'

'Myopia can also run in families so, if you are myopic, your children are more likely to be myopic too. Lifestyle factors can also play a part, such as obesity and the overuse of screens. It's also worth bearing in mind that certain ethnic groups including people of Asian, East Asian and African American origin, can be more likely to be myopic.'

'Children can have an eye exam at any age, even if they can't yet read or talk, so don't forget to visit an optician every two years or sooner if you have any concerns.'

To find out more or book your next appointment visit:
www.specsavers.co.uk/stores/linlithgow.



JOHN'S CHANGING ROBES ARE CHANGING LIVES

Over the past year, local businessman, **John Keogh**, has established The Outsider – a Community Interest Company (CIC) that re-invests all net profits from the sale of its high quality outdoor changing robes to fund the manufacture and distribution of a sleeping coat free of charge to individuals living on the streets and sleeping rough.

John explained the background to the project: *“On December 23rd, 2021, I was in Glasgow shopping with my wife. It was freezing and pouring, and I spotted a guy on the street who had a sleeping bag covering him up. He was soaked to the skin. I said to my wife, ‘That’s his lot. He’s not going home for a cup of tea or a hot plate of soup and a change of clothes. That’s where he’s staying tonight.’ I am a keen wild swimmer, and I have one of the branded changing*

robes. I wondered if I could get something similar made and then donate them free of charge to anyone who is sleeping rough. I also wondered if I could make it in such a way that the robe could convert into a sleeping bag. That was the idea and that’s what I have done.”

An engineer by profession, John had come up with a practical solution, something he had always done throughout his long career. He thought about the people who were sleeping rough and wanted to give the project a Scottish name. The concept of the ‘**Outsider**’ comes from the fact that such people are living outdoors and are also outside of society. In Scottish parlance, ‘outsider’ also refers to the ends of a loaf of bread, which keep the loaf together and which people often use to make toast. Therefore, in the ‘Outsider’ sleeping bag, you can be kept warm and toasty if you are sleeping on the streets.

John has recently retired and so has been able to devote his time to bringing two Outsider products to market for those who enjoy our great outdoors, including wild swimmers, campers.

event goers, cyclists, and hill walkers. These are the **Normal Robe** and the **Multi-Function Robe**. He is also about to launch the **Equestrian Robe**. All Outsider products are hand-made in Scotland.

“Approximately, for every two robes I sell, I can make and donate one of the sleeping coats. I decided on setting up a Community Interest Company, as it allows me to take donations and grants, as well as being able to sell products. People, who perhaps don’t need a robe at this time, can still donate to the cause.”

In a major fund-raiser before Christmas, John and some friends slept out in Edinburgh and Glasgow and raised over £8,000. They were also able to distribute sleeping coats to many of the homeless people they met and the money raised meant that even more coats will be on their way. By the end of 2022, sixty had already been given out.

Originally from Bridgend, John went to school in Linlithgow and his parents were well-respected business people in the town, well-known for their Highlander restaurant and catering business. For many years, there were very few local events, including dances and wedding receptions, which did not employ the services of John’s parents, Cath and John.

“I have always worked hard and tried to do the right thing and that ethic came from my Mum and Dad,” he told me.



Further information about The Outsider and its help for the homeless can be found on Facebook and on the website <https://theoutsider.co.uk>



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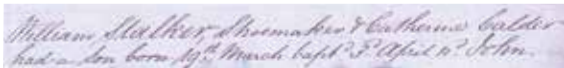
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ENTREPRENEURIAL EMIGRANTS

Bruce Jamieson

Over the centuries, many Linlithgow-born folk have emigrated abroad and contributed greatly to overseas life. Here are just two of them: **John Stalker and John West**.

John Stalker On Sunday, April 3rd, 1836, in St Michael's Church, a baby boy was baptised by the Rev Andrew Bell who had been minister in the church for 9 years having taken over in 1827 following the death of the Rev Doctor James Dobie. The child in question was christened John – the second son of William and Catherine Stalker.



John Stalker's birth record in the Old Parish Register.

William is listed in the records of the Linlithgow Incorporation of Shoemakers and carried on his trade as a cordiner in a workshop at the back of his premises in the High Street. He must have died sometime before 1841 as he is not listed in the census of that year. Instead, his 30-year old widow is recorded as living with her two sons, William, aged 6 and John, aged 5. To make ends meet, she is listed as running a lodging house at 251 High Street.



