



LOWPORT CENTRE

BACK UNDER COMMUNITY CONTROL P7.

ONE LINLITHGOW BID PREPARATIONS FOR BALLOT P4.

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LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

BLACK



ESTD. 2011

LINLITHGOW'S NEWS BY LINLITHGOW'S PEOPLE

BITCH

ISSUE NO. 103 JAN 2024

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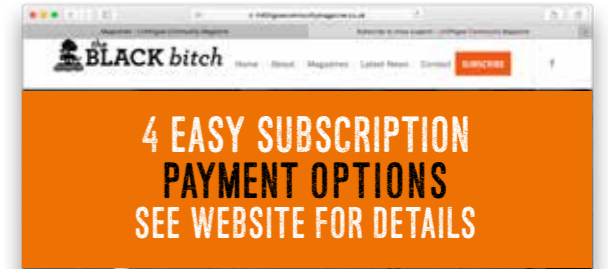
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We hope you all enjoyed welcoming in 2024, a New Year which seems likely to be a year of interesting developments in our local community and the wider world.

In our own community this issue carries two stories of significance for the year ahead and beyond as well as other insights into community activities and interests.

The first article to highlight is the **One Linlithgow Business Improvement District's** report on the upcoming re-ballot seeking approval for a third term and the second is the confirmation of the handover of the keys to the **Low Port Centre** to Heather Begarnie, Chair of Trustees, to mark the beginning of a new life for a highly valued community facility.

The significance of the first article is set against a backdrop of the continuing slow decline of public funds being allocated for investment in local communities, a situation which is unlikely to be reversed in the short term. Since it was set up, the businesses which form One Linlithgow Business Improvement District have worked in collaboration with each other to help plug this gap by generating funds to re-invest for the benefit of the local community at large. That is why it is important that this local organisation continues to exist. The outline of the case for a successful re-ballot is presented in the One Linlithgow article on pages 4 and 5.

The second development of special note is the return of the Low Port Centre to community control. Built in 1987 by Lothian Regional Council as an outdoor pursuits centre and originally run by a committee of community members it reverted to Council management in 1997. At its peak, with an accommodation facility and café, it was a highly popular centre with visitors young and old, from far and near. Under the enthusiastic management of St John's Church it can look forward to a return as a valued community resource. On page 7, read Heather Begarnie and Andy Clark's thoughts on the day on which the keys were handed over.

On page 16 the **Super Scribblers** - a co-operation between pupils of Springfield Primary and Low Port Primary - remind us of popular events in the Linlithgow diary for the first half of 2024 - build them into your plans now!

The eagerly awaited news on the application to open a **new pharmacy** in the town is the subject of an article by the Community Council on page 8.

Fairtrade Linlithgow, the 4th Fairtrade town in Scotland, celebrates its 20th birthday this year and reviews their achievements over that period while encouraging everyone to play their part in ensuring producers are paid fairly. Their article is on page 25.

Linlithgow Amateur Musical Productions introduce "a must-see cabaret in Linlithgow" scheduled for 23rd and 24th February. It's a full-fledged social event and full details are provided on page 18.

The Uganda Childbirth Injury Fund is a Scottish-based charity dedicated to helping women suffering permanent injuries during childbirth. Ishbel Campbell is a registered nurse in General Practice locally and explains the work being carried out by the Injury Fund in Uganda. This article, on page 10, does not make for easy reading but certainly should make everyone aware of how privileged we are to have the National Health Service.

Our regular feature "**Folk Fae Lithgae**" tells the story of history-making Catriona Grant who has become the first woman to fulfil the role of Clerk to the Deacons' Court; **Bruce Jamieson** takes a trip down memory lane to tell us what happens when "Robert Burns comes to Town"; keen gardeners have **New Hopetoun Gardens** and **Linlithgow & District Allotment Society** for tips and hints; and the first season of the **Linlithgow Tourism Initiative** proved to be a great success and sets the team up for the new season.

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION

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ONE LINLITHGOW

A BIG DECISION FOR LINLITHGOW BUSINESSES IN 2024.

As we head into a new year and reflect on the events of 2023, the businesses in Linlithgow will soon be asked their honest and frank opinions about their Business Improvement District (BID) – One Linlithgow.

Businesses will be provided with a four-year progress report towards the end of February and will be given a chance to have their say about the achievements of One Linlithgow since October 2019.

Towards the middle of the year, around 350 businesses will be given the opportunity to vote in favour or against the One Linlithgow Ltd BID in a well-established, democratic process that has been in existence for over 15 years in Scotland.

The result will determine whether there is a BID to implement many projects that are perceived as paid for by the Local Authority. This includes all the festive lights along the High Street each year and the full operation of the CCTV cameras in the town and Mill Road Industrial Estate.

Burgh Beautiful will be anticipating the result of the vote as it will determine if there is funding from the BID for another 5- years for the plants around the town.

Evelyn Noble, chair of the One Linlithgow BID said "Continued support for One Linlithgow BID provides a great opportunity to work together and make the changes we all want. The cost to our businesses is low and through One Linlithgow we can maintain access to external assistance and funding not available to individual businesses. Supporting the BID means we can preserve what we have already put in place and work together to build on our achievements to date and enhance the reputation of our town. Since 2019 we have achieved that despite a global pandemic, but we must continue to work together to achieve even more."

BUSINESS AS USUAL

While businesses are deciding on the future of Linlithgow, the BID team are continuing to promote the town as a quality destination to visit.

As we look forward to an uncertain year, the One Linlithgow team and directors hope they are given the opportunity to continue with the achievements to date. For more information about the BID, see OneLinlithgow.com



WHAT DID ONE LINLITHGOW DO ON THE RUN UP TO CHRISTMAS?

TESCO COLLABORATION

In late 2023, One Linlithgow was approached by Tesco as one of biggest levy paying businesses offering to help with any activities. As a national company they are very supportive of BIDS throughout the UK as they recognise the tangible benefits they can provide.

