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LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY MAGAZINE



ESTD. 2011

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LINLITHGOW'S NEWS BY LINLITHGOW'S PEOPLE

ISSUE NO. 96
MARCH 2023

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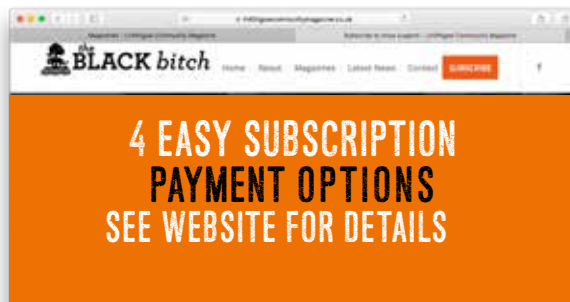
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**DAVID TAIT,
EDITOR**

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In this magazine we are drawing attention to two issues that will have a bearing on how the town of Linlithgow will grow in coming years and how it will take care of the health and wellbeing of its growing population, especially the elderly and infirm.

With substantial residential developments in the planning pipeline on both the west and east the planning of the town as a cohesive unit - long postponed - can no longer be ignored if Linlithgow is to retain its standing as a prime heritage location and a much sought after place to live.

The first issue relates to the construction of **60 homes at Deanburn, at the top of Preston Road**. In the eyes of community organisations, a troubled project from the outset when land previously designated as an "Area of Great Landscape Value" was re-designated to permit residential development without any effective community consultation. It is on the wrong side of town for ease of access, is on the busy route to 3 schools and creates more traffic through the already overcrowded High Street. Even as building work starts on site an application to West Lothian Council to have a critical planning obligation modified starts its way through what is likely to be a painful resolution process potentially with long-term and serious implications for the town. The details are explained on pages 4 & 5.

The second issue is the long drawn out battle over the future of **St Michael's Hospital**, several times lined up for closure and now under threat again following temporary closure in 2021. Clearly held in high regard by many in Linlithgow judging by the reported comments at the packed engagement event on 7th February but now once again in the spotlight for closure while health budget managers struggle to balance the books against rising costs and staff shortages. Against that, St Michael's is the only facility left in the north of the region and some pointed questions need to be asked - and answered - as to what is to be put in its place by way of a "home first" service before its doors are closed permanently. Community voices need to be heard.

Reviewing the rest of the content it's nice to see that spring appears to be in the air with meetings, events and performances coming onto the calendar.

Childrens' LAMP will return to the stage for the first time since 2019; preparations for the **Marches** and **Gala Day** are well in hand; **St Michael's Parish Church** will host a multi-talented group of instrumentalists and singers to help raise funds for the **Aspire** Linlithgow project; the **Museum** has hosted an exhibition of **Linlithgow Embroideries** capturing the High Street of the 50s and 60s and is also hosting an **educational programme on Mary Queen of Scots**.

For Linlithgow fans of film we return to the **Hippodrome Cinema** in **Bo'ness** for the 13th year of the world-

class **Hippfest** silent film festival with live musical accompaniment.

Plus there are updates from **Linlithgow Golf Club**, the **41 Club**, the **Community Council**, **Burgh Beautiful** and the **Floral Art Club** - all keen to attract new members and volunteers to help maintain the high standards amongst Linlithgow groups and organisations.

Finally, as we continue to grow our appeal to provide a "notice board" of local town issues, events and group activities we must also continue to grow our income to match rising costs of publication and to grow our administrative capacity. Since our first issue in 2011 the magazine has been determined to generate its own funding in order to be free of any external influence of any kind and we would like to continue to grow in the same way. **To do this we ask readers who enjoy the magazine coverage of town matters, otherwise unreported, to consider subscribing or if already a subscriber perhaps increasing their subscription even by a little.**

In these times of change it is ever more important to ensure you are informed and kept up to date on what is happening in your town. We know that everyone is not in a position to subscribe but we depend on subscriptions so please give what you can as every penny counts.



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



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WILL LINLITHGOW LOSE £956,280 (OR MORE) DUE TO ILL-CONSIDERED PLANNING DECISIONS?



CALA homes development at Deanburn Road.

Recent articles in this magazine have highlighted the need for **'Infrastructure First'** to tackle traffic problems in the High Street and to mitigate the effects of new housing development. As these traffic and housing issues are inextricably linked, the greatest care needs to be taken to ensure that maximum benefit for the town (known as **'planning gain'**) can be properly extracted from the development value of housing sites. Now read on ...

In the words of someone scrambling for time to think whilst being interviewed on TV, the heading above is "a very good question". The question relates to the current CALA homes development at Deanburn Road. Planning permission was given despite robust objection from residents and a presentation to the planning committee by the Community Council, the latter focusing on the lack of any sort of illustration of how the development would sit in the landscape, the site having previously been designated by the planners as an 'Area of Great Landscape Value'.

However, it is not the development's appearance, nor indeed the road layout and traffic impact, which gives rise to the matter in question, but rather the terms of the 'planning gain' agreement under section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, which facilitated the grant of planning permission. **The terms of this agreement between West Lothian Council, CALA homes and the landowner, were derived from West Lothian Council's unadopted document 'Developer Contributions Towards Transport Infrastructure'.** This document requires developers of the Linlithgow housing sites contained in the 2018 Local Development Plan to contribute towards the total cost of building the proposed westbound slip roads at the M9 Burghmuir junction as well as changes to junctions at both ends of the High Street.

This 'supplementary guidance' document was approved by West Lothian Council Executive on 23 June 2020 and, in the normal course of events, would have been adopted for use soon after. However, in this instance, the then Scottish Government Chief Planner, **John McNairney**, wrote to West Lothian Council on 24 March 2021, stating that the supplementary guidance did not conform to the provisions of section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Nor did it comply with its explanatory circular 3/2012 which requires that the destination of developer contributions must fairly and reasonably relate in scale and kind to proposed developments (eg at Deanburn), or reflect the actual impacts of, and be proportional to, proposed developments. Consequently, the Chief Planner gave notice of a direction from the Scottish Ministers that West Lothian Council must remove the paragraphs and tables referring to Linlithgow from the supplementary guidance. This has to date not been done, but the section 75 agreement was signed by all parties, planning permission was granted to CALA and the development is now well under way.

The next stage in the continuing saga has yet to be played out, but it must come as no surprise to anyone that, on 24 November 2022, West Lothian Council received a planning application from the landowners of the housing site at Deanburn Road, requesting that the obligation to pay their £956,280 share of the cost of building the Burghmuir slip roads be removed on the grounds that the requirement to pay the money was unlawful. This was backed up with a detailed supporting statement from law firm Shepherd and Wedderburn LLP. The Council failed to make a decision on the application within the statutory time period and, on 2 February, the landowners exercised their right to appeal against deemed refusal to the Scottish Ministers, the very people who had directed against the situation arising in the first place.

Well, why does this matter and what lessons can we learn for the future planning of Linlithgow, especially in the light of the forthcoming opportunity to submit our own 'Local Place Plan' which West Lothian Council will, by law, have to consider incorporating into the next version of its county-wide Local Development Plan?

>> It now seems likely that very little of the money required to build the additional M9 slip roads at Burghmuir can be derived from the housing sites that West Lothian Council designated in their last Local Development Plan. Therefore, the town will probably derive little or no infrastructure benefit from the development of the other housing sites identified in that plan, including large sites at Edinburgh Road and the former CEMEX quarry at Kettilstoun.

>> As demonstrated in the Deanburn case, the cost of so-called 'developer contributions' generally comes from the land value (and hence from the original land owner) not from the developer.

>> More generally, the situation begs another question about the Council's continuing practice of collecting Section 75 money in association with sites in Linlithgow, then spending the money elsewhere in West Lothian.



Finally, it should be mentioned that the Planning Forum's 'Plan for the Future' which underwent its second round of public consultation last year received a wide measure of support as a basis for our Local Place Plan. Ideas in this plan stand a much more realistic prospect of attracting 'planning gain' under Section 75 and other means.

The adoption of Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 by the Scottish Minister on 13 February paves the way for the Council to proceed with its revised Local Development Plan. It is understood that Scottish Parliament's approval of regulations is imminent in relation to Councils' 'invitation to prepare' Local Place Plans and how they will give consideration to submitted Local Place Plans in the preparation of their Local Development Plan.

To answer the question, can we lose £1 million now and millions more in future years? The answer is yes, easily, unless we keep a keen eye on what is happening and be 100% ready to submit our Local Place Plan after it has been requested by West Lothian Council. We will be inviting further input to and opinion on a finalised version of our Local Place Plan, which we anticipate submitting in the Autumn. This will affect everyone; once the Council's Local Development Plan is published it really is too late – ask anyone from the Deanburn area.

Planning Forum

LINLITHGOW'S ROTARY TREE OF LIGHT

The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange (RCLG) continued its support of local charitable organisations again in 2022 with its Rotary Tree of Light festive period fundraising initiative. The event kicked off on the day of the Advent Fayre and ran until the end of December.



Thanks to the generosity of the good folks of Linlithgow, the fantastic support of numerous local businesses, and with the help of Gift Aid, more than £3,000 was raised over the five weeks of the event. A fantastic effort by any measure. West Lothian

Foodbank, 1st Step Linlithgow, and Aspire - all local charities operating in the Linlithgow community - have all benefited from an equal share of the funds gathered.

RCLG would like to thank everyone who made a donation and/or placed a dedication on the tree. Particular thanks go to Halliday Homes, Robert Bennie and Sons, and Veitch Solicitors for their very generous donations this year. Thanks also go to West Lothian Council for the use of their tree at the Cross, JMK Printing for their assistance, and our corporate sponsors Alan Steel Asset Management, Pacitti Jones, Stewart Electrical, and Cala Homes - their financial support ensures that every pound of public donation goes to the designated charities.

At the end of the day the Rotary Tree of Light is a community endeavour. Many other local businesses also rallied round again this year and supported the project in kind by taking donation packs and posters for wider distribution. Pacitti Jones, A Wee Mindin', and Wilsons Newsagents also helped out again this year as collection points. We are all very grateful for this assistance. It makes such a big difference.

We will of course be running the event once again in 2023, so look out for the announcements in the autumn. The 2022 event was the seventh consecutive Tree of Light event run by RCLG. Since its inception, the event has raised £17,500 for local good causes.

More information can be found at www.linlithgowtreeoflight.org.uk or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LinlithgowTreeOfLight.



Allan M Robertson The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange

Images from Top left : 1st Step Linlithgow President Elect Ken MacKenzie presents a cheque to Maria Throp, Development Manager with 1st Step Linlithgow.

Aspire Linlithgow, Ken MacKenzie presents a cheque to Margaret Henderson and Alan Miller from Aspire Linlithgow.

West Lothian Foodbank President Andy Ireland (left) and Treasurer Roy Redwood (right) presents a cheque to Kathleen Neilly, CEO of West Lothian Foodbank.