249-255 High Street (to the west of New Well Wynd) before demolition.

There was a demand for such boarding facilities in the 1840s as hundreds of labourers were working on the Edinburgh to Glasgow Railway and looking for accommodation.

John received a rudimentary education, initially in a Dame School and then, after its opening in 1843, in the Public School at the West Port.



Linlithgow's Public School.

John was a bright lad but his mother needed him to provide an income and so, at the age of 12, he was apprenticed to a shoemaker and, for the next seven years, he perfected and practised his trade in the burgh, earning 10 shillings a week.

John must have decided he could do better so, at the age of nineteen, he decided to emigrate to America. After some years working for others, he set up his own shoemaking factory in the town of Orange in New Jersey.



Orange, New Jersey, in the late 19th century.

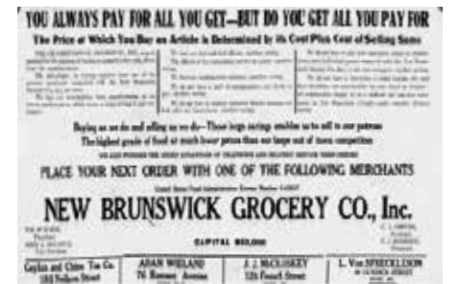
The town had a thriving leather industry, and this provided John with a steady supply of raw material for his shoes. His business thrived, enabling him to build a substantial country house close to the mineral springs that made the town a popular health resort. His factory workers were "comfortably housed in multiple-family dwellings", close to the factory.



A sketch of a 19th century American shoe factory.

For some reason, John Stalker sold his business in 1873 and instead he set up a thriving tea and coffee enterprise named "The Ceylon and China Tea Company." The venture was successful and Stalker set up several stores in America and in Canada at

the townships of New Brunswick and Trenton.



An advert for Stalker's New Brunswick Store and his Ceylon and China Tea Company.

After his wife died, John went to live with his sister-in-law and then, following a period of ill health, he moved with her into a Masonic Retirement Home in Burlington, New Jersey, where he died on December 15th, 1918 - a Linlithgow life well lived.

Captain John West, the Salmon King

John West's canned fish products are known world-wide, but how many people know that the founder of the company was born in Linlithgow – or at least that is the claim made by the company itself - and repeated in many website entries.



His birthdate is given as the 27th August 1809, but actually tracking down his birth records is proving very difficult. An entry in the Daily Mail in October 2015 states, "The original John West was born in Linlithgow in 1809. After working in the fishing industry in Scotland, he emigrated to the USA where he pioneered the canning of fish."

The John West Company's own website states that "he cut his teeth in the local Scottish fishing trade". So, if he was involved with fishing was he born in a coastal town in Linlithgowshire? Another entry in Wikipedia suggests that he had training as a millwright so was he born on a farm – perhaps, as has been suggested, in the vicinity of Ecclesmachan?

No school building existed in that village until the 1830s so did John attend a school in Linlithgow – perhaps the one which stood behind the Burgh Hall?



John West photographed in the 1870s and his wife Margaret who died in 1894.

What is not in dispute is that, at the age of forty, John West emigrated to Canada where he married and set up house near Quebec. He seems to have begun his working life in a sawmill - using his mechanical expertise gained while employed in Scotland. The Californian Gold Rush of the late 1840s saw him trying his luck on the American goldfields where, perhaps having no luck with mineral exploration, he operated a sawmill and opened a general store and post office.

In 1853 he moved to the American state of Oregon and took up a 640-acre Land Claim on the Columbia River which he named 'Westport'. Could that be a tribute to his time in Linlithgow?

He used his entrepreneurial skills to set up a sawmill from which he exported timber to Australia. As a side-line, he also began exporting salmon which migrated up the Columbia River in their thousands.

Initially, the fish were salted, packed into barrels and shipped to California, from where they were transported to Great Britain. In the late 1860s, he set up his first canning plant - an operation which, by 1873, was producing 22,000 cases of salmon yearly.

John West's product won first prize at the Oregon State Fair in 1873.



Once again using his technical expertise, he invented an automated can-filling machine and a process for turning salmon waste into oil and fishmeal. During the period when salmon were not so plentiful, his machinery was used to can beef, mutton and brambles. By 1882 thirty-nine of his factories were in operation, with 1700 fishing boats supplying the products he required.

In 1882, he commissioned a 118-foot propeller-driven steamer which he, rather egotistically, called the "John West". Captain West, as he liked to be called, died in 1888 a very wealthy man.