As a result, the BID secured a dedicated One Linlithgow information rack at the checkout in Tesco, where circa 25,000 people a week pass through. The rack was able to promote the inaugural Linlithgow "Christmas Dinner Trail" that many children enjoyed throughout December. Congratulations to the lucky winner of the £25 West Lothian Gift Card - **Kathryn**, this year's Gala Queen.

The information rack also contains the latest Linlithgow Visitor Guide, Coffee and Cake Trail as well as the West Lothian Gift Card "LoadThiscard.com" facility.

LOYALTY LOTTERY

The well-established One Linlithgow Loyalty Lottery, and the special festive version was well supported once again by the local community. The £100, £50 and £25 winners have all claimed their prizes that can be spent in local businesses around Linlithgow into this year.

LINLITHGOW ADVERT SKY TV



Throughout December up to Christmas Eve, many readers may have caught a viewing of the 30 second advert for Linlithgow that was broadcast locally. The results of the analysis from

Sky Adsmart demonstrated that 145,277 viewings of at least 23 seconds of the advert were recorded. To understand how this works, type "how does Sky Adsmart work" into Google.

ARTISAN MARKET

The December market was a great success, with a number of local businesses taking a One Linlithgow subsidised stall or table in the Hub. After more than a year of funding secured by One Linlithgow to get the market established after the pandemic, it has now become an established monthly event for Linlithgow, attracting people from central Scotland to visit our town.

STREET BANNERS

13 lamp-post banners have been commissioned and now installed around Linlithgow, with more secure fixings so they can stand the test of time and provide a much better impression of the town to visitors. One Linlithgow will continue to manage the banners around key events, by working with the organisers of Party at the Palace and Beecraigs Festive Forest.



THE VENNEL VISION

We reported in the November issue about a public vote to secure funding for the Vennel to develop this area of Linlithgow. The "Place Based Capital Grant Community Choices" fund received over 4,000 votes for worthy projects across West Lothian, and the Vennel Vision project received 327 votes. Although the BID was unsuccessful in securing funding, all is not lost as BIDS can dedicate time and resources to leveraging in other sources of funding. The BID team will continue to work with local groups to review and develop the vision whilst aiming to find the funds to make the project happen.

STAFF CHANGES

One Linlithgow are sad to report that **Sally MacIntosh-Anderson** has moved on from her work in One Linlithgow. After five years getting the BID concept established in Linlithgow, Sally has decided on a career change. On behalf of all the businesses that Sally has helped over the last 5 years, we would like to extend a big thank you and best wishes.

We would also like to extend a belated welcome to **Katie Llewellyn** who has been contracted to focus on generating localised content for our social media channels, primarily Facebook and Instagram. Katie's role is to visit businesses to generate new content and share any interesting content from business owners.

WELCOME AND GOODBYE

A warm welcome to **M&S Foodhall** that will be opening in Stockbridge Retail Park in Linlithgow on 25th January following a £10m investment in Scotland this year. 60 new jobs will be created in the local area, and local manager **Brian Torley** is looking forward to welcoming the community to the new store. One Linlithgow will be touching base to introduce the BID and provide information about the local community.

A goodbye from the High Street to **Tracey Victoria** who are relocating their business to the Mill Road Ind Estate following a recent announcement. They have been trading in the High Street for a number of years.

THE BRAEHEAD BUSINESS UNITS

Hidden away from the main High Street on Braehead Road, across from Linlithgow Rose football club, a small number of businesses work away providing services to their loyal client base.



These are the professional services we might need from time to time or on a regular basis. Check out their websites for more information.

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Folk Fae Lithgae CATRIONA GRANT

Two months ago, Catriona Grant made history when she became the first woman to hold the position of Clerk to the Deacons' Court, the body which maintains the traditions of the Riding of the Marches and organises all the events associated with the historic day on the 'first Tuesday after the second Thursday in June'.

Born in 1959, Catriona has spent all her life in Linlithgow and grew up with the Marches traditions. Her Dad and Uncle were very involved in preparing decorated vehicles and some of her earliest Marches memories involve seeing vehicles being built at Newlands' Agricultural Engineers on the Edinburgh Road, where her dad worked. She loved to go to the judging at the Low Port on Marches morning and distinctly remembers, as an excited four year old, being mesmerised by the magnificent rocket, complete with lady astronaut, which the Brookside Metal Company built to mark the voyage of the first woman in space in June 1963. A few years later, Catriona took part in the procession as part of the local Brownies, with school friends Jill Thom and Jill Younger, under the watchful eye of 'Brown Owl,' Barbara Braithwaite.

For many years, the Marches was considered in some quarters to be very much a "man's day," but in more recent times, there has been a growing involvement of women, culminating in the election of Liz Park as the first female

Provost in November 2021. With Catriona's appointment, it means that the Deacons' Court's two most important positions are now held by women for the first time. This is a significant development as the organisation approaches its fiftieth anniversary.

Liz and Catriona go back a long way, having started school on the same day in April 1964 and having been in the same class all the way through Primary. They also served on the Gala Day committee together and have been colleagues on the Deacons' Court over the last twenty years.

Catriona explained what her new job entails:

"It's about being the first port of call for contacting the Deacons' Court, taking care of all the organisation, mostly of the Marches Day itself, whether it's bands, invitations, catering, transport, contact with local authorities, police, or whatever,"

"In many ways, my ten-year stint as secretary and then Chair of the Gala Day committee has given me a good grounding into dealing with all the various agencies and an insight into what the role of the Clerk is."

Catriona is very much looking forward to Marches Day on Tuesday June 18th and is eagerly anticipating her role at the Provost's Breakfast:

"When I announce the guests into the hall will be when I really feel that I am now the Clerk. The Marches is a huge

event and I think there are a lot of headaches with it. I am under no illusions about organising seating plans, carriages, trailers, and making sure everybody is happy. I have been lucky in that I have shadowed my predecessor, Ross McIntosh, over the past year and it has been invaluable to draw on his extensive experience."