OPEN FOR BUSINESS

On Wednesday 22nd February, **Alex Paterson**, Chief Executive of Historic Environment Scotland, visited Linlithgow, and gave the welcome news that Linlithgow Palace would be re-opening in part later in the Spring, with a target of May. We have all missed the visitors to the town who come specifically for the Palace. **One Linlithgow** is using this Spring to talk about the other fantastic things here that people can visit while they wait for the Palace to re-open.



As we see the bulbs starting to flower, now is a great time to be out and about round the town, whether that is a visit to **Beecraigs** with some warm refreshments at **The Hideaway Café**, a walk round the loch then visiting one of our many cafes on the High Street, or earning about our town at **Linlithgow Museum** and finding the exact spots around the town as you then explore. Maybe we can even speculate where Scotty from Star Trek will be born in just under 200 years.

The **Linlithgow Union Canal Society**, often know as LUCS, has also been busy over the winter and will be running its usual events and cruises.

With all this talk of activity, you may decide a trip to **Xcite** is needed to be fit for all this exploring. Those who venture further into the car park or along the canal will see the new cycle circuit, nearly complete and ready for action. More on this soon.

Whatever your interest, don't wait for the Linlithgow Palace to open before you invite your friends, and venture out in the town.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

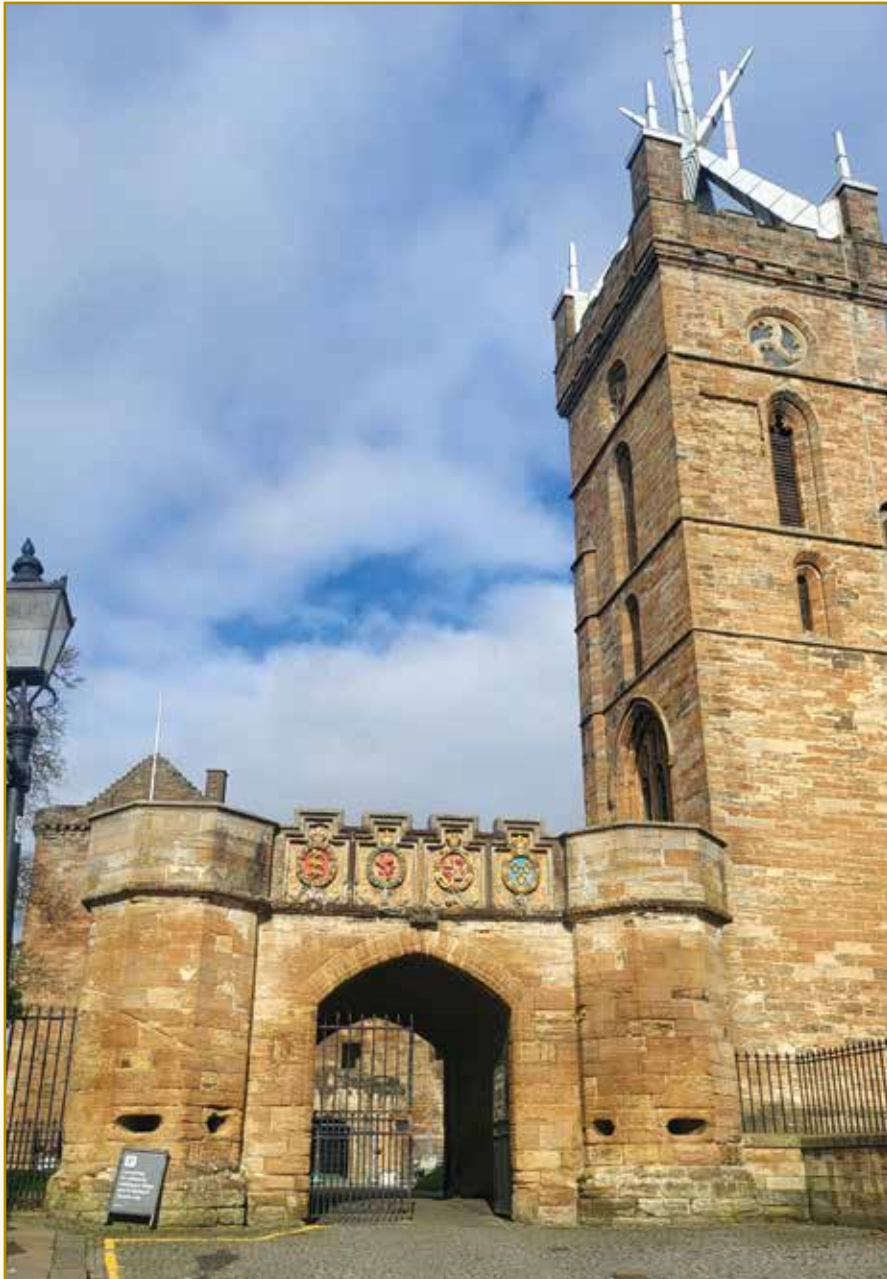
Those involved in tourism in the town will likely now be conscious of the work being done on a Destination Management Plan for Linlithgow, work being coordinated by **One Linlithgow**.



Destination Management Plan is a fancy term for how do we get more tourists to come here, and spend more time and money with our local businesses and other services.

Many local organisations have now met a handful of times, and views brought together now, into what is forming a plan with short, medium and long term goals. The **One Linlithgow** team is using the feedback generously given to draw together a plan to benefit the whole town, to help the whole town succeed.

For now, we have many fantastic stories of tourism: a railway enthusiast from abroad visiting **Rainbow Railways**, and then exploring Linlithgow as a result; the music enthusiasts brought to the town by the unique collection offered by **Low Port Music**; or the booklovers coming to **Far From The Madding Crowd** to hear from a beloved author. **The desire is to create many more stories like this.**



TWINNING

Every year West Lothian plays host to visitors from many different locations, not least from the towns and areas we are twinned with. In Linlithgow, we are twinned as a town with Guyancourt, France. West Lothian has twinings with Grapevine, Texas, and Hochsauerland, Germany. Naturally through these friendships we have people arriving from all over, and a great reminder of an international, peaceful outlook in these difficult times.

This year, as one example, Linlithgow will be hosting 15 bowlers coming from Hochsauerland. Many have been before, and love our town. They have a passion for bowling but the sport does not have access to the greens in Germany that we are fortunate to have here.

As well as friendship visits, these visits are a great opportunity to do international business, and we look forward to trading more with our friends in these locations.

LATEST NEWS LINES:

West Port Vets have now moved to a fantastic new facility in Mill Road Industrial Estate. We hope to feature them and our other pet service businesses in a special piece about what Linlithgow has for our beloved animals.

West Lothian Council has just passed its latest 5 year budget plan and one year budget. As we scrutinise this to see the impact on our town, we are very aware of the role of community organisations like **Burgh Beautiful** protecting us from some of the worst changes in landscaping. We are concerned that our transport links stay strong, what any rates changes will mean, and removal of the older persons train subsidy.

Cyber Week Scotland happens at the end of February each year. This is a timely reminder to keep our passwords updated and secure, change default passwords and be careful about how we keep our payment methods secure. [Have a look at www.cyberweekscotland.com](http://www.cyberweekscotland.com) to help think about some of the issues.



VIEW FROM THE TOP

Despite a variety of challenges hitting our local businesses, as fuel prices increase and footfall has been less predictable, we remain with a very low vacancy rate in business premises across Linlithgow. Whilst not the only measure, this is an encouraging sign that businesses are 'hanging in there'.

A challenge in recent years, through Covid and beyond, has been understanding consumer behaviour and how that may affect local business. It appears that at last we are returning to a world closer to what we understood prior to Covid, with employees generally returning to their workplaces for at least part of the week. We are also seeing more confidence in people using leisure time facilities, albeit that is tinged with the increased costs at home.

The **One Linlithgow** team are grappling with the best actions to encourage more people to the town, staying longer, and spending more money with our local businesses. There are some street improvement projects to be completed as well as work on the Destination Management Plan moving to a conclusion through the Spring.

In **Mill Road Industrial Estate**, works are taking place on fencing and some environment improvements to make it a safer and more secure place to do business.

Much of the work of a BID goes unnoticed, as it is behind the scenes. If you have a pressing improvement you want addressed, please get in touch as we are continuing to adapt our business plan to suit this fast changing world post Covid, that could not have been predicted when the plan was written.



FIT FOR A QUEEN

Isobel Elliot has recently been involved as a Volunteer in a brilliant piece of work for the museum's educational resources:

"Schools had not been able to visit Linlithgow Museum for educational visits as they had done prior to COVID, so Museum staff decided to provide educational boxes to aid pupils in their Social Studies and Science & Technology projects. After consultation with teachers, it was decided one of the boxes should aid pupils' experiences of the topic Mary Queen of Scots. Background information was provided for teachers, and a game was produced to be a fun learning and reinforcing tool. It was also decided to interrelate with Historic Environment Scotland and Linlithgow Primary's Junior Tour Guide videos to provide costume and drama ideas. The costume was the stumbling block. Due to prior commitments no one was available to sew the dress. As a regular volunteer with the Museum's educational projects, I said I would ask Nici Martin who runs the "Thread Counter", a shop in the High Street providing sewing materials, accessories and wool, to see if she could help.

Nici is a trained tailor and runs sewing classes. She also travels through Europe with opera companies creating historic costumes so seemed ideal for the task. However, there were two problems to solve: the museum had little money to support the making of the dress and also as it was March, Nici was already up to her eyes in making and helping

mothers make costumes for the Gala Day in June. Undaunted, Nici with her usual enthusiasm said she just didn't have time to make the dress alone but she would help me make it. As my skills are basic, I was a bit overwhelmed by the idea especially as we were unable to find a specific simple pattern for a Mary Queen of Scots costume. Many Tudor patterns were available but nothing specifically for Mary.

Nici and I looked at costumes online and Nici was able to put together a pattern to create the dress. A stretch velvet was chosen as this was cheaper than heavy velvets but it was a nightmare to work with as it moved all the time. However, with Nici's support I attended some classes and managed to cut out and put together a simple costume. By this time Nici's workload had lessened slightly and she was able to take over and make the costume the professional and stunning dress as seen in the photos. Nici donated much time and materials to the creation of the dress without payment and everyone at the museum is very grateful to her for her efforts.

The second problem was the fitting of the dress. It was difficult to get any girls of an appropriate age who could come along to help. Helpfully, I knew the current Gala Queen's mother. Seonaid Scott agreed that her daughter, Ruth, could come to the shop and help in the fitting of the dress. Ruth said she would be happy to be involved and she arranged to come and try on the dress which helped enormously. She did this on several occasions and it seemed appropriate that the Queen of the Gala Day in Linlithgow helped us with the costume for Mary Queen of Scots who was, of course, born here in Linlithgow."