John West's headstone in Westport Cemetery.

The company continued under the name "John West" but in the 1920s it was taken over by Unilever. In 1997 it was bought by Heinz who sold it to French-based MW Foods who in turn passed it on to the Thailand based Thai Foods Group.

Further research may come up with more details of John West's birth and upbringing in, or near, Linlithgow. Meanwhile we can but admire the story of a local lad who became a household name across the world.



A plaque above the Columbia River, erected to commemorate John West by his great-grandson Bryan C. Aalberg.

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ENJOYING THE SPECIAL WINTER BLOOMS

At the start of the new gardening year we love to make plans for the coming seasons, not least where we might like to take our holidays. In the depth of winter it helps to speculate on warmer climes, whether these be the Mediterranean or into the sub-tropics further afield and nearer the heat of the equator. We do enjoy the winter in our own garden, giving us a chance to get ahead of sleeping nature and enjoying the special winter blooms that appear here and there, but it's lovely coming back inside to the warmth and the company of our houseplants.



Monstera on Japanese Bridge

Our Clivia plant originally comes from South Africa and has handsome green straplike leaves all year round. Come the New Year it produces a succession of orange flower clusters over the early months of the year. We keep it on a northwest facing windowsill. You will often see it as a lush evergreen ground cover in your holiday resorts of the Canary Island. Madeira has always been a favourite for a little warmth early in the new year. There are so many gardens to explore, the oriental bridge at the Monte Palace is covered with the Swiss Cheese Plant, originating in Mexico it is a native of the tropics. There are many different forms, some quite dwarf like Monkey Musk, and it has enjoyed a resurgence in its popularity as a house plant in recent years.



Clivia + Monstera

Earlier in the winter our conservatory was filled with the spicy fragrance of Jasmine (*Jasminum polyanthum*). Sorry for using the latin name but there are many different sorts of



Jasmine polyanthum

Jasmine, some hardy in our gardens but this one needs to be inside for the cold half of the year. It lives in its pot in the garden from June to mid-September. We twine it up a bamboo tripod and prune it hard to the frame in late spring to stop it getting top heavy. We have spotted it growing up from basement front gardens on our walk to

the Chelsea Flower Show from Sloane Square tube station, flowering outside in May, but they don't get a frost down there!

Where would you like to holiday this year? We haven't left the UK for three years and think we might go to the Italian Lakes in late March to see Camellias and the many great gardens.

Their winters are as cold as ours but things warm up quicker than with us. We haven't been there that early before so will be delighted to see familiar gardens at a

different season. Many years ago in March we took a Beechgrove film crew to Pisa to film us selecting plants from one of the great Italian nurseries around Pistoia for our 'Tartan Tuscany' show garden at Scotland's National Flower Show. Even that far south they had had a snowfall ten days before we arrived but the plants all looked very happy and the yellow Mimosas were full of flower, ready for the early March Women's Day celebrations.



Lesley at Lake Como

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NEW SKINCARE ROUTINE

Get professional help to make the right choices...

The new year is in, and it's proving to be a popular time for clients asking for help to revamp or start a new skincare routine that they can rely on no matter what the season.



Get professional help to make the right choices...

With well over 25,000 skincare products on the market worldwide there are too many wrong choices to be made. Working out just what your skin needs is a minefield.

How do you know what a good brand or product is and what does your skin actually need?

The first thing you should do is choose and listen to a trained skincare professional, such as me, Tina. We are all unique and so is our skin and skin needs.

I can cut straight through the noise. **We talk about your skin, concerns, conditions, what you're currently using, lifestyle and your goals etc this way you get tailor-made expert advice on what products are right for your skin type with how, when and how much to use. I can give you a personalised regime that leads to awesome skin, with additional help to tweak your skincare and**

treatments whenever you're in a period of flux meaning your skin will stay resilient no matter what is going on.

Expectations

Beautiful skin doesn't happen overnight, but it does need a bit of time and patience for treatments and product results to show, so stop jumping from one brand to the next.

A single chemical peel, for example, can provide the immediate effect of bright and radiant skin; however, more significant results in treating textural issues, fine lines and inflamed acne could take up to eight weeks.

Using homecare products consistently and as directed to achieve optimal results requires time and patience. Just as you take time to exercise, you need to take time (just a few minutes) for your "daily skin care workout regimen" in the morning and evening.