Ross carried out the duties of Clerk for fourteen years and his long service was marked with the presentation of a commemorative quach at the annual general meeting in November.

Preparations for this year's Marches are now well underway and the first fundraising event of the year takes place on Friday January 26th with the annual Burns Supper. Four weeks later, the popular Sportsman's Dinner will be held in the Rose Club.

**FRI
26
JAN**

Full details of all Marches-related activities can be found on the Deacons' Court Facebook page.



Murdoch Kennedy



THE LOW PORT CENTRE - A NEW ERA BEGINS

The 8 January 2024 was a momentous day in the life of the Low Port Centre. Heather Begarnie, LPC Chair of Trustees, collected the keys to the Centre from West Lothian Council.

Commenting on the significance of the day, Heather explained, "We first viewed the Low Port Centre in December 2020 and there are times when we wondered if this day would ever come! Many people have worked very hard over these years and it is now amazing to have the keys and the opportunity to bring the Low Port Centre alive again. Thank you to West Lothian Council for all they have done to support this project and make the building compliant."

It is now 'full steam ahead' with phase one of the refurbishment work and a team of volunteers, as well as contractors, will be working to refurbish the main hall ready for use in the coming weeks. The volunteers working on the refurbishment are primarily from St John's Church, which has been instrumental in getting the project to this stage. St John's Church will also be using the Low Port Centre for their church services and for office space. It is anticipated that the Centre will be reopened for community groups to use within the next couple of months.

Speaking about the refurbishment work, Andy Clark, LPC Project Lead, commented: "We're so excited to be starting refurb work at the Low Port Centre. Very soon we'll be able to reopen and welcome community groups and

businesses from across the region."

There are rooms available for community groups and businesses to use on an hourly basis and the Low Port Centre are keen to hear from any community groups that might be interested in using their facilities on a regular basis. If you would like to enquire about hiring on a weekly basis contact: info@lowportcentre.org



The Low Port Centre website is now live and you can find information on how to hire a room, the opening times for the Centre as well as other helpful information about the vision of the project there: www.lowportcentre.org



Heather Begarnie, LPC Chair of Trustees, collects the keys to the Low Port Centre.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION FOR A NEW LINLITHGOW PHARMACY

When local resident and pharmacist, **Tom Byrne**, believed that the two pharmacies in the town were overwhelmed and unable to provide the full range of NHS pharmaceutical services required he approached the Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council (LLBCC) to gauge support for a new pharmacy.

Unsurprisingly the proposal to establish a new pharmacy was fully and enthusiastically supported by LLBCC, with many at the meeting detailing the challenges they were continuing to experience in the town when accessing NHS pharmaceutical services.

On learning that NHS Lothian would consider LLBCC to be an interested party in the application, would be consulted regarding the proposal and be entitled to participate in the Pharmacy Practice Committee (PPC) hearing to decide the application, LLBCC mobilised its resources to ensure the voice of the community was heard.

LLBCC facilitated public meetings and discussions regarding the pharmacy application with the community by having the application as a standing item on its agenda at monthly meetings. These meetings allowed Tom Byrne to collaborate with LLBCC, the community and the three town councillors to construct an irrefutable case for the new pharmacy.

As part of the application process there was a requirement for a joint consultation between the applicant (TPB Partnership LLP), NHS Lothian and the residents of Linlithgow to determine the community's thoughts on current services and the requirement for new services. LLBCC used its Facebook page to advertise the joint public consultation between TPB Partnership and NHS Lothian, encouraging as many people as possible in the town to respond with their thoughts. This activity, combined with an article in a previous edition of the Black Bitch, resulted

in 709 responses from residents and organisations. This is the highest number of responses ever received by NHS Lothian for a pharmacy joint consultation, with over 95% of respondents stating there were gaps and deficiencies in the current services and a new pharmacy was required.

LLBCC supplemented the joint consultation between the TPB Partnership and NHS Lothian by running their own poll on their Facebook page. This poll generated in excess of 730 responses over 97% of which stated a new pharmacy was required in the town.



LLBCC have continued to work with Tom and the TPB Partnership LLP to garner further support for the new pharmacy and ensure the wishes of the community were fully considered when the Pharmacy Practice Committee (PPC) considered the application. To that end Graeme Grant and Chris Cook represented the LLBCC at the PPC hearing on September 26th when they were able to question the TPB Partnership on their plans for the new pharmacy, question existing service providers, Boots and Lloyds, on their objections to the new pharmacy and make a statement to the PPC on the community's thoughts and requirements.

The statement made by LLBCC, along with their broader engagement in the application process, were pivotal in influencing the decision of the PPC that a new pharmacy was required to ensure adequate provision of pharmaceutical services in Linlithgow. NHS Lothian then issued a formal letter of award to TPB Partnership LLP.

CURRENT POSITION

Despite objections from Boots and Lloyds, NHS Lothian's PPC unanimously agreed that a new pharmacy is required in Linlithgow to ensure adequacy of service provision in the town. However, both Boots and Lloyds have chosen to appeal that decision. While Tom and the TPB Partnership LLP have not been informed of the grounds of appeal these must be related to an error in law or in the procedure undertaken by the PPC in reaching its decision.

Appeals are heard by the National Appeal Panel (NAP) which currently does not have a Chair although there is an active recruitment process underway. When the NAP hears the appeal they can dismiss it, if it is considered to be baseless, or they can instruct a partial or full rehearing of the initial application. Inevitably there will be a delay in securing the additional pharmacy services that LLBCC, Linlithgow Health Centre, the three elected members of West Lothian Council, MSP, MP and NHS Lothian agree are required.

The NAP is a Scottish Government function and residents who are concerned with the ongoing delays in this process should make their thoughts known to their local MSP and to NHS Lothian.

Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council

SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF COMMUNITY TOURISM INITIATIVE AT BURGH HALLS



In summer season 2023 Linlithgow's Volunteer Visitor Group set up its stall for the first time in the main reception area of the historic Burgh Halls.

The self-starting Group picked up on what had been a Community Council proposal which did not survive the Covid lockdowns. The Group had the aim of welcoming visitors to the town and helping them to appreciate its 600 year history as a Royal Burgh and County Town of Linlithgowshire.

In its first season, the initiative operated on three days a week in two, 2 hour shifts from 11.00am till 1.00pm

and 1.00pm till 3.00pm, conveniently based just beside the Burgh Halls Cafe.

The Group reported excellent footfall, and within a few weeks had spoken to visitors from every continent across the globe. Some sent lovely messages afterwards, and others have contacted the Group to ask further questions - usually family heritage based.

Alan Mowat, of Historic Environment Scotland based at Linlithgow Palace, had provided the Group with great support and interest in the project leading to the ambition to widen this service to Blackness Castle as well.

Many of the visitors were on short term trips, e.g. Outlander, and specialised film location tours which gave them limited time options, but we also had many local visitors and people from elsewhere in the UK too, with more time to explore.

This year, 2024, beginning just before Easter weekend, following the great success of 2023, we aim to re-commence the service, and hopefully this year over five days a week. Primarily we hope to focus on the medieval High Street, and its environs, and are producing a specific leaflet to highlight its story to follow the really successful 2023 leaflet. It had covered two walks around the Loch - a shorter easy one, and the complete walk.

Demand required it to be reprinted a couple of times, and there is a budget available this year to cover a High Street leaflet too.

These ambitious plans will of course require additional volunteer support. The Group is well aware that many groups in town are in the same position so are appealing for those with an interest in the Town's history and heritage to get in touch and find out a bit more about what is involved in the role.

So, if you like the sound of setting aside just a couple of hours a week to join, and enjoy chatting to new people, please get in touch with Jill at: jill@maddingcrowdlinlithgow.com to say hello and find out what it's all about. With the added bonus of not only receiving a free T shirt on joining you will also have the opportunity to learn more about the ancient Burgh which is your home.

Finally, Jill says "We all enjoyed it so much last year, whether it's just meeting people or sharing the town's heritage. We were all proud to feel we were a part of it."

LINLITHGOW'S VOLUNTEER VISITOR GROUP

THE WALK FOR JOCK

CHARITY GROUP LOOKS FORWARD TO AN EVENTFUL YEAR

Members of local charity group "The Walk for Jock" are

looking forward to another busy year, as they gear up for their annual assault on the West Highland Way.

Plans are already in place for the walk at the beginning of September and a list of participants has been drawn up. The trip has now become so popular that a waiting list has been established for 2025.

The "Jockers" rounded off a very successful fundraising year in 2023 by launching an appeal in November to help the West Lothian Food Bank. By the time it closed, a van was loaded to the brim with goods and sent to the Foodbank to help local people in real need at Christmas.

Not only did they receive donations of food, but people also kindly donated £400, and the committee pitched in with another £400 from the proceeds of the walk last September.

Claire Kirkwood of the group told me: "In total, we must have packed up about

£1500 worth of goods for the Food Bank and the van was packed full. As well as the all the food parcels donated, we were able to buy a whole host of essential foods and much-needed toiletries. We can't thank everyone enough for their support. Within an hour of the van arriving, I had received a call from the Food Bank staff who were absolutely delighted."



A generous donation from 'Walk for Jock' has allowed Cycling Without Age Scotland Linlithgow Chapter (CWAS) to purchase a cold weather kit for one of their Trishaws. The kit consists of two winter

jackets and a duvet cover.

A spokesperson told me: "This will allow us to wrap up our passengers nice and cosy and thus be able to take them out from April to December extending our season by two months this year. As we solely rely on donations from the local community, this will truly enhance the passenger experience as well as allowing our fabulous volunteers to take more of the elderly and people with mobility issues out and about Linlithgow. We are deeply indebted to all the "Jockers" for their continuing support."

"Walk for Jock's" desire to kit out all the football teams in the local primary schools has taken a further step, with full sets of strips being donated to Low Port PS and Linlithgow PS. Those schools not already in receipt of kit will receive theirs later in the year.

Saturday March 9th is a major date in the calendar for the group, as that is when the presentation of cheques from the 2023 walk will take place in the Rose Social Club. This will be a major social occasion for everyone. Full details will be available on the Facebook page and other social media platforms.

SAT
9
MAR



Nurse teaching session

ISHBEL HELPS THE WOMEN OF UGANDA

Ishbel Campbell has been a resident in Linlithgow for the past twenty five years and works as a registered nurse in General Practice in West Lothian.

Her friend Mhairi Collie, a surgeon in Edinburgh, is involved with a Scottish-based charity called "The Uganda Childbirth Injury Fund", which is dedicated to helping women who have suffered permanent injuries during childbirth. Mhairi invited Ishbel to travel with her to the east African country to assist with the nursing care at obstetric fistula camps and she now visits regularly.

"We operate on and care for some of the poorest and most marginalised women in the world. During the birth process, when labour becomes obstructed, in this country women would have access to a caesarean section leading to a healthy baby and mother. However, in Uganda, due to very limited access to safe maternity care, the same scenario results in a stillborn baby and damage to the birth canal for the bereaved mother. Most of these women are left leaking urine and/or faeces continuously from the hole, an 'obstetric fistula' that has formed between their bladder and/or bowel and vagina when their baby has been stuck during delivery.

The consequences of these injuries mean that the women will end up living in isolation as they are ostracised from their communities due to their poor condition and smell. Their partners leave, they are unable to work or live independently and often need to be cared for by a member of their family. When I talk of these women, it should be noted that many are as young as 16."