UPDATE FROM LINLITHGOW MUSEUM

We have a busy few months coming up at the museum, so we hope to see you at some of our events:

Places of Science talk:

The next talk in our places of science series is on the **16th March at 7.00pm** in the museum community space. **Alistair McConnell** will be talking about Star Trek Borgs and Robot Prosthetics. Get your tickets at Linlithgow Heritage Trust - Art Tickets

Fayres, bottles and car boots:

Our next two **vintage and collectors fayres** are coming up at the Queen Margaret Hall in Linlithgow on the **11th March and 26th August from 10am till 4pm**. These events are popular so get the dates in your diary now.

We're also delighted to be hosting the Scottish bottle show for a second time, and we'll be tying that into a car boot sale. This event will be on the **6th May at the Queen Margaret Hall**. Early entry to the bottle show from 8am till 9.30am is £2, thereafter entry is free until close at noon. The car boot is free and for space at the car boot contact **Bob McMillan** on 01506 848059.

Easter holidays:

Join us at **Linlithgow Museum** during the Easter holidays for heaps of family fun!

Get your hands on history, take part in a scavenger hunt or discover the world with intrepid adventurers from the town. There is something for everyone. Check out www.linlithgowmuseum.org/news to see what's on. Free as always (but donations are always welcome!) Open Mon, Wed-Sat 10am-4pm and Sunday 1pm - 4pm.

Alison Train



We hope that future school groups will enjoy the educational boxes and that pupils will get great pleasure out of wearing this beautiful dress as part of their learning about Mary Queen of Scots. This has been an interesting project and we would like to thank Isobel, Nici, Ruth and Seonaid for all their efforts in making this idea into a reality.

Isobel Elliot and Alison Train

FUTURE OF ST MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL VERY MUCH A LIVE ISSUE IN THE COMMUNITY

A public meeting billed to exchange information on the future use of frailty care beds in St Michael's Hospital and the rest of West Lothian ended with more questions than answers and failed to reassure anxieties about its possible closure.

Last month's Black Bitch feature on the community engagement event around the future of St Michael's Hospital held on February 7th generated considerable community interest. Around 200 people including the local MSP and all the local ward councillors crammed into St Michael's Kirk Hall to listen to a short presentation by the West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership Chief Officer, **Alison White** and the West Lothian Council Head of Health, **Yvonne Lawton**.



Background

West Lothian Health and Care Partnership is a body jointly controlled by Lothian Health Board and West Lothian Council that plans and commissions community health and social care services across West Lothian. With a combined budget of approximately £264m, the Partnership (often referred to as the Integrated Joint Board or IJB) passes its funding, along with associated operational 'Directions', back to the Health Board and Council who employ the staff and services associated with care delivery.

It is acknowledged that service provision in West Lothian and elsewhere is under operational and financial pressure.

Demographic change is altering the pattern and emphasis of service delivery towards the joined up support of an ageing population with multiple chronic conditions. Ultimately, that manifests itself into a health and care system in transformation from one based on institutional care to one largely built around care and treatment close to or in peoples' own homes.

This is now the process that faces the population in the north of West Lothian in relation to services previously provided at St Michael's Hospital in Linlithgow.

Following a commitment to continued operation made in 2017, the facility was "temporarily" closed using emergency powers in June 2021, the decision driven solely by short term pressures on staff availability arising from the pandemic.

At that time, Linlithgow MSP Fiona Hyslop declared that *'I have written to the Health Board chief executive to request a meeting to ensure that this move is strictly temporary and not the first step in a strategy to remove hospital care for the elderly from Linlithgow.'*

The temperature in the community cooled but two further extensions of the closure were announced and on the second of those in June 2022 the Health and Social Care Partnership approved a process to review the overall requirement for frailty care beds in West Lothian as part of an overall clinical strategy update that is due to report to, and be approved by, the Health and Care Partnership Board on 21 March 2023.

Based on the tenor of the Chief Officer's comments on bed use at the 7th of February meeting, it seems likely that the major recommendations, affecting St Michael's, will be:

1. Extension of the community care model called 'Home First'
2. A permanent reduction in staffed inpatient frailty bed capacity

Before there is a rush to judgement, however, there are a number of questions the community may wish to have answered, among them:

1. How have St Michael's operating expenses been deployed since closure? And in the event of closure, post closure, how will they be used?
2. If to be re-invested in home-based services, how will future demands be met when shortfalls in provision are reported now?
3. Should the review decision be to close St Michael's Hospital will the cost saving be a reduction in outlays to help meet the overall available budget or will the saving be redeployed to increase "home care" provision?
4. How relevant was the data on bed usage presented to the meeting of 7th February given the distorting effects of the Covid 19 pandemic?
5. Is "bed blocking" an issue at St John's Hospital and elsewhere in Lothian and if so to what extent?

6. If Scottish Ministers took the view that community consultation was inadequate prior to the decision being taken to close permanently and ordered the facility to re-open on capacity grounds what would be the cost of re-mobilisation?

7. What is the long term solution for bed based community healthcare given that Tippethill Hospital (a PFI hospital) has its contract with Lothian Health Board expire in September 2025? Does the overall implementation of the strategy not require a new community hospital for West Lothian and could that not be sited on the St Michael's Hospital footprint?

8. In the event of St Michael's Hospital closure, it is likely the Friends of St Michael's charity, which has contributed approximately £47,000 over the last six years for beds and other equipment, will simply be wound up and disappear, along with the people who helped, and the goodwill with which such help was freely given. Could a properly managed community engagement process retain that goodwill and contribution to the common good?



The Linlithgow Combination Poorhouse.

The remaining questions for the community in Linlithgow, outwith the heavily invested Friends of St Michael's, are questions to be asked of the community itself. Firstly, does it really care enough about what happens to its local hospital building to actively support it to survive and thrive and secondly, does it care enough about how their local and national taxes are spent in providing health care in the locality?

The answers to those questions should be provided over the next few months.

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

I'M TALKING ABOUT LEXAGONS

In summer 2021 I was approached by an indie game developer Steve Kyle about composing music for games he was creating. At the time, a deck based card game called Final Yaldi, not that dissimilar to the concept of Pokémon where you battle an opponent based on attributes of your card. Fast forward almost two years and Steve, AKA SKYLE Games, has just released his debut called Lexagons – a highly addictive daily word game based on creating 'rare' words from chunks of letters.



Steve and I actually go way back. We both went to West Calder High School, although Steve came through a number of years after me, and we were both heavily involved in the Livingston Music Scene which at the time had, for me, some really interesting bands doing really interesting music. Steve, a bass player, also had a keen interest in software development and he once took part in a game design competition organised by Abertay University before going on to study Computer Science at the University of Edinburgh, all the time working on prototypes of his own games. He was then funded by Arm, a British semi-conductor company, to do a PHD in Cambridge focusing on making code that runs on Android phones more efficient.

'I just used to say I have a PHD in Android which is why I'm especially qualified in how to tell you to turn it off and on again.'

I think comments like that tell us a lot about Steve. He's humble, hardworking and very dedicated to pursuing his dream of being a professional game developer. He actually quit his job at Arm (which he was offered after completing the PHD) after 7 years to pursue his dream and because I've worked pretty closely with him for a while now (I wrote the

music for Lexagons) I wanted to try and help him get the word out.



Now Available in Play & App Stores

So if you are into word games search 'Lexagons' in the Google Play or App store and play for free. Maybe even consider shelling our £3 to unlock the full game - I know it would mean a lot to Steve. And don't worry if the soft, relaxing tones of the theme music bugs you... you can turn it off in settings! Now, talking of bugs in music, I was recently contacted by a local man whose profession it is to kill them...

Bloodsugar

Local GP Stewart Box (guitar, bass) is part of a melodic rock band formed by yet more Edinburgh University alumni including his brother Andy (guitar, bass) who also runs Boxinaband recording studio which helped out Linlithgow Academy act Altinak.

Bloodsugar was originally conceived in 1980, when I assume Stewart was studying medicine, however after some early shows at now defunct venues like Preservation Hall and Negociants, families and careers slowed the band's progress. The medical men however didn't disband and they managed to release 3 albums and play a few shows over the next 30 years and now, with kids all grown up, it seems the group have found the time to create fresh material.

So what does a band with a GP and other academics sound like? I can't help but think of other medically influenced bands like The Right Prescription fronted by 'Dr Karl' from Aussie TV series Neighbours. (They were a real band that played shows - I know because I saw them live in Australia and I think I left with an infection.) Also, The Amateur Transplants - a comedy group from London who had albums like 'Fitness To Practice' and songs called 'Paracetamoxyfrusebendroneomycin'.

Thankfully though, the medical influences seem to stop with Bloodsugar's name.

Their most played song on Spotify 'Dictator', which appears on the 2018 album Perfect Colours, eventually has a raucous opening (after a 13 second intro which doesn't need to be there) before stripping back to allow the vocals of Dave Watkins through backed up by the keyboards of Mark Vetriciano. The lyrical content struck me as a little contrived 'keeping in with their banker chums / they all went to school together' as the band take a pot shot at politicians in a slightly unimaginative and literal way however they seem tight enough as a unit, and the main hookline has a sort of catchiness.

I was impressed by their ability to traverse musical styles with ease and put together well thought out arrangements between their instruments. The funky vibes of 'Husband', the opener of their new release 'Wheel of Fortune', is lively, upbeat and well played but once again they are found wanting in the lyrical department: 'have you got what it takes to be by husband?' comes across a little half-hearted and lacks substance. Silver Screen has a lovely synth opening and an 80s electro vibe; Real World is another genre hop to a more rocky place and Last Trip To Durham introduces soft, celtic sounding synth violins and some beautiful chordal guitar work. Dave Watkins' vocals here work much better in a lower register, playfully weaving over the well sculpted texture created by the band.

Bloodsugar live up to their billing as a melodic rock band who like to experiment with different musical styles and I think with some head scratching on the lyrical side of things, could become a really interesting act.

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 Twitter: @GaryGuitar4 Facebook: garyclintonguitartutor



Doctor Who...



Doctor Who boasts the title of the longest running Sci Fi show in history. The first episode hit the airwaves in 1963, almost 60 years ago when my Grandpa was still in short trousers (well almost)!

A British national treasure, Dr Who is a household name across the world. Impressive! The show has survived against all odds. Just some of the challenges encountered include fading support from the studio, depressingly low budgets, stars coming and going and even a cancellation in 1989. Our amazing **National History Museum of Scotland** in Edinburgh is showcasing an exhibition with props from the beloved programme and this has really put me in the mood to analyse this institution of a show.

Why has it lived so long and how did it become so iconic across the world? The story begins in 1963 when BBC head of drama Sydney Newman developed an idea of an educational historic-scientific programme with the core concept being an old man and his granddaughter travelling through time in space in a machine that looks like a police telephone box. The series was greenlit and handed over to Verity

Lambert who would oversee and mould the show in its earliest years as the first female producer at the BBC. The programme quickly established itself as iconic and was a huge hit with the intended core audience of families. It laid the foundation for the show's future by establishing the core character of 'The Doctor' (or 'Dr Who'), an ancient and mysterious alien who travelled the universe with human companions in his tardis. Finding himself wrapped up in various situations with aliens and humans alike, he helped out where he could, using compassion and intellect over feats of strength and power. Many will remember his equally famous recurring adversaries including the Daleks and the Cybermen who had many a child hiding behind the sofa in fear.