Listen to your skincare professional.

You don't need dozens of products to make a good routine. **AlumierMD** skincare is packed with actives. Using one product will often do the job of several. Take **AlumierMD** sunscreens, for example, of course they offer daily broad-spectrum protection, but they're also packed with protective antioxidants, hydrating enough to replace your moisturiser, and you can choose a tinted formula and skip foundation too. It's the last step in any regime.

Example of some options using AlumierMD products

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Could include EverActive C&E™ + Peptide, Calm-R™, HydraCalm, and AlumierMD SPF 40 or 42 for cellular protection, to strengthen capillary walls / manage bacteria, to rebuild the hydrolipidic barrier and to protect against UVA & UVB.

For Acne Skin:

Could include Clarifying Serum, Retinol, HydraSmooth™ or HydraClarité and Clear Shield SPF 42 to manage bacteria, enhance cell turnover, for antioxidant protection for cells and to protect against UVA & UVB.

For discolouration & uneven skin tone:

Could include EverActive C&E™ + Peptide, Intellibright® Complex and or EvenTone, Retinol and AlumierMD SPF 40 or 42 to target the triggers, reduce the onset and accumulation of discolouration and uneven skin tone, enhance cell turnover and protect against UVA & UVB.

For ageing skin:

Could include EverActive C&E™ + Peptide, Ultimate Boost, Retinol and AlumierMD SPF 40 or 42 that can provide antioxidant protection, stimulate collagen production, increase cell turnover and protect against UVA & UVB.

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LADAS A PLEA FOR BEES



‘Bees are part of the biodiversity on which we all depend for our survival.’

(<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/why-bees-are-essential-people-and-planet>).

Do we take bees for granted?

We hear them buzzing around our plants in the warmer months and often don't stop to consider the role they play in our food production. For example, bees visiting flowers pick up pollen and when they fly to the next flower this brushes off and fertilises the next flower. This allows the flower to set seed and swell to form berries and fruit. We see this every year on raspberries where the bees are very active when the raspberries are flowering. The more bees visiting the flowers, the more raspberries there are.

A recent report from the UN Environment Programme (see hyperlink above) outlines the importance of bees to food security. One third of the food we grow in the world relies on pollination by bees. We know that bee numbers are declining because of loss of habitat, farming practices, use of pesticides and changes to our climate. This in turn is a threat to some of the plants we need.

What can we do to help?

In the UK there are over 25 species of bumblebees and 250 species of solitary bees. We can encourage these bees by having diverse planting. On our allotment we encourage wilder areas along the hedgerows; planting of wildflowers and other bee friendly plants e.g. lavender, borage, and all herbs particularly from the mint family, but also herbs such as basil, sage, oregano, rosemary, and thyme; promote organic growing and less or no use of pesticides. The Bumblebee Conservation Trust recently published a statement on pesticides (<https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/new-pesticide-position-statement/>) and the harm to bumblebees, and recommend that as far as possible the use of pesticides, which includes insecticides, herbicides and fungicides, is stopped completely.

With the changes to our seasons we have bees in our gardens and growing spaces for almost the whole year. Spending a little time researching which plants you can

grow to help support bees all year round will increase the bee population and prevent some of the species of bees from becoming extinct. Here is a link to an article in *Gardeners' World Magazine* from March last year. <https://www.gardenersworld.com/plants/plants-for-bees/>

Here are some things you can do in January if you are growing or plan to grow:

January continues the work started in November/December: planning for the year ahead and readying plots for the new season. There are still some crops being harvested. Some seed planting can be done this month and some planting of seeds planted before the turn of the year. Planting of fruit bushes and trees can be done until March but choosing a time when the soil is not frozen or waterlogged is best.

Harvesting:

Continue to harvest kale, kalettes (a cross between brussels sprouts and kale) and leeks. With careful successional planting, some plottolders still have cauliflowers, broccoli (e.g. the Rudolph variety), cabbage, perpetual spinach, carrots and parsnips for picking.

Sowing:

Do not be in a hurry to sow seeds this month. If you have a greenhouse or polytunnel this can allow earlier sowing and growing of some vegetables. More and more of the plottolders on our allotment site are putting up greenhouses and polytunnels to extend the season, increasing yield and giving some vegetables a better start. This can also allow a greater variety of crops to be grown.