Ugandan surgeon with his patients

Mhairi, Ishbel and their nursing colleagues run surgical camps to cure these patients and work alongside local surgeons and nurses. Adverts go out locally on radios and TV about 4 weeks before the camp takes place inviting women who are leaking urine or faeces to attend for treatment. To help the local teams provide care, The Uganda Childbirth Injury Fund has taken out basic items that will aid with infection control. These have included bed sheets and home-made theatre gowns, that have included some in tartan fabric to celebrate the UK link. They also regularly fund raise to be able to continue the work.

Ishbel told me:

"I work on the ward alongside the nurses looking after these women when they arrive for screening, before and after surgery. I began to realise that many of the post-operative problems that arise such as infections or failed repair sites occur because the local nurses are not trained to look after the women adequately. Teaching on the ward has thus been a big part of my role within the team, trying to improve the standard of nursing care".



The fistula ward, Kamuli Mission Hospital

"Over the past few years, we have been trying to formalise the nursing care of these patients to introduce a standard of care that can be replicated in other hospitals which run fistula surgery camps. We have been mindful of the challenges that the local nurses face and have adapted what would be considered standard care in western countries, to the realities of what is available in the context. I have written a textbook on nursing care which has been published and is available online. Added to this, with the support of a Ugandan surgeon and two local fistula nurse trainers (the 2 Joans) we have developed a competency-based training plan and produced a few videos on key aspects of the nursing care".

Ishbel and her team are now training nurses from all over Uganda in fistula nursing care which is proving to be a great success with the nurses able to go back to their own hospitals and teach their colleagues.



The two Joans



Fistula Nurse Trainees

In May they were nominated as a team and shortlisted for the 'Nursing Now' category in the Burdett Nursing Trust Awards. Ishbel is delighted to report that they won the category as 'The Kamuli Fistula Nurse Team' and received a substantial grant to develop the nurse training further with the aim of replicating the training in other fistula affected countries in Africa.



Accepting Burdett Award on behalf of the team

"Being a part of this journey and being able to look after them is by no means easy but is very humbling. Seeing the nurses gain confidence in their newfound skills and the impact this is having on their patients is an immense privilege. Many of these women have lived with incontinence for years before attending for treatment. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing the smile on the faces of the women when they are discharged home dry to start a new life".



Kamuli fistula team with the Burdett trust award

Further information about the Uganda Childbirth Injury Fund can be found on the group's website: www.ucif.co.uk

Murdoch Kennedy



Linlithgow and District 41 Club

November meeting with guest speaker - Ross McIntosh

Linlithgow and District 41 Club held their November meeting in the local Golf Club where Ross McIntosh, Clerk to the Deacon's Court, was guest speaker.

Ross, who has been in the role covering five Provosts - which he describes as 'A very long time' followed Jim McGurk and Roy Redwood in the post. Asked how he became Clerk of the Court, he said that "I was in the wrong place at the wrong time"!

Ross remembers when everything was painstakingly written with pen and ink - not like today where notes of meetings can be produced, almost before the meeting has finished! He said that the demise of the old Town Council in 1975 led to the creation of the Deacons Court solely to organise, fundraise and run Linlithgow Marches and that he was very proud of the Court's achievements in doing just that. Ross described how his role is very varied in that it can involve multiple filling out of forms, to setting the routes for the Flutes and Drums which can change every three years to facilitate a visit to the house of the current Provost and ensuring that everything is in place on the big day which can mean 'Making many decisions on the hoof'.

Ross, who will soon retire from the office as Clerk to the Court summed up his time as 'A pleasure, enjoyed it all and got there'!



Christmas Dinner & Quiz and two new Members

Members met for a pre-Christmas dinner and quiz at Linlithgow Golf Club on Wednesday 6th December.

Five teams participated in what proved to be both a fun and a challenging test of their general knowledge. 'Top Table' a team captained by Martin Burns and made up of Pat McCourt, Alan Evans and Bill Freeman took the honours in a close-run competition. Club chairman, Alan Evans, thanked quizmaster George Wilson for his work and thoughtfulness in providing such an entertaining and diverse quiz. Two new members, Laurie Boles and Alan Cochrane were installed as members into the club.

Top: Quizmaster George Wilson with winning team members Martin Burns, Pat McCourt and Alan Evans. Below: Chairman Alan Evans presenting Laurie Boles and Alan Cochrane with their membership badges.

Regards, George Wilson

THE FIRST YEAR IT SLEEPS, THE SECOND YEAR IT CREEPS AND THE THIRD YEAR IT LEAPS!

What are we talking about? That 'marmite' plant Ivy (Hedera), loved and hated in equal measure by gardeners. The lovers can be frustrated by the time it takes to get established and the haters alarmed by the speed it can leap after three years.

There is a lot of folk lore associated with Ivy like it represents 'fidelity' because it won't let go of something it's attached to. It is said to also represent 'eternal life' because it is evergreen, holding onto its leaves throughout the cold winter months.

It's true that it can pull down crumbling mortar but if your walls are sound it helps to keep them dry and insulates your house against the winter cold. It can grow up into gutters and slates and spread onto painted surfaces, and you do need to control its wanderings in these situations. It also can grow high up into trees and act as sails to make them more vulnerable to destructive storm winds.

But on the positive side it makes great evergreen groundcover in shady positions.



It's a useful trailing plant in a pot, furnishing your arrangement, here with Winter Box and heathers that produce showy new growth in the Spring.



It's a superb plant for wildlife in your garden because it flowers late in the autumn when there isn't much pollen or nectar around our gardens for a pre-winter feast and produces black berries for birds in the winter. Here it has entwined itself with Cotoneaster horizontalis against a garden wall. Soon the Cotoneaster leaves will go bright red and drop off, the blackbirds will strip the red berries, and you'll be left with the mature leaves and flowers of the ivy which can provide shelter for wildlife in the winter.



It is so useful as a self clinging climber to frame a doorway as here at Le Manoir Quatre Saison.