This format was unique. Featuring an unconventional protagonist, the fantastic concept of the show lent itself to a vast wealth of storylines that could hypothetically go on forever. The only limitation to the show's lifespan at this point was the cast. In its early years the show saw numerous changes both in front of and behind the camera. The shows very intense soap opera esque schedule saw many cast members and crew move on to other projects. This included the original producer Verity Lambert. It seemed the only constant

was William Hartnell who portrayed The Doctor. He too eventually had to leave the show due to his age and illness.

Would this be the end of Doctor Who? No! Because the BBC had a trick up their sleeve. Fearing that young audiences wouldn't react well to a recast of the character, they opted to take an unprecedented route. In a clever move, this is where the concept of 'regeneration' comes into play. In a genius stroke, whenever an actor who portrays the doctor wishes to move on, the character will die in the show and undergo a process where they heal but have a new face and personality. This not only makes for a good way to future proof the show, but also revitalise it with a newkind of energy when its getting stale. William Hartnell's replacement Patrick Troughton brought a more clownish and comedic tone to the show while it remained functionally the same. The winning formula of the show resulted in a super committed fanbase where their emotional connection to the show from their childhood remained as they matured.

It's this fanbase that would go on to keep the show on air throughout the show's dark period in the 1980's where the script quality and increasing competition from American shows with enhanced special effects led to

a dwindling in popularity. The show was seen by the BBC gods as an outdated relic. Eventually not even super fan support could keep it afloat and the show was finally axed in 1989.

But this would thankfully NOT be the final resting place of Doctor Who as fans were kept entertained by a line of novels and a television movie throughout the 1990's until nothing short of a miracle happened. In 2005 writer Russel T. Davies, who had grown up on a diet of Doctor Who, got a revival series off the ground with himself as showrunner. A relatively famous actor Christopher Eccleston took on the lead role. This revival performed fantastically and the show has never looked back. Today the future of Doctor Who is looking as bright as ever.

Doctor Who is a one of a kind show. The winning formula invites change to reflect the era it is in while remaining undeniably the same show as aired almost 60 years ago. With boundless imagination, wit and iconography I believe this show could live forever.

**Calvin Sinclair
S4 Linlithgow
Academy**



THE LINLITHGOW EMBROIDERIES "THE STORY BEHIND THE STITCHES"

The lockdown has brought some unexpected delights, and such is the Linlithgow Embroidery created by **Christine Anderson**, owner of the Patchwork shop and a skilled seamstress.

She took this opportunity to do something she had been thinking about for 20 years, that is capturing the old Linlithgow High Street as it was when she and her friends were young. Sadly, a number of historic buildings have been demolished and Christine wanted to preserve their memory in embroidery. She used her needle and thread like a paintbrush, sewing directly on to calico linen. There are six panels measuring 70 x 200 cm in block work using brown embroidery thread to pick out the buildings. She's also included small well-known figures and some comments on life in the street. The embroideries are unique and irreplaceable.

A partnership between **Linlithgow Civic Trust** and the **Linlithgow Museum**, with support from One Linlithgow (BID), Linlithgow Community Development Trust, and Councillors Pattle and Conn, a working group has been formed to protect and preserve the embroideries for posterity.

After months and months of searching and talking to galleries, museums and textile experts, trying to find out which materials we should use, and how the embroideries should be safely mounted and framed, we at last contacted the V&A in Dundee, and received expert advice and help. They were very enthusiastic about the project, and directed us to the Scottish Conservation Studios situated at Hopeton. The textile expert there is **Tuula Pardoe** who has guided us on how the embroideries should

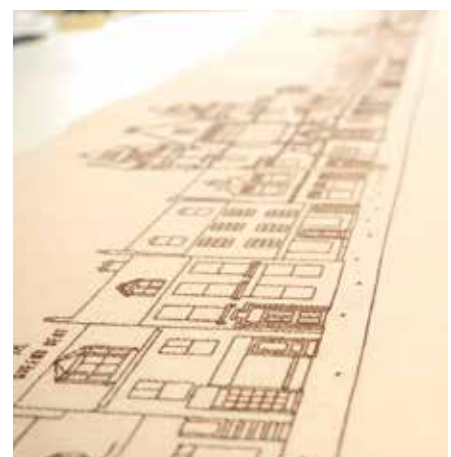
be preserved and exhibited.

She recommended that they should have remedial work to straighten them as they are becoming a little crumpled. The total cost for preparing the works is approximately £15,000, with additional costs for insurance, transport, etc., for the works.

As this edition of the Black Bitch goes to press we will already have had an exhibition of the Embroideries in the Museum on the 24th and 25th of February, however, we hope that there will be a number of opportunities for the community to see them and help us to raise the funds for preservation. Accompanying the Embroideries at the exhibition is our **Oral History** project, where we have local people telling of their memories of the High Street, and those who lived, worked and played there many years ago. The stories are both fascinating and amusing, and we are grateful to the 14 volunteers who have taken part. Together with the Embroideries they form an important slice of social history.

People who wish to help finance the Linlithgow Embroidery project, or who have stories they wish to share should contact either: Marilynne MacLaren, Convenor Linlithgow Civic Trust, at lctchair@lbt.scot, or the Treasurer at alan.earsman@lbt.scot, or go to the 'Just Giving' website which can be accessed through our website <https://lbt.scot/civic-trust/embroidery>.

Linlithgow Civic Trust
Linlithgow Museum





LINLITHGOW GOLF CLUB GEARS UP FOR THE NEW SEASON

LINLITHGOW GOLF CLUB

It's all systems go at Linlithgow Golf Club as the Club gears up for the new season.

Opening day for members will be on **Saturday 8th of April** when Captain **James McCallum** has the honour of hitting his drive off the first tee. The Greens staff and volunteers have worked hard to ensure that the course is in top condition ahead of the big day.

The Club has recognised that many members may be facing financial challenges this year with higher interest rates, high inflation and substantial increases in energy and food costs. As a result, the Club has reduced membership fees for members in their twenties which means members don't pay full fees until they reach the age of 30. Secretary **Grant Hamilton** said...

"We appreciate that younger members have many demands upon their income and we felt as a club that we should do something about this. I believe our rates for members under the age of 30 compare favourably with other clubs in

the area." Details of these rates and other offers are available from Grant, on T. 01506 842585.

For anyone interested in joining, the Club is running an **Open Day on Sunday 16th of April** when golfers can play the course for free and see the facilities on offer including a restaurant, bar and professional's shop. To book a time for Open Day, please contact Club Professional **Stuart Reekie** on T. 01506 842585. Stuart has a fully stocked shop and teaching studio and offers a warm welcome to members and non-members alike.

In addition to the shop being open to all, the Club's bar and restaurant are also open to the community, you do not have to be a member to make use of them. Lunch and afternoon teas are available seven days a week and evening meals are available on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday, please contact **Stevie Duffy** on T. 07549 636334 for more details. The Club is also the ideal venue for private functions, such as significant birthdays and wedding anniversaries. All functions are catered for at prices to suit every budget.



As Club Captain **James McCallum** states...

"Linlithgow Golf Club is part of the wider community in Linlithgow, and in the past was perhaps really only available to members. However, times have changed and both the course and Clubhouse are open to members and visitors alike and everyone will be made welcome."

MEMBERS
OPEN DAY

SAT
8
APR

VISITORS
OPEN DAY

SUN
16
APR

Linlithgow Marches Get Involved!

It is fast approaching the time of year when our town comes together to celebrate its Annual Riding of the Marches. With so many traditions, events and opportunities to take part in, being held as part of the celebrations, the big question is – how will you be joining in?



Over the coming months the Deacons Court will be hosting a range of events that you, your family and friends can come along to and enjoy in the run up to the big day. These will include the Prize Bingo, Golf Tournament, Summer Showcase, Street Fair, Wrestling Dinner and a new event for this year, Day at the Races. For information on how you can attend any of these events, or to reserve a stall at the Street Fair for your organisation, please contact us at deacons court.events@gmail.com

Other traditional parts of Marches celebrations such as the Crying of the Marches on Friday 9th June and both Deacons Nights on Saturday 3rd and 10th June, will be taking their place in the town's diary. Come along and join the community lining the streets to support these events.

There are many ways in which you can get involved in the Marches Day itself.

You, or an organisation you are involved with, may wish to take part by walking in the procession, dressing up in fancy dress or even by building and entering a float. One of the easiest ways for children to get involved in the Marches is by decorating their bike and taking part in the procession. Designs can be as simple or as intricate as they would like and all entries will be entered into the Best Decorated Bicycle competition.

A Marches Planning meeting will be held on Thursday 13th April in Linlithgow Bowling Club at 7.30pm, for those who will be taking part in the procession or who are interested in hearing more information about it. Entry forms for anyone wishing to take part in the Marches Day procession can be found on the Deacons Court website.

**THU
13
APR**

Finally, please join us on our social media platforms for the most up to date information and more ways to get involved with celebrating Linlithgow's heritage and community spirit with our Marches celebrations and events.

Website: linlithgowmarches.org
Facebook: [@linlithgowmarchesinst](https://www.facebook.com/linlithgowmarchesinst)
Instagram: [@deacons court](https://www.instagram.com/deacons court)
Ashley Johnston



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Wildlife pond and wetland at Kettilstoun

In order to promote increased biodiversity in an area of former farmland, and to mitigate in part for the losses relating to the newly developed cycle track near the Leisure Centre, Burgh Beautiful approached R J McLeod, the developers, who agreed to excavate a 'scrape' as a 'community benefit' related to the cycle track project under the company's Environmental and Sustainability Policy.

This has created a pond and wetland area near the recently planted Triangle Wood, west of Linlithgow Leisure Centre and below the Union Canal. The site excavated was an old pit/quarry with a small stream, originating from under the Union Canal running into and out of the pond. The pond itself is approximately 18 inches deep, shelving to 12 inches and then a shallow slope at the pond margin.

The provision of a permanent source of open water will allow the development of such species as caddis flies, damselflies and dragonflies through their complete life cycle; from eggs laid on plant material which hatch into nymphs or larvae which typically live in the water or muddy bottom for a period of 6 months to two years. These then emerge from the water and undergo their final moult, emerging as the complete insect, which may live for only a few weeks. The



previous boggy habitat would not support such species as it is vulnerable to drying up in the summer.

It is important that the pond contains some plants which will allow these insects to lay eggs and finally emerge and we propose initially to plant some native flag iris by the pond margin in the Spring.

We also hope to attract amphibians, frogs, newts and toads which we know live beside the Union Canal and provide a safe fish-free habitat for their egg development into tadpoles.

We will hold a watching brief this year to see how the vegetation around the boggy area surrounding the pond develops, and

plant with native wetland flowers, such as meadowsweet, kingcups, water avens and marsh forget-me-nots.