Some seeds that can be sown this month (indoors):

Chilli and sweet peppers. As chilli and sweet peppers have a very long growing season, they are best sown in a heated propagator inside. The short day lengths over the winter do not affect their growth, unlike most other vegetable plants, which require plenty of light. Another tip (from the famous gardener, Geoff Hamilton, an inspiration to many gardeners) was to start peppers off in very small containers and pot them on successively into slightly

larger pots each time so that they become rootbound. This makes them produce more flowers and consequently more fruit as the plant feels under stress. It works!

Tomatoes:

Some advocate sowing tomato seeds indoors this month, but because they germinate quickly, I have found it best to sow in mid-February to early March. If we have mild weather, sowing in January works, but where we live this cannot be a given.

Shallots can be sown from seed later this month, indoors or in a greenhouse, or in early February. Plottolders have had success growing the banana-shaped shallots from seed as single plants as they are bigger and so easier to peel than the globe-shaped ones grown from sets.

Salad leaves, broad beans and onion seeds can be sown inside this month (weather permitting).

Transplanting:

Any salad leaves, winter spinach or brassicas sown last year can be planted on into modules and grown on until ready for planting out.

Planting:

It is not too late to plant garlic cloves.

Plant soft fruits, e.g. blackberries, blackcurrants, gooseberries (until the end of March)

Plant raspberries (until the end of February)

Pruning:

>> Prune established blackcurrant bushes by removing about a quarter to a third of old wood.

>> Remove dead wood and crossing 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 have not done so already.

Val Corry,
Chair LADAS





Philip Kingscott



THEATRE, MUSIC AND GIN WITH THE TANDEM WRITING COLLECTIVE

The highly successful scratch theatre company, Tandem Writing Collective, will be bringing their new writing and live music event to the Linlithgow Burgh Halls on Saturday, 4th February.

Tandem is a female led writing collective established and run by playwrights **Jennifer Adam, Amy Hawes and Mhairi Quinn**. They travel across the central belt showcasing their short plays and linking up with grassroots theatre makers as they go. Their new writing nights offer 6 ten-minute plays and the Company pride themselves on offering a variety of exciting, entertaining and thought-provoking work in a relaxed, informal environment.

"I think a theatre style taste menu is how we have described it in the past," said Glasgow based playwright Mhairi Quinn. *"Short bite size pieces of theatre, something for everyone, accompanied beautifully with some live music."*

It is clear from the pieces selected by the three writers that the Pandemic over the last two years has had an impact on their writing.

"If the last couple of years has taught us anything, it's about the importance of connection." said Jennifer Adam, who lives in Linlithgow. *"And one thing that has always struck me about Linlithgow and the people who live here, is their very strong sense of community. So the plays for our Linlithgow show really capture that notion of reaching out, whether it's to a person, a place, or a moment in time, they are stories that ultimately connect and ground us."*

As an extra treat, the girls are joined at this event by music and gin experts, **Aaron McGregor and Philip Kingscott**, whose **Cocktails and Concerts** event at last year's Edinburgh Fringe was rated the number 1 Food and Drink Event by the Scotsman.

"Aaron McGregor is an amazing musician and composer who has worked with Tandem in the past and even composed original scores to accompany our writing" added Amy Hawes who is based in Aberdeen. *"Aaron's events with talented actor and Gin expert, Philip Kingscott, were widely praised*

at last year's Edinburgh Fringe. We are thrilled to have them both offer something a little different for our first Linlithgow show."

Philip Kingscott has performed in the past with the Tandem Writing Collective. He said *"Tandem always put on a great evening's entertainment, not just cracking plays but great music from a selection of Scottish artists. When they approached Aaron and I individually as performers it seemed a natural fit for a little taster of our successful Fringe show. I'll not give away what gin we'll be tasting, but I will say it celebrates the flavours of Scotland's Larder and I know Aaron will pair it with some excellent music."*



The writers added, *"Theatre should be brought to communities, not the other way around, so we are really excited to be holding an event in the heart of Linlithgow to meet new creatives and show our work to new audiences."*

The event promises an exciting night of new writing, live music and gin and all for a fiver. Tickets are limited for their Burgh Halls show and so online booking is required, you can do this here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/theatre-music-and-gin-with-the-tandem-writing-collective-tickets-506925095607>

**Saturday, 4th February, 7.30pm
Linlithgow Burgh Halls Cafe**

Find and Follow Tandem Writing Collective on twitter @TandemWriters or at Tandem Writing Collective on Facebook, www.tandemwritingcollective.co.uk

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LINLITHGOW ARTS GUILD

Linlithgow Arts Guild has changed its website address. Programme information and ticket links are now at www.linlithgowartsguild.org.uk. The change from .co.uk to .org.uk was necessary because of a withdrawal of service from its previous web provider. The previous address is no longer active.