Growing up a pergola is the neat bright yellow Hedera Buttercup, with the close up of its wandering growth with well lobed leaves and its mature growth of bigger unlobed leaves and flower buds.



There are so many different colours, sizes and shapes to choose from, lovers of Ivy are spoilt, perhaps we can tempt a few past haters to give them another go, they are so undemanding and easy to grow? The neat spread of Hedera Gold Child up a wall.



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ROBERT BURNS COMES TO TOWN

Bruce Jamieson



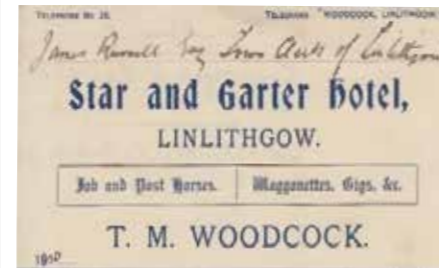
This is a ticket for the Linlithgow Burns Club's annual tribute to the poet – in this case to celebrate the 150th year of his birth on Wednesday, January 27th, 1909, in the Star and Garter Hotel.

The ticket was issued by Bailie James Dowie, President of the Club which had been in existence since 1885, and William M. Scott, Secretary. Mr Scott was a well-known local architect responsible for designing such burgh landmarks as the Town Hall steps and the Masonic Hall. Outwith his professional life, he was a Past Master of Lodge Ancient Brazen and a member of the provincial Grand Lodge. He was interested in all local sports and was widely known as a good golfer, cricketer and curler - playing in all the curling bonspiels in the County and beyond and being the driving force in creating an ice rink behind the Burgh Halls.

Chairman for the evening was solicitor James Kidd who, nine years later, was to be elected as Member of Parliament for Linlithgowshire, standing as a Coalition Unionist supporter of Prime Minister David Lloyd George's Coalition Government.

Mein Host at "The Star", Mr T. M. Woodcock, looked after the eminent gathering in his usual efficient and whole-hearted manner – serving up a starter of painch, tripe and thairm (offal sausages), haggis, neeps and tatties, mutton pie and bannocks and cheese – each course washed down with copious drams. A break was called after the meal so that

cigars and pipes could be lit and soon the atmosphere was congenial - if somewhat toxic!



A 1910 invoice from Mr Woodcock of the Star and Garter.

The principal speech of the evening, The Immortal Memory, was delivered by the Rev James Robertson, minister of the Haymarket United Free Church in Edinburgh. He chose, as his theme – "The Day Burns Came to Linlithgow."

His discourse began with Burns and fellow traveller, Edinburgh High School teacher William Nicol, leaving the town of Kirkliston where they had spent the night in Castle House in the High Street. While there, Burns had scratched a poem on a pane of glass, using a diamond-tipped pen. The rhyme went:

"The ants about their clod employ their care

And think the business of the world is theirs.

Lo: waxen combs seem palace to bees.

And mites conceive the world to be cheese."

The windowpane is now in a museum in Vancouver, Canada.



Castle House in Kirkliston High Street.

The Rev Robertson had heard it said that this reference to "cheese" was what gave Kirkliston the nickname of 'Cheesetown' – although he himself was of the opinion that the name derived from a much later period in the town's history when the Forth Bridge was being built. Workers living in Kirkliston would set off for a day's work on the bridge carrying cheese sandwiches and when arriving in South Queensferry would be greeted

by shouts of, "Here come the lads frae Cheesetown!"

The Rev Robertson continued his narrative by asking the audience to picture a scene later in that day (Saturday, August 27th, 1787) as a horse-drawn chaise pulled up at Linlithgow Cross. He pictured the pair, leaving their conveyance and horse in the hands of a hired ostler, walking up the Kirkgate to visit St Michael's Church. Robertson had to admit that Burns was singularly unimpressed by the place, describing the medieval edifice as "a poor, pimping place of Presbyterian worship, dirty, narrow, squalid stuck in a corner of old Popish grandeur."

The Rev Robertson also commented drily that when Burns spotted the church's cutty stool it filled the poet with even more displeasure, musing, as he must have done, over the times he had sat on a similar seat in Mauchline Kirk – paying penance for his sins on the stool of repentance.



The cutty stool from Biggar Kirk.

Robertson went on to relate that Burns was more moved by the Palace, where, as Burns wrote, "the beautiful, injured Mary Queen of Scots was born." Later he was to write "A Lament of Mary Stuart in Captivity" which begins:

*"I am the sovereign of Scotland,
Aye, and mony a traitor there;
For here I lie in foreign hands,
And never-ending care."*

Robertson went on to ask the gathering to imagine Burns coming back down to the centre of the burgh, and entering the Golden Cross tenement where he was inaugurated as a member of Masonic Lodge Ancient Brazen. In this, the good minister was citing local tradition – but, sadly, not provable fact! No written record exists of this occasion - although the upper floor of the building must have had masonic connections as, when the building was demolished in 1966, a painted ceiling was uncovered bearing several Masonic symbols. Burns did tend to join local Masonic lodges on his travels round Scotland but there is no written evidence of this happening in Linlithgow.

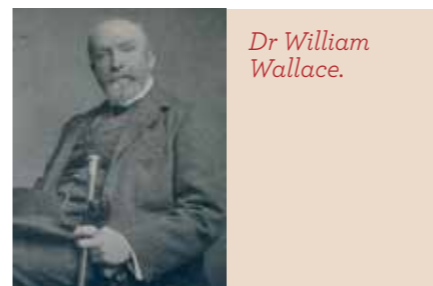


A section of the Golden Cross ceiling now in Linlithgow Museum.



The Golden Cross being demolished.