For the future, it would be wonderful to be able to provide a pond dipping platform, so that our children can experience for themselves the fun of coming with their jam jar and seeing (and releasing) all the mini-beasts which live in the water.

We thank the Linlithgow Community Development Trust for facilitating this project.

Margaret Harrison,
Burgh Beautiful

In Memory

Heather Laing and her siblings Iain, Graeme and Ailsa sponsor a pair of hanging baskets in memory of their parents Joe and Sylvia Lavery. Most people will remember Joe as the bandmaster of Linlithgow Reed Band, leading the way at events such as The Marches and The Bo'ness Fair.

He and his wife moved to Linlithgow in 1973 - when Barons Hill Avenue was just built - and made the town their family's home.

Joe, from Glasgow, had been in the army for 23 years. He met Sylvia, a legal secretary from Twickenham in London, while he was at the nearby Army Music School, and they spent a large part of their married life travelling around with the Royal Scots.

When he left the army, Joe taught music at schools in West Lothian and was bandmaster with the 1st/52nd Lowland Volunteers, a Territorial Army band. He later became the bandmaster of the Linlithgow Reed Band, and choirmaster for Linlithgow Rugby Club Male Voice Choir and Linlithgow Ladies choir.



Sylvia passed away in 2012 after a battle with Alzheimer's. Joe died in July 2021 at the age of 89. They had four children and nine grandchildren who wanted to pay a fitting tribute to them.

Heather said: *"Dad always kept himself busy with music. He played the organ in St Peter's Church, he was in the Rotary Club and would play for the 'old people' at various care homes, on the canal boat and the steam train - although he was often the oldest one there!"*

"He passed away during lockdown, so last September in St Michael's Parish

Church we had a celebration of his life with music and many of his friends coming along to pay tribute to him.

"We thought it was appropriate to have something in the town to keep mum and dad's memory alive. They were such a huge part of the community and a floral display seemed fitting - so they continue to play a role in enhancing Linlithgow."

If you would like to sponsor a floral display, or Burgh Beautiful's work in general, please contact: sponsorship@lbt.scot



Schools tree planting

In recent months Burgh Beautiful volunteers have visited Low Port Primary and Linlithgow Primary schools to get some of the children involved in tree planting.

They used young Rowan and Elderberry trees left over from those given to Burgh Beautiful by the Woodland Trust for the hedge planting



at Fiddlers Croft at the east end of the Peel in December. Pots were donated by Sainsbury's and the compost purchased from money donated from last year's Rotary Club Duck Race.



The young trees will be kept for pupils to watch their growth and development over the school year - and then either taken home or planted by the pupils in Triangle Wood, west of the leisure centre, in the Autumn.

Burgh Beautiful volunteers were pleased to find that the children knew so much about the issue of climate change worldwide.

Science shows that woods and trees combat the devastating effects of climate change - flooding, pollution, and extreme weather and temperature. They are the ultimate carbon captors, absorbing atmospheric carbon and locking it up for generations.

But trees are also a vital source of food and shelter for wildlife, as well as an important way to enhance the appearance of our communities, softening the built environment.

Volunteers needed

Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow depends on a small and declining number of volunteers to run the organisation and raise all funds – and urgently needs new and enthusiastic people who are willing to help out.

Activities will have to be severely curtailed, or even ceased, if replacements can't be found for lost volunteers and those who feel they have already done their part.

Giving just a little time would make a huge difference to take the strain off those already doing several tasks to keep the group's activities going.

TO SUMMARISE, THE GROUP NEEDS TO FIND:



- >> LABOURERS/GARDENERS
- >> LITTER PICK COORDINATOR
- >> SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR
- >> YOUTH WORKING GROUP LEADER
- >> GENERAL FUNDRAISER

Details of all these volunteering roles are advertised on the mylinlithgow.com page, or email bbl@lbt.scot.

Donna White
Burgh Beautiful

MUSIC AT ST MICHAEL'S PARISH CHURCH

REED BAND, STRING ORCHESTRA, LADIES CHOIR, RFC MALE VOICE CHOIR, ST MICHAEL'S CHOIR

"Zadok the Priest" is unquestionably a great piece of music. Written by George Frederic Handel for the coronation of King George II in 1727, it has been performed at every royal coronation since and will be played again at the forthcoming coronation of Charles III in May prior to the anointing of the new sovereign. For singers, musicians and listeners, it unfailingly sends a tingle of excitement through the being from its majestic opening to its triumphal conclusion.

Linlithgow's musical forces are going to combine together in a forthcoming thrilling project to perform Handel's anthem. The ever-popular Linlithgow Reed Band's Spring Concert takes place on Sunday, 26th March in St Michael's Church, Linlithgow. Their finale will be an awesome performance of Handel's Coronation masterpiece in which they will be joined by the Linlithgow String Orchestra and singers from the Linlithgow Ladies Choir, the Linlithgow RFC Male Voice Choir and from St Michael's Parish Church, Linlithgow. It will undoubtedly be a memorable community musical moment when musicians and singers from a variety of groups and traditions are able to combine their talents. For our audience it should not only be a thrill to hear Handel's music in the stunning setting (and acoustic) of St Michael's but to wonder at how the piece evolved into the Champions League theme!



This is not the only musical project, on behalf of Aspire Linlithgow, taking place at St Michael's on that March weekend. From 2pm - 4pm on Friday afternoon of 24th March, the church will be hosting an informal concert for children of all ages. It is ideal for beginners as well as advanced-level performers. The aim is to give performance opportunities in an informal setting to children in front of an appreciative audience! Members of the audience and performers are free to come and go between performance items, but you are also encouraged to stay and support others in their endeavours. Parents and/or instrumental music and singing teachers should bring the performers to the church. Families and friends are encouraged to attend and support.



Those who wish to perform should register their interest by emailing me on billjonesjazz@gmail.com, providing brief details of the piece of music to be played or sung and on which instrument. I can provide piano accompaniment if required. In the week beginning 20th March, I will publish a provisional list of performers and approximate timings and email this out to families.

There will be a retiring collection in aid of the church's Aspire Linlithgow appeal.



Bill Jones
(Director of Music, St Michael's Church / Linlithgow String Orchestra)

Linlithgow Visitor Information Centre Call for Volunteers

We all know the saying “St Michael is kinde to strangers”. Well, here is your chance to prove it!

It is hoped that a Visitor Information Centre can be opened in the Burgh Halls this summer and local volunteers are needed to talk to tourists about the towns’ attractions and amenities. With a date for the reopening of Linlithgow Palace yet to be confirmed, it is more important than ever that those who choose to linger longer in Linlithgow are given the welcome they deserve!



Visitor Information Centres are traditionally the first point of contact for tourists and visitors who rely on them for up-to-date information and advice on what to see and do on their trips.

The Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Community Council are behind the initiative, restarting the project that was put on hold due to COVID. The group have funding secured for signage, uniforms and I.T. equipment and expert training is going to be delivered by Visit Scotland with ongoing support from Visit West Lothian.

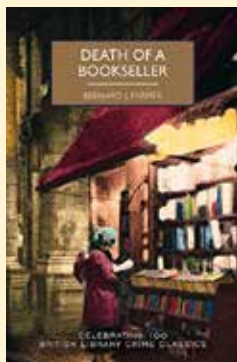
Volunteers need no special skills, just a willingness to be friendly and approachable. Visitors from all over the world come to Linlithgow, so it could be an opportunity to brush up on your language skills! Organisers are keen to work with volunteers on a flexible rota system.

For more information, please contact secretary@llbcc.org.uk

Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council



DEATH OF A BOOKSELLER BERNARD J. FARMER



Born at the beginning of the twentieth century, **Bernard J. Farmer** was a British writer whose books included a series of police-focused crime fiction novels, mystery tales for children and non-fiction works exploring his passion for rowing, politicians and book collecting. In the years which followed the Second World War, Farmer joined the ranks of the Metropolitan police, gaining experience and knowledge of detecting techniques which many believe lent authenticity to his detective stories.

His novel, **Death of a Bookseller**, is the second of four detective novels written by Farmer which feature detective Sergeant Jack Wigan as the main protagonist. Throughout the last century, this was a popular novel in literary circles, not least because of the central role played by books, booksellers and collectors. The novel shines a spotlight on the nuances of bookselling and the stereotypical characters that might be associated with this trade.

The novel begins one August evening, as Sergeant Wigan from the Sun Police District makes his way home from Late Turn duty. A conscientious member of the police force, he notices a man swaying about in the middle of the road and assesses him to be drunk. Realising that the man is neither violent nor incapable, he determines that the best course of action is to ensure that he reaches the safety of his own home and so accompanies him to his doorstep. During the course of their meeting, detective Sergeant Wigan ascertains that the man is called Michael Fisk and he makes his living buying and selling books.

“I’m what is called a runner. I go here, there, everywhere, picking up what I can find in the first-edition line, and selling to other dealers or sometimes direct to a collector.”

Mr Fisk reveals on his route home that today he has made the “find of his life” and now has in his possession a rare collector’s item: Keats’ own copy of his poem *Endymion* complete with inscription. Buoyed up by his good humour and still under the influence of his celebrations, he invites the detective Sergeant into his home and shows other items in his collection. This begins a genuine interest for the detective Sergeant in book collecting which propels the narrative for the first section of the story.

“[Wigan] thought he would like to collect first editions himself. It was a scholarly hobby. It would brighten up his mind, dulled sometimes by the monotony of police duty,”

It is with some horror for both Wigan and reader alike that the convivial Mr Fisk comes to an untimely demise, propelling the narrative of the story into a dark, gothic tale with many shrewd twists and turns. Wigan is convinced that the wrong man has been framed for the murder of Michael Fisk and so ensues a race against sentencing to clear the name of this unfortunate soul. With his burgeoning knowledge of the world of books, Detective Sergeant Wigan is well-placed to gain insight into the various characters known to Fisk, who may have had cause to feel upset or grievance towards him. Wigan encounters a series of well-described, interesting and peculiar characters during the course of his investigation, leaving him with no shortage of suspects and sources of information.

Bernard J. Farmer has woven an intricate and clever narrative with embedded and well-connected plots and plenty of red-herrings to keep his readers guessing about the motive and culprit, until the final few pages. This was a thoroughly enjoyable novel, deservedly retrieved from the archives of the British Library’s Crime Classics series.

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



Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Community Council

Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council meet once a month, usually on the last Tuesday of the month. Our meetings are always open to the public, and views and comments are most welcome, on any local topics, ranging from Planning Applications to the Remembrance Day Service to the Advent Fayre. Normally the meetings take place in the Burgh Halls, at 7.30, but we are currently exploring the possibility of Hybrid meetings which would enable those who cannot attend in person to still participate in the proceedings. Watch This Space for updates!





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Stained grout lines



AFTER
GroutGleam
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Email: m.g.podiatry@gmail.com

Murdoch Kennedy
**13TH SILENT FILM
 FESTIVAL AT THE
 HIPPODROME**



Our last issue featured an article about the Hippodrome in Bo'ness, Scotland's oldest purpose-built cinema, which is very much a mecca for film fans in Linlithgow. The cinema is now gearing up for its biggest event of the year – the silent film festival “Hippfest” – and this will run from Wednesday March 22nd until Sunday March 26th.