Upcoming events February, March and April 2023

The Arts Guild's concerts continue through February, March and April with events at Linlithgow Primary School.

On Saturday, 25th February there is a piano duo (4 hands at one piano) given by established professionals Emma Abbate and Julian Perkins. The programme "Across the Pond" includes music by Beethoven, Schubert, Samuel Barber and 19th century German composer Moszkowski.

Subsequent concerts include a lecture-concert on The Baroque Violin by Rachel Podger, a leading interpreter of Baroque and Classical music, and an entertaining evening of lively music from the newly-formed student group the Alba Challah Klezmer Ensemble. All details are on the website.

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- Sunday 29th January - Pure Malt 5-8pm
- Friday 3rd February - Les Byle 9.30-late
- Saturday 4th February - Simple Mo 9.30-late
- Saturday 11th February - Cal 9.30-late
- Sunday 12th February - Lynne Size 6-9pm
- Saturday 18th February - Ricky Wilde 9.30-late
- Saturday 25th February - Karaoke 9-late
- Sunday 26th February - Pure Malt 5-8pm
- Friday 3rd March - Charley Bell 9.30-late
- Saturday 4th March - Lynne Size 9-late

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“in 2023 there will be more properties available for sale and more choice for buyers, therefore properties may take a bit longer to sell and that generally it will be a less frenetic market”

RIGHTMOVE

Image: cgh.creative

It's January 2023, so time to get the crystal ball out and make some predictions for the housing market for the coming year.

At Paul Rolfe we saw some cooling of the local market in the last three months of 2022, but it is important to put that into some sort of context.

In 2021 and the first 9 months of 2022 it was a very strong sellers market. For family properties in good condition demand was very high, anywhere between 20 and 40 viewings requests typically, frequent closing dates being set, and often some great prices achieved for sellers.

The last 3 months of 2022 still saw properties selling quickly, and still almost always achieving above the home report valuation, but with fewer viewings being booked.

SO WHAT ABOUT THIS YEAR?

Rightmove have already reported that traffic to their website over the Christmas period indicates a positive level of activity and familiar patterns. On Boxing Day 46% more people were making enquiries to sell their property than on the same day in 2021, and they also reported a 20% increase in requests to view properties already on the market compared to the run up to Christmas. Their

take on the market is that in 2023 there will be more properties available for sale and more choice for buyers, therefore properties may take a bit longer to sell and that generally it will be a less frenetic market.

Between March 2020 and August 2022 the average UK house price rose by a staggering 23%. Most industry analysts are predicting falling back of house prices, but with important regional variations. Two of the biggest mortgage lenders are predicting reductions of between 5% and 8%. Set that against the recorded recent increases and home owners will still have enjoyed a healthy increase in the value of their property since March 2020.

One analyst describes their predictions for 2023 as a “soft landing” for house prices. The avoidance of urgent or forced property sales due to changes in home owners’ employment or financial circumstances is an important point, and they point to the following factors.

>> While unemployment rates are predicted to rise to 5%, this is still a relative historic low.

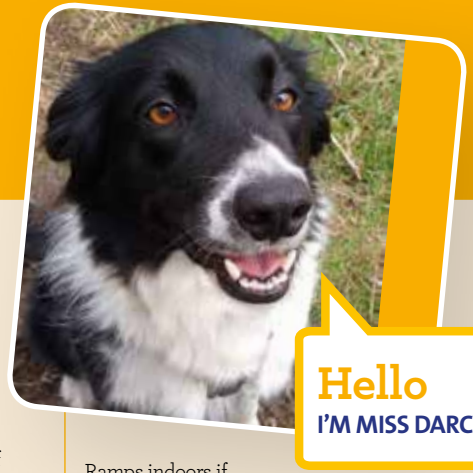
>> Secondly a significant proportion of homeowners are protected from rising borrowing costs, in the immediate term at

least, with approximately 85% of mortgage borrowers still on fixed rate deals.

>> Thirdly, as a result of the 2008 financial crisis lenders have for some years now applied far more stringent affordability criteria and stress testing, resulting in a greatly increased number of current borrowers better placed to weather increases in the cost of living, than before the financial crisis.