The Rev Robertson went on to declare that Burns was also made a Freeman of the Burgh of Linlithgow – a claim being put about by Dr William Wallace, editor of the Glasgow Herald, who had written that the burgess ticket had been preserved and was worded, "At Linlithgow, the 16th day of November 1787, in the presence of James Andrew, Provost." Unfortunately, there is no record of Burns signing the Town's Burgess Roll, no Town Council Minute, no official document at all, and furthermore, the alleged date of the ticket is puzzling in that there is no evidence to show that Burns was in Linlithgow on that day.



Dr William Wallace.

Indeed, it would have been difficult for Burns to come out to Linlithgow at the alleged time, as in November 1787 Burns (as his letters reveal) had a great deal to occupy his mind - and take up his time. His steading, Mossgiel Farm, was struggling and so, on his brother's advice, he went back there, found the situation worse than ever, made love to his pregnant wife, Jean Armour, then returned to Edinburgh where he again attempted to woo a certain Agnes Macle hose. Finding her still "unavailable", he duly got her servant girl, Jenny Clow, in the family way.

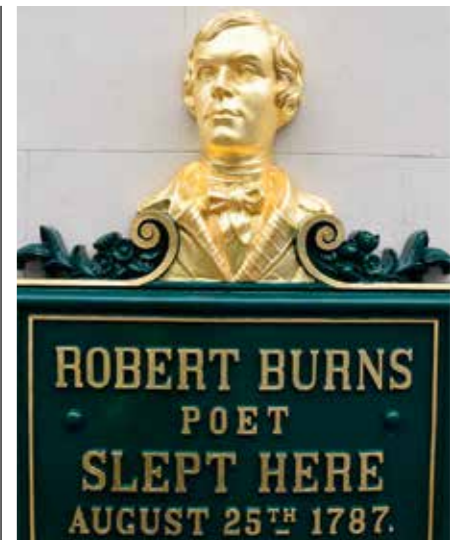
While pacing in Potter Row and staring up at Mrs Macle hose's house, Burns fell in the cobbled street, dislocating his kneecap and rendering him housebound. From his bed, he wrote several letters to Agnes as well as others trying to secure another run-down farm at Ellisland, in addition to enquiring about a job with the Customs and Excise. So, that November he had a lot on his plate and things got worse when Agnes decided to break off the relationship – such as it was! In his despair, Burns wrote the poignant verses of "Ae Fond Kiss".

"Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;

Ae fareweel, and then forever!

*Deep in heart-wrung tears
I'll pledge thee,*

*Warring sighs and groans
I'll wage thee."*



Below: The Cross Keys Inn, Falkirk, and above: the commemorative plaque on the building.



So, it would seem highly unlikely that Burns took time out in the midst of all this turmoil, to visit Linlithgow in November 1787. However, Burns was in Linlithgow in the August of that year and, as the Rev Robertson continued to narrate, after visiting the town centre, he travelled out to Linlithgow Bridge where he was delighted to renew his friendship with old friend James Smith, manager of the Avon Cotton Print Works.

Robert and James reminisced about their younger, Hell-raising days in Ayrshire and the antics they had got up to. Before leaving, Burns purchased a calico dress and shawl for his wife and left for Falkirk where he spent the night in what was then the Cross Keys Inn.

THE SUPER SCRIBBLERS

WELCOME TO THE FIRST ARTICLE JOINTLY RESEARCHED AND WRITTEN BY THE SUPER SCRIBBLERS - PUPILS OF SPRINGFIELD PRIMARY AND LOW PORT PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

January- June Spotlights

We have compiled highlights of the month from January to June, which occur within the Linlithgow Community. We know there are many more events within Linlithgow, but we thought we would compile a few as a reminder for you to keep the dates free! Read our article to find out what activities are taking place in our community. We hope you and your friends and family have fun joining in! Look out for the highlights from July to December in one of our upcoming articles.



January

An exciting development in the Stockbridge Retail Park is that of the new Marks and Spencer's food hall opening this January. The new shop will offer customers 6,000 food lines with a proposed bakery section. It will also bring lots of new jobs to the community and will be a great new place to buy delicious M&S food.



Also, make sure to check out the Linlithgow Market along the High Street. It will be there on the first Saturday of every month and is a great place to buy some local treats and produce, along with some creative crafts. Bring your friends and family for an awesome day out!

February

Following a sell-out evening in September 2023, LAMP will be holding another cabaret evening in February 2024. Enjoy musicals from all genres, featuring talented members of both adult and children's companies.

Do you enjoy embroidery? Do you want to join a new club in Linlithgow? Stitch Matters is a group in Linlithgow who help you to develop



skills and knowledge of textile art. They hold many events throughout the year. February could be your month to join!

The draw for the Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Gala Day is on the first of February. Who will be selected as this year's queen?

March

Join the Linlithgow Churches together with a joint service on Cockleroy Hill on Easter Sunday. Decorate some boiled eggs with colourful pens and paint and have a great time with friends and family.



An Easter highlight for the Primary 6's at Springfield and Low Port is Cracking Easter at St Michael's Church. A variety of activities are set out in the church to learn about the Easter story and traditions. It's an educational day out and is cracking good fun!

April

Save the date from the 2nd to the 6th of April 2024 free as LAMP Children's Theatre present the timeless tale of Disney's Beauty and the Beast. Keep an eye open for tickets being released in February. You don't want to miss out!



Keep your eyes peeled for a spectacular painting exhibition by James Lumsden at the Burgh Halls until the 9th of June.

Every Sunday at 9:30am there is a parkrun for 4-14-year-olds at Xcite Linlithgow on the cycle circuit so, get fit and join in!

As April's weather starts getting warmer it's time to explore the outdoors. Beecraigs is a great place to reconnect with nature, go for cycles and play in the play park. There is always more to explore in Beecraigs.

May

May is a great month to come to Linlithgow. Summer is close and there is so much to do. The Primary 6 Cross Country race is held at the Peel. All the schools in Linlithgow meet at the Peel and do a 1.3km running race around the palace and the Peel. You should definitely come and support the sporting stars!