Now in its thirteenth year, “Hippfest” is renowned for its varied programme celebrating silent film with live musical accompaniment and the 2023 edition will continue that tradition.

This year, the festival will be served by a daily shuttle bus between Linlithgow railway station and the Hippodrome, bookable in advance.

“Hippfest” is Scotland’s only festival dedicated to silent film. Announcing the programme, festival director **Alison Strauss** said:

“Hippfest” has grown to be a world-class festival for silent film, cultivating a real community of people who share an adventurous appetite for extraordinary cinema and live music.”

“We can’t wait to welcome everyone to explore the programme with us and to come and be part of the unique atmosphere of the festival and of the

Hippodrome itself.”

“The team has worked incredibly hard to pull together all the ingredients of “Hippfest” that our audiences love, and this year the mix of great films, great music and great fun will be hard to beat.”

A screening of ‘**The Blue Bird**’, Maurice Tourneur’s 1928 fantasy fairy-tale of two children’s quest for happiness, will open the programme on Wednesday March 22nd. The magical journey of Tytyl and Mytyl, based on playwright Maurice Maeterlinck’s hugely popular 1908 play *L’Oiseau Bleu*, echoes *The Wizard of Oz*, with its charming allegory about what is really important in life.



The film will be accompanied by the world premiere of a new commission by ‘**Sonic Bothy**’, an award-winning Glasgow-based inclusive ensemble, that explores, composes and performs contemporary music.

As part of the “Hippfest” community screening programme, the Barony Theatre will be showing ‘**The Man Who Laughs**’ a few days before the festival gets underway



Other highlights on the 2023 programme include ‘**The Silent Enemy**’ (1930), which features an all-Native

American cast and follows the indigenous Ojibwe tribe as they struggle to survive in the face of the silent enemy – hunger. The film will be accompanied by **Gunter Buchwald** on piano and violin, and with **Frank Bockius** on percussion.

“Hippfest’s” traditional Jeely Jar screening will make a welcome return



with a double bill of silent comedy from 1926 – ‘**Dog Shy**’ and ‘**Mighty like a Moose**’.

There’s an avant-garde love letter to Kyiv from film-maker **Mikhail Kaufman**. ‘**In Spring**’ (1929) is a poignant portrait of Kyiv, filmed a few years after a brief spell of independence and on the cusp of its subjugation by the Soviet Union. “Hippfest” is proud to welcome Ukrainian musicians, **Roksana Smirnova** and **Misha Kalinin** to the Hippodrome for the UK premiere of their new score.



The festival closes with ‘**Shooting Stars**’ (1928, Hollywood Babylon – UK style)! A behind-the-scenes film-biz satire in which the glitz and glamour of a 1920s British movie studio is the setting for seediness, betrayal and intrigue.

“Hippfest’s” regular events will also take place at the Hippodrome, around Bo’ness and beyond. This will include young musicians premiering their compositions for Scottish archive films in ‘**New Found Sound**’ – fast becoming the festival’s hottest ticket every year.



The Hippodrome

For more on the programme or to book tickets, visit www.hippfest.co.uk

- A. *The Loves of Mary, Queen of Scots* (1923) - HippFest 2022 - photo credit Tom Duffin
- B. *The Unknown* (1927) HippFest 2022 - photo credit Tom Duffin
- C. *The Mark of Zorro* (1920) - HippFest 2022 - photo credit Kat Gollock
- D. *The Man Who Laughs* Image courtesy of Park Circus, Universal
- E. *The Silent Enemy*
- F. *Shooting Stars* _ Image courtesy the BFI
- G. *His Majesty the Barber* Image courtesy of The Swedish Film Institute



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Ask the expert: Looking ahead to hay fever season

Specsavers

WITH Allergy Awareness Week set to take place next month (24-30 April), now is the perfect time to make sure you are prepared if you're likely to suffer from hay fever.

As lighter nights and warmer days approach, allergy sufferers may find themselves succumbing to symptoms such as sneezing, headaches, and itchy eyes.

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

How do allergies affect the eyes?

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

Are people who wear contact lenses worse affected?

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

What can contact lens wearers do to minimise irritation?

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

What else can specs wearers do?

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

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

WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO PICK THIS YEAR?

You may have heard us say that we believe every garden should be able to provide at least a posy of flowers or leaves every week of the year, bringing your garden indoors every week. Just pop out into your garden and see what you might bring indoors today. Lesley's Spring posy pot is full of the many blooms performing in the garden at that time. Hyacinth, Erysimum the perennial wallflower...



Spring Posy pot

Roses and then Daffodils in our bowl. If you need more ideas pick up our purple piglet project on Floating Flowers and also our leaflet of Pick Your own Flowers & Foliage next time you are in the Gardens.



Floating Daffodils

Just pop your handful of little picked delights into a glass jar, even in a jam jar they will look good. Also you might like to float flower heads in a bowlful of water, it's so easy and looks splendid. We've been enjoying Lenten

In her potager picking bed in the next couple of months we have Tulips that have been performing for the last three or four years. It's lovely to be able to pick as many as we want without spoiling displays in other parts of the garden. As they are finishing she

plants annual picking flowers between the rows of tulips to give us plenty of blooms to pick during the summer. Sometimes, if she is impatient, she starts the seeds off in the greenhouse and pops the young plants into the bed in late April. Other times if she has been too busy she will just sow the seeds in rows between the bulbs in late April. Amongst her favourites are nasturtiums, Clary Sage, Cornflowers and the dwarfish Cosmos (not the late flowering tallest ones!).



Lesley's picking garden

Last summer there was a germination of seeds from a previous crop of the annual Vipers Bugloss (Echium) which produced a carpet of bluey purple flowers in late summer. They looked great in vases alongside the pale yellow Sunflower which grows to 2m (6ft) and a regular variety of Nasturtium that was trailing along the ground with the Vipers Bugloss.



Autumn picking flowers



Dougal Philip and Lesley Watson
New Hopetoun Gardens

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www.newhopetoungardens.co.uk



WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO PICK?

WE HAVE A GREAT SELECTION OF CUTTING FLOWERS AS SEEDS, BULBS AND YOUNG PLANTS TO HELP YOU CREATE YOUR OWN PICKING BORDER THIS SUMMER PLUS SUGGESTIONS!

Images: Rebecca Holmes



CHILDREN'S THEATRE SET FOR A TRIUMPHANT RETURN

This year we are welcoming back LAMP Children's Theatre members with their first full musical production since Covid sadly prevented them performing in 2020. They had an extremely successful return to the stage last April with their 'Reignite' concert. Those of you who were able to attend, would agree that the talent, movement and general enthusiasm they displayed easily brightened up post-lockdown blues. They are now well underway with rehearsals for their upcoming show - **'High School Musical'** - which is set to be another roaring success!

Disney Channel's smash hit movie musical follows the life of Troy, Gabriella, and the rest of the students of East High as they deal with issues of first love, friends, and family while balancing their

classes and extra-curricular activities.

It's the first day after winter break at East High. All the pupils return to school, recount their vacations, and look forward to the new year. Basketball team captain Troy discovers that Gabriella, a girl he met singing karaoke on his ski trip, has just enrolled at East High. They cause an upheaval when they decide to audition for the high school musical. Although many students resent the threat posed to the "status quo," Troy and Gabriella's alliance might just open the door for others to shine as well. It is a show that is fun for the whole family and filled with upbeat numbers, such as 'Wildcat Cheer', 'Start of Something New' and 'We're All In This Together'.

The cast of High School Musical have a lot of returning members this year, but they also welcomed a number of new children following successful auditions. The singing, dancing, and general buzz around rehearsals has been a delight to listen to and watch, particularly with the fact that there have been the added props of basketballs to manoeuvre into scenes!

This year the production team of **Eddie MacLennan, Musical Director**, and **Hayley Fleming, Choreographer**, and

the company are being led by **Hannah Easton**, a former Children's Theatre member herself and a well-known host on the stage with the adult company. She also stepped up to the role of Director last year with the LAMP Adult company's 'Elf the Musical'.



LAMP Children's Theatre High School Musical will be performed in the **Linlithgow Academy Theatre** at 7:30pm on the 4th, 5th, 6th and 8th of April with a 2:30pm matinee on the 8th. Please note there will be no performance on **Good Friday (7th April)**.

Tickets can be purchased from **Ticketsource** - www.ticketsource.co.uk/linlithgowamateurmusicalproductions or by calling the **Box Office** on 07862211525. And look out for us on **social media!**

We look forward to welcoming you to the show!

Claire Withnell
President
Linlithgow Amateur Musical Productions (LAMP)

If you are interested in joining **Adult LAMP**, please email your details to lampsecretary@gmail.com to be kept informed of our next show. If your child is interested in joining **Children's Theatre** for next year's show, they need to be in P5 to S5 this August. Again, please email as per above and we can keep you informed.





KUMON LINLITHGOW KUMON CONNECT

In our last article in October we had very recently moved into our new commercial space. Now almost six months into life at 82, High Street, we look ahead to a busy year in our thriving centre as well as celebrating our 20th anniversary of helping local children reach their full potential.

At Kumon Linlithgow, we aim to give our students the skills and tools they need to enjoy learning, whether they're looking to be a little more challenged academically or could benefit from a little more support. As their Instructor, my job is to guide each student through work that I set at just the right level for them, keeping them engaged and making progress through the maths and English programmes. They study little and often through the completion of Kumon's daily worksheets and by attending weekly class sessions in the centre. Our students steadily increase their ability and fluency, building their skills in small, manageable steps and building their confidence both at school and at home.

Families can choose either the traditional paper and pencil format or digital study, with Kumon Connect. Kumon Connect makes the tried and tested worksheets even more accessible and convenient for students to study using their tablet and stylus.

The stylus allows students to hand-write their calculations and answers just as they would a pencil. The process of writing by hand and making corrections on the page has always been a key part of the Kumon method. Kumon believes that handwriting is a more complex cognitive process than using a keyboard, as it combines a neurosensory experience with fine motor skills, thus bringing together both movement and thought and aiding recall.

Since its introduction in January 2022, we've found that incorporating technology into our tried and tested materials enables us to provide even more support to our students. While they develop the skills to study independently, I'll be at their side between classes, offering individual guidance, marking their work and overseeing their corrections.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS THAT KUMON CONNECT BRINGS TO OUR STUDENTS:


1. Students can use Kumon Connect in class just like our tried and tested paper worksheets,
2. Marking for Kumon Connect is completed daily by Kumon staff, whereas marking for paper study is completed by parents at home,
3. Digital worksheets present any errors to be corrected before any new work is completed, encouraging students to learn from their mistakes,
4. Digital worksheets can be delivered and received instantaneously, meaning it's also great for holidays and for times when you can't get to the centre,
5. Parents have access to study data and results so they can better understand their child's progress through the levels,
6. Students receive helpful study hints to motivate and encourage them,
7. We can replay and view each child's home study daily rather than just once a week in class.
8. We can ensure students are on the right track and are using the correct method, adjusting study plans if necessary,
9. The playback feature allows us to see a student's process step-by-step to allow us to better understand their thought process.