As we said earlier in this article there are very important regional variations and at Paul Rolfe we see the West Lothian housing market and Linlithgow in particular, being able to perform better than other parts of Scotland and the UK for a number of reasons.

We should report that the Scottish Government made a recent material change to the costs of property buying. On the 15th December, overnight, they increased the ADT (Additional Dwelling Tax) rate from 4% to 6%. Something you need to be aware of if you are considering making a new buy-to-let investment or potentially may be owning two properties at the same time for however short a period of time.



Hello I'M MISS DARCY

Her owners describe her as a rocket dog who is beautifully bonkers and a super sookie girl who thrives on human attention. A typical collie, she likes to be busy and involved in literally everything her humans are doing.

She makes them smile by being a constant attention seeker, showering them in affection at any given moment, and the second food is involved will turn into a one dog trick show throwing out every move she knows in the hope for edible rewards!

She makes them smile by being a constant attention seeker, showering them in affection at any given moment, and the second food is involved will turn into a one dog trick show throwing out every move she knows in the hope for edible rewards!

Her favourite place to be is wherever her owners are! She is also a water baby and will rocket into water and doggy paddle to her heart's content. If water is not deep enough for swimming she will lie in shallow water, staying happily submerged like she's on a spa day.

Last year Miss Darcy went from being an energetic dog spending many hours outdoors everyday to not being able to manage a short walk literally overnight. After vet

investigations she was diagnosed with arthritis in her toes, front leg and hind knee. This arthritis flare up meant she was too sore to walk and exercise had to be built back up very slowly after lots of rest, pain management and only when she felt comfortable enough to do so.

Her owner says:

"Being a young high energy dog it has been a real challenge managing her limitations and working on ways to keep her active mind busy finding games, puzzles and training things to do that do not involve using her paws. Her front paws are the worst affected and very painful when they flare up - a tricky task when they are used for everything!"

Her owners had to make lots of changes to their lifestyle and now take each day as it comes as to what she feels comfortable doing.

Arthritis is an inflammation of the joints and is a common problem for many dogs causing pain, discomfort and stiffness. The cartilage within a joint changes or becomes damaged, which makes it less smooth and causes the bones in the joint to rub together which can be extremely painful. It cannot be reversed but it can be managed to provide a lifestyle in which your dog will feel comfortable. Arthritis prevention is key - prevention at a young age with wear and tear and prevention after diagnosis to prevent damaged joints worsening.

Arthritis can be caused by natural wear and tear in joints, injuries,

abnormally shaped bones or abnormal cartilage (such as hip dysplasia or elbow dysplasia), by genetics and some breeds have an increased risk of developing it. Weight can also be a factor as this applies extra pressure on the dogs joints. It can be found in dogs of any age, sometimes the direct cause will be unknown.

Signs of arthritis can be subtle - dogs may appear slower changing positions, increased or excessive licking of joints, drooling, behaviour changes, playing less, less running off lead. They may be stiffer, pause before jumping, reluctant to engage in usual games or routine, restlessness or resting more. Any changes in usual routine could potentially be a factor and arthritis should not be ruled out in young dogs.

There are a lot of lifestyle changes and considerations to manage how arthritic dogs cope. Environmental factors affect joints like temperature and air pressure changes. Ensuring dogs sleep in warm, draught free areas, raised dog beds and extra bedding can help. Orthopaedic dog beds are excellent for comfort and ensuring dogs have options, somewhere to comfortably lie out flat and somewhere to curl up.

Wood flooring, tiles and vinyl can increase risk of injury. Rugs and non-slip mats over flooring ensure dog paws have grip and stability. Having baby gates on stairs is a safe way to ensure dogs can safely use stairs under supervision.

Ramps indoors if your dog sleeps on a couch for example and telescopic ramps for the car will prevent risk of further damage or injuries from jumping.

Jumping, running on rough ground, steep gradients, and heavy exercise should be avoided. Soft ground is more comfortable however soft sand can be straining. Little and often lead strolls are best. Dogs do not need walked every day and indoor days for brain games are highly rewarding to your dog. Pain can also affect how your dog feels around other dogs and they may not want to engage with other dogs, or people, where they have previously.

There are many forms of treatment for arthritis, from lifestyle management, exercise regime, joint supplementations, medicinal and pharmaceutical options, surgical intervention, physiotherapy, acupuncture and more.

Any changes in your pet should be checked by a vet.

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