In addition, the George Allan Football Festival is held at Linlithgow Rose Football Club. If you like football this

is the place for you. Each school competes to try and win the tournament. It is a great morning watching the young, budding footballers of Linlithgow represent their schools. If you go to the football festival you'll have a ball!



The month of May is a great time to start being sporty at the table tennis club. It runs on a Wednesday from 7:30pm-9:45pm. If you want to go, head to Longcroft Hall and join in the fun!

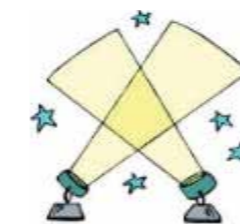
June

June is a remarkably busy and exciting month with both The Marches and the Gala Day held in the town. The Marches is a historic event, which sees townsfolk check the town boundaries. This is held on the first Tuesday after the second Thursday in June. It is a full day of celebrations and starts with an early rise at 5am! The Gala Day is held in June on the Saturday after The Marches. At The Marches there is a decorated bike competition where you ride your decorated bike across the streets and if you win first, second or third, you have the chance of winning a prize. On the Friday before The Marches, the Town Crier comes to remind everyone about The Marches and to invite everyone to attend.



The Gala Day gives the children of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge a special event of their own. There is a parade through the town with local bands, organisations, and then after that a crowning ceremony. At the Gala Day, there is a queen and other important roles, such as The Champion, Fairies and Junior Guards. In 2023, there was a Linlithgow's Got Talent competition which was fun for everyone. This competition will happen again this year, and we hope all of the schools in Linlithgow will join in with the fun.

WRITTEN BY THE PUPILS OF LOW PORT PRIMARY SCHOOL AND SPRINGFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL



Advertising Feature

ARCHER JOY
FINANCIAL PLANNING



Goal planning for you

The start of the year is a great time to take stock of where you are with your finances, and one of the key things we look at with clients is their overall Financial Plan. Here are some hints and tips to get you started on your New Years Finance Review.

Set the Goals!

Imagine you're on a wild adventure with no map or compass. Sounds fun, right? Not for your finances! Setting clear financial goals is like charting a course for your money. It helps you steer towards your dreams without getting lost along the way. Maybe you're saving up for your dream home, or funding your education, or building your retirement nest egg.

Whatever it is, setting those financial goals helps you know where you're headed and stay on track. Remember to think short-term as well as long-term in your goals.

Think of The Why:

The next thing to consider is why these goals are important to you, so you understand how they are going to motivate you, and you can keep picturing the end goal. Not all goals will be short-term wins, so think about how you can break down some of the longer term goals and celebrate the wins!

Deep Dive:

Once the goals and motivations are decided it's a case of starting to implement - and one of the key stages of this is a deep dive review of your spending. Often people forget about the services they sign up to throughout the years (and many businesses bank on people not reviewing these! For example, Netflix, Apple, Spotify etc.) What are you currently paying for that you don't need? or in some cases what are you paying for that you could downgrade to help support your goal. Perhaps set yourself a target amount you want to cut and find ways to do this. Examining your finances might hurt a little (when you quickly see how much money Sky TV is costing you!) but it will be worth it when you can see the monthly savings that you can make.

Think of the unthinkable:

Life is unpredictable, and unexpected expenses can crop up at any time. Spending time thinking (but not dwelling) on the "what ifs" will help you see areas of weakness in your plans. These can be supported by an emergency fund to handle the joys that life throws at us, like the exhaust going on your car. An emergency fund always makes sure that your overall goals are not thrown into chaos when these things crop up.

Get In Touch

Archer Joy Financial Planning
07834 837 183
Archerjoy@sjpp.co.uk

Clearing Debt:

For many individuals, managing and reducing debt is often a financial goal. Setting specific targets for debt repayment helps create a roadmap towards financial freedom. Whether it's paying off credit cards, student loans, or mortgages, having a plan in place accelerates the journey towards a debt-free life. Think about what key achievements you want to see in this area rather than "be debt free" it can be too vast a goal. So perhaps thinking in small steps and celebrating when they are achieved will help keep you on track. For example, start with your smallest debts and get them cleared. While mortgage free is a great goal, for many people that is a long-term goal, so celebrate the small wins and enjoy the journey to debt-free.

Review, Review, Review:

Your goals will change, and it is an absolute MUST to review your plan regularly. Things change, routes alter, so regular reviews let you see if you are on track, or if not, what changes should you implement to get back on track. If you have gone a little off course, don't be hard on yourself, just take a chance to reset and refocus on why your goals are important.

Top Tip:

Our top tip to achieving your financial goals is "make it as easy and hassle free as possible". What ways can you make it really easy each month to do something towards your goal? Is it easier for you to change some of your direct debit days so you don't have to worry each month about when they come out? One of the approaches we have seen implemented really well, is for people to split their bank accounts. Use 1 for savings. 1 for spending and 1 for Emergency fund and fund these accounts on pay day, so all your money is accounted for. Find the way that works well for you.

The End Goal:

It is NEVER too early to think about what to do once you have achieved your goals, so make sure you think about when this happens; firstly, how are you going to celebrate? But secondly, what is next? If it has been a stepping stone goal, the next stage is easy to see, for other bigger goals, sometimes your next step isn't always so obvious.

If the thought of going through all of this on your own is filling you with dread, then work with someone who can help you through all of this, Archer Joy Financial Planning. A friendly, local service, who are here to help you through the maze of Financial Planning and smashing your financial goals in 2024!

Associate Partner Practice

St James's Place



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LAMP SHINES AGAIN: A MUST-SEE CABARET IN LINLITHGOW

Photography: Lee Fletcher Photography



Excitement is in the air as Linlithgow Amateur Musical Productions (LAMP) gears up for its eagerly awaited cabaret show! Scheduled for February 23rd and 24th at Linlithgow Academy Theatre, this event is not just another performance; it's a showcase of the diverse talent spanning both the adult and children's LAMP companies. The blend of experienced performers and