PURSuing INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL IS AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO, SO THE ABILITY TO CONNECT WITH EACH CHILD USING OUR DIGITAL WORKSHEETS IS A FANTASTIC INNOVATION.

We're running a one-week free trial until **31st March** for both paper-based study and for Kumon Connect. The first step is booking your child's free, no-obligation assessment with us and, we can discuss how Kumon can benefit your child.

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GALA DAY PLANS ARE ALL IN PLACE

Following up from the draw held at Linlithgow Primary School on Thursday 2nd February, we are delighted to introduce our new Queen elect, Chief Lady and Champion.

Queen Elect - Katherine Kendall
Linlithgow Primary School

"I am thrilled about being Queen Elect this year. I attend Linlithgow Primary school and I am in Primary 6. I am 10 years old and I turn 11 in September. My hobbies are dancing, gymnastics, art and drama. I also love reading books in bed every night. When I am with animals I stick to them like a magnet. I cannot leave their company!"

"I was so shocked and happy when the doorbell rang and the ladies from the committee came to tell me I had been elected. I am really looking forward to all of the activities being the gala queen include but I am particularly excited about travelling in a carriage and being crowned queen at the Peel."

Chief Lady - Lucy Bannister
Linlithgow Primary School

"I am delighted to be picked and it is such an honour. I am looking forward to spending time and looking after the Queen who is one of my good friends."

Champion - Matthew Hinde
Springfield Primary School

"I felt overwhelmed to be picked as Champion, and I'm very excited for the big day. I am looking forward to seeing all my friends and family while riding along in the parade. I'm looking forward to being on a horse and wearing a kilt."

Crowner

Crowning the Queen this year is **Mrs Katrina Cochrane**. Katrina has lived in Linlithgow all of her life and is a long-term supporter of the Gala Day. She is director at Linlithgow Travel and has donated numerous prizes over the years to raise funds. Her daughters **Laura** and **Amy** have both been involved in the Gala Day as a Fairy and a Flower Girl.

Katrina: *"I was highly delighted and thrilled to be asked to crown this year's Queen Elect... What an honour! When Anne and Senga from the committee came to my house, I was in total shock. It took me a few days to get my head around it, then I realised it would be such an honour!"*

What is changing this year?

The procession will start at 11am this year to allow further activities for the children at the Peel. As this is one hour earlier than usual, please make sure you arrive at the Peel in time for the crowning... just follow the procession!

Fundraising Appeal

This year we are hoping to raise funds via a door to door collection as there have been cuts in West Lothian Council budgets. We want to keep the Gala Day to the standard you are all accustomed to and need additional funds to help with this. Envelopes will be provided via the Black Bitch Magazine - April edition. These envelopes will be collected with any contributions between 30th April and 7th May. Please donate if you can. No amount is too small.

FROM
30
APR

Kelly-Anne Martin

For the Gala Day Committee



JOHN BUNCLE

A REMARKABLE CHARACTER

Bruce Jamieson

One of the local history presentations I delivered in 2022 was on the subject of a fascinating character called **John Buncle**. He was born in the family home in Linlithgow High Street in the year 1798. His father, James, was Deacon of the Wrights – the man responsible for repairs to the Burgh Halls piazza and for replacing the original balustraded flat roof with a sloping one of blue slate.



The metal piazza and sloping roof of the Burgh Halls.

Interestingly, James Buncle corresponded with the head of the Edinburgh Wrights - one Deacon **William Brodie**: locksmith and Town Councillor by day; housebreaker and robber by night - the inspiration for **Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr Jeckyll /Mr Hyde**.

After an education at Linlithgow Grammar School, John Buncle began his working life in the tanning trade, eventually setting up his own leather-making establishment in partnership with **Andrew McElfrish** who had married John's sister, Elisabeth. At the age of 35, John bought out his partner and ran the local tannery himself.

His business interests obviously took up a great deal of his time and consequently he got married late (at the age of 63) to **Catherine Callender**, aged 56 - the daughter of another Linlithgow tanner who operated out of 338 High Street. The marriage took place in St Michael's Church and afterwards the couple moved into a large property called Springfield House.



An aerial view of Springfield House.

To help them run the fairly large premises, the Buncles hired a maid - in 1871 it was the 19-year-old **Elsbeth Steel** from Bo'ness. A gardener, **Robert Marshall**, was also employed to look after the ornamental garden in which was situated a natural spring, on the wellhead of which John had a marriage lintel carved with the following inscription:

JB SPRINGFIELD
CC 1861



The well head is now positioned to the west of the Oracle Building.

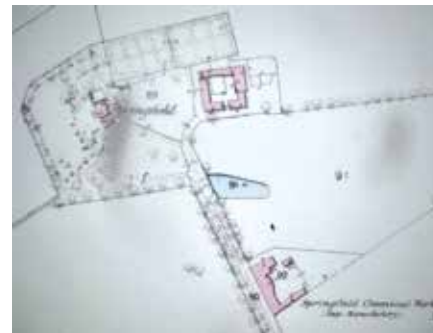
Included in the Springfield Estate was a farmhouse and steading with 80 acres of arable land which, along with a threshing mill, was leased out on a 19-year tenancy.



The still existing but unoccupied Springfield Farmhouse.

Mr Buncle specialised in the growing of roses (which he exhibited in horticultural shows) and in the breeding of rare specimens of hen. He regularly won prizes for his Cochins, Brahmas and Dorkins.

Pride of place on the Buncle estate was the Springfield Chemical Works - Buncle's Soap Factory which produced an odourless, solid block of detergent, first patented in 1855.



A 19th century map showing Springfield Farm and the Chemical Works.

Factory owner John Buncle was quite a character - well-liked by the majority of Linlithgow folk but a thorn in the flesh of those in authority. He was an outspoken man and objected vociferously to the Town Council's inefficient handling of the cholera epidemic of 1865. In 1872, he railed against the plans to demolish The Mint - the old tower near the railway, once home to the Knights of St John.



Buncle's efforts saved the Mint until it was demolished in 1885.

He also complained about the proposed renovation of St Michael's Church and the removal of the upper seating galleries, arguing that it would be impossible to trace all 130 pew owners and reallocate them seatings in the proposed new arrangement. In his usual style, he called those in favour of the project "**madmen with very depraved tastes.**" In protest at the plan, he sold off his own pew in the church - "Number 28 - with sittings for six bottoms."

Buncle tried several times to be elected on to the Linlithgow Town Council but he was never successful. On one occasion, he was told that, under the terms of the 1833 Municipal Corporations Act, he did not actually reside within the boundaries in which he could be elected. Buncle tried to argue that he did own properties in the town itself and that occasionally he slept in one of them. His plea was laughed at!

He replied by saying that if he was not within the catchment area then he should not have to pay the cess tax (rates). He backed up his case with a reference to a Town Council Minute

from 1767 in which his land was assessed for tax under the name "Lands of Flask". He argued that no such place now existed - he lived in Springfield. It was pointed out that two other landowners, **Adam Dawson** of Bonnytown and **Mr William Wilkie** of Boghall, were also initially assessed as being in the Lands of Flask - and they were still paying their dues. Mr Buncle lost his case.

At the next municipal election, he made an impassioned speech in which he compared the Council to a hive of bees - with the Queen (Provost Adam Dawson) at the heart, some worker bees who tried hard but several drones who did nothing. This received cheers from the attending public but scowls from the Councillors.

Mr Buncle did manage to get on to the Parochial Board - the agency set up to administer the Poor Law and either arrange relief for paupers or find a place for them in the Poor House.



The Linlithgow Combination Poorhouse.

Buncle constantly complained about the cost of running the institution and how badly the money was being spent. He had many runs-in with the chairman of the Board, **John Hardy**, a former Provost. Buncle often reminded him that he had been in charge when the town lost the court case against the railway company and had gone bankrupt as a result. It didn't help either that Hardy regularly beat Buncle when showing roses at local shows. At one stormy meeting, Buncle accused Hardy of connecting a hosepipe to the Cross Well and using the water to irrigate his garden during the hot summer, thus depriving the townsfolk of their water supply.



The Cross Well - in this 1907 postcard called "The Fountain."

Buncle often took matters into his own hands, as when he wrote on behalf of the Linlithgow Guildry to persuade the Railway Company to reduce carriage rates on local commodities such as tanned leather, hides - and, of course, soap! On another occasion, he took it upon

himself to commission some unemployed labourers to widen the High Street at New Well Wynd where he owned a property called Buncle's Land.



Old properties at Buncle's Land. He argued that the road was dangerous at that point, and that over the years three children had been killed there in carriage accidents. Nevertheless, the authorities complained that he had no right to do this, and the case went to court. Buncle won but was ordered to pay court expenses of £13 - a fact he dined out on when asked to speak at local social events - something he did until very close to his death in 1887 - much lamented as a colourful, local character.

FLORAL ARTS CLUB

The next meeting of the club will be on **Wednesday 15th March** in the Rose Social Club at 7.30pm with the demonstrator being David Ryland from Armathwaite, Cumbria, and this is the club Spring Competition evening.

19 APRIL

Lindsay Flarey from Dumfries as demonstrator.

17 MAY

It is our AGM to be followed by a demonstration by Louise Jones from Wallasey, Cheshire.

Come along and enjoy a friendly evening with beautiful flowers followed by tea or coffee.



Hetty Redwood, Chair



LONG COVID SUPPORT GROUP

Do you, or a loved one, struggle with Long Covid? We are setting up a support group to meet for tea, coffee (possibly cake), and a chat with people who understand what you're going through.



It's free!



2.30pm 2nd Friday of the month
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TEL. 07505 877195

LADAS SPRING IS ON ITS WAY!

With the ever lengthening days, primroses are beginning to show their heads. Weeds are also beginning to show through at the allotment! This is a sure sign that we need to prep the beds for crops going in if we haven't already done so. This is also an ideal time to mulch beds with organic matter. I am seeing manure being heaped on plots and left to rot down before digging in. Mulch in the form of soil improver can be bought from local garden centres or in bulk from local suppliers. Added organic material such as kelp provides plants with some feed giving them a really good start. Some of us, who have planted green manure to overwinter, will be cutting down and digging in to enrich the soil.



The allotments are looking well-tended and some plot holders have already begun some crops under cloches. Cloches are low enclosures used to cover plants, helping to shield plants from harsh weather and pest attack and they create a warm microclimate that will help seedlings to germinate. They protect young plants and crops in the colder months of the year. Putting cloches over the ground before planting or sowing is often advised to warm up the soil. It is cold soil, not cold air, that slows down growth and germination. Cloches can be expensive but even some strong polythene over some plastic or metal hoops can be effective. Just make sure they are well pegged down to guard against their being blown away in the wind!

I am still picking flower sprouts (kalettes), carrots and parsnips that have overwintered and leeks (I always plant too many leeks!). One of the plot holders gave me a black radish that I've never grown. I confess I hadn't heard of this vegetable before. From a search on the internet I found black radish are very beneficial for health (for example great for skin health, liver function and our immune system). I will be buying some seeds and trying these out this year!

Having the opportunity to share ideas, discuss our growing successes and failures, as well as just having a chat is what makes our allotment site such a great place to be. There is always someone to ask for advice. We even have a resident robin if there is no one else around!



We are delighted to announce that after a few years with a closed waiting list the list is now open. If you wish to know more about how you can join us at Oakwell go to the website <https://linlithgowallotments.wordpress.com/membership> Even if you are not with an allotment but are keen to grow some vegetables at home, here are some jobs to do now.



Jobs for March:

March is a busy time for vegetable plots. It is still too early to sow seeds outside without some form of protection against the elements. Keep an eye on the weather!

>> You can start chitting potatoes in week 1 although it is not essential to do this

for maincrop tatties. ('Chitting' means making the seed potato sprout by putting it in a light, cool but frost-free place with most of the eyes pointing upwards; egg boxes are ideal for this). Opinion is divided on whether or not to chit; some say that it is a waste of time but we always do it as it is a convenient way to keep seed potatoes until planting out time as storing them in the dark will make them grow long, weedy sprouts.

- >> If you haven't already done so, sow summer cabbages and lettuce indoors in week 1.
- >> Sow Broad Beans in pots or root trainers inside in week 1 for planting out later. Sutton Dwarf, only growing to 45 cm, is ideal for small gardens or windy sites like ours.
- >> Sow early types of Peas such as 'Meteor' or 'Douce Provence' outside under cloches in week 1. Or again these can be started in root trainers or gutters. (Fill a length of square guttering with compost and push the peas in about every 3-5 cm, water, keep in a greenhouse or cold frame until they germinate, making sure they don't dry out. Plant out when large enough (about 15 cm high). You may still need to cloche to protect them from the weather. On our allotment mice and voles will eat pea seeds which is why we tend to grow on and then plant out.
- >> In week 2 sow broad beans outside under a cloche but note what I have said about sowing peas outside as mice and voles will give beans the same treatment.
- >> In week 2 prepare the soil in your plot/garden for courgettes, pumpkins and squashes. To do this, dig a planting pocket for each plant about a spade's depth and about 30cm square. Fill the hole with well-rotted manure or compost ready for receiving your plants in June.



Please note the website address for the LADAS is now linlithgowallotments.wordpress.com



Val Corry,
Chair LADAS





IPL (INTENSE PULSED LIGHT)

IPL is a quick, easy, and non-intrusive method of skin rejuvenation. It can be used to reduce or remove various lesions on the face or body:

Vascular lesions Red vein removal can provide a long-term solution to facial problem's such as general red flushing and Rosacea, small red thread vessels, cherry angiomas/red spots (blood spots), spider naevi and port wine stains, campbell de morgan spots, liver spots etc.

The IPL light targets and is readily absorbed by blood vessels, heating them to a point where they are destroyed. Following treatment, the vessels clear as they are reabsorbed by the body, leaving little or no trace of the original lesion.

or

Pigmented lesions Flat pigmented lesions such as sun damage, age/sun spots, freckles and solar lentigenes etc can be successfully removed creating a clearer, brighter, and more youthful appearance.

The IPL light targets and is absorbed by the high concentration of melanin found within pigmented lesions. The rapid absorption of light energy heats the melanin and causes the destruction of the melanin-rich cells.

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LINLITHGOW 41 CLUB



Following the installation of two new members, Alastair Campbell and Eric Moffat, gin was the topic for the Linlithgow and District 41 Club recent meeting held at the local gin club.

Newly installed, Alastair gave an interesting and knowledgeable talk on the origins of gin detailing its naval connections, the various types of gin and how they were each made. He described the 'Gin Palaces' of London as being out of control and how gin became known as 'Mothers Ruin' before the Temperance Movement brought back some semblance of normality to the city.

A generous gin tasting, including the mixing and sampling of various cocktails and a lesson on the making of Limoncello brought much conviviality to the occasion! James McCallum thanked the speaker for giving a splendid presentation and for hosting an excellent sampling session. A good meal rounded off the evening.




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*“it is still very much a positive market
for house sellers”*



Image: cgh creative

In the last issue of the magazine we gave our views on how the housing market would perform in 2023, and so far this year the activity we have seen and the results we have achieved are in line with our predictions.

As we write this article, we have set 8 closing dates since the beginning of the year, and one property in particular went under offer recently for a figure that was 17% above the asking price.

So, it is still very much a positive market for house sellers and as we head towards spring when typically more buyers enter the market, we thought, if you are thinking of selling, it might be useful to give some advice on how to choose an estate agent.

The best agent for you is the agent that you are able to trust to guide you through the process. A few indicators of a good agent are:

Industry qualifications and professional memberships

These can include being members of or holding qualifications from:

>> NAEA Propertymark naea.co.uk

>> Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) rics.org

>> The Guild of Professional Estate Agents guildproperty.co.uk

All members are required to work to agreed codes of practice and the relevant logo will be displayed in their offices. You can check on the trade body websites to ensure an agent is a member if you have any doubts. As part of being a professional and holding membership, there are a number of key areas an agent needs to ensure are in place:

>> Professionalism and Training– Agents will need to maintain professional standards by ensuring that their staff have a minimum level of on-going training to keep up to date with their skills.

>> Redress Schemes – All member agents will be part of a redress scheme. If you have a complaint about their services and you are unable to resolve it with the company directly, you can refer your complaint to the redress scheme and they will adjudicate in order to resolve the dispute.

>> Reputation– Agents have to uphold their reputation to maintain their business and therefore need to take a professional approach to their work.

>> Knowing their client– As part of taking on a new seller and buyer, an agent will need to collect some basic information and identity documentation so that they know who they

are dealing with.

>> Compliant – Being registered with HMRC to ensure they comply with all the obligations under the money laundering regulations

A strong local presence; Knowing the local market is key to getting the best price for your property and if your agent has an identifiable local presence this will help reach the maximum number of buyers. Sold boards locally will demonstrate what they have sold, along with a comprehensive website and portal listings.

Recommendations; As with most professional services, a recommendation from neighbours or friends is a great endorsement of an agent’s services. Increasingly there are now review style websites that will give you both positive and negative feedback on an agent.

Marketing; People buy their next home not just with their head but with their heart as well, and a professional agent’s marketing of their client’s property should appeal to both. The way a property is presented, photographed, described, how an agent conducts viewings can all have a significant impact on the outcome for seller clients, so it is important to consider this when choosing an agent.



Hello I'M BREAGH

Breagh's owner describes her as loyal, curious, protective, affectionate, loveable. A 'busy breed', or more accurately Zebedee on speed! She is effortlessly adorable - apart from when she rolls in the unmentionables! - and she cannot imagine life without her pet.

She makes her owner smile by giving herself a back scratch/massage walking under the hedge really enjoying it! Breagh's joy at rolling in the snow and frost creating her own canine-shaped snow angels! Tilting her head trying to understand what on earth her owner is rambling on about! Doing a fabulous recall - no better sight than your dog racing back to be by your side. Gingerly paddling rather than swimming (like her owner she's not keen on getting her hair wet!) And when she is super-keen to please, so focused on the treat in hand, without having to be asked will perform every trick she knows!

Breagh's hobbies are playing 'Find it!', orientation games; leg weaves; the beach at Tentsmuir Sands, digging, walking with her dog walker, who she absolutely adores, and her canine pals!

When she wants her owner's attention, she picks up her blanket and toys and does a 'posh walk' to take everything outside - 'retrieving' clothing from the washing machine and parading it through the house and in the garden! Her favourite toys

are Nelly (grey squeaky elephant) and Ernie (Ermintrude, squeaky cow) and fav game is 'cardboard chaos'.

Her happy place is home: snuggled up on the sofa in the conservatory, lying next to (or on!) her owner for a cuddle and a scratch, finding a sunny spot in the garden to sunbathe, or watching the world go by from the living room window. Out and about she loves the beach and Witchcraig at Beecraigs, or anywhere she can chase squirrels and run through heather and bracken.

Breagh's owner has been vigilant in monitoring her health, she says:

"When she was only a few months old, Breagh started having some little collapses when we were walking. After various tests and a referral to the Dick Vet Hospital, it was determined that she has a slightly enlarged heart. Thankfully she is absolutely fine but it was a very frightening time. I had to focus and prioritise loose leash walking as excessive pulling was likely to trigger a collapse, not an easy feat with a bundle of bouncing fun with an inquisitive nose! One of my friends said that Breagh has a bigger heart because she has so much love to give - obviously I agree!"

Her advice for other owners is:

"Always always trust your instinct and take your pet to the vet if you have any concerns at all. You will not be wasting your vet's time and you could potentially be saving your pet's life. You know your pet best and any changes in habit, temperament or behaviour, however

small, may indicate that something is wrong."

For 2023 she is most looking forward to celebrating Breagh's third birthday; enjoying more staycations and cherishing their time together.

Like Breagh's owner, if you have any concerns about your pet always book a check up with the vet. Some pets are good at hiding things and often little changes can be easily missed.

To help keep your pet in their best health there are lots of things owners can do at home. If you familiarise yourself with things which are normal then it can be easier to note any changes or signs that here should be checked out. Here are a few very basic pet checks:

>> *Nose should be moist and soft, clear, free from any snot or discharge,*

>> *Pets should be able to breathe freely.*

>> *Eyes should be bright, clear, comfortably open. Free from tears or discharge and there shouldn't be a lot of tear staining. Area around the eyeball (conjunctiva) should be salmon pink.*

>> *Ears should be fleshy pink colour inside. Free from smells, have no build-up of wax or excessive hair and ear flap flat.*

>> *Teeth should be clean, white. Free from cracks or breaks, staining.*

>> *Pets should have fresh breath - bad breath should always be checked.*

>> *Gums should be moist, free from lumps, bumps, growths. Fleshy pink colour although some pets will have darker pigments in their mouths, making their gums look darker - it's best to check what's normal for them. Coat should be in good condition and free from parasites, matts, bald patches, dandruff.*

>> *Skin should be free from any rashes, lumps and bumps, itchiness, abnormal gait or movement. Free from wounds, growths, excessive licking.*

>> *Limbs should move freely and evenly. Free from limping, skipping, abnormal gait or movement. Free from wounds, growths, excessive licking.*

>> *Tail should move freely, not have any sores, rash or faeces on rear, and no abnormalities or changes in normal movement.*

>> *Eating, drinking, toilet routine, sleeping and behaviour - any changes should be checked by a vet.*

Regular check ups at the vet and at home are an excellent way to ensure your pet is in their best health. To book a healthcheck or if you have any concerns contact Westport Vets: 01506 844165. For enquiries email: surgery@westportvets.com.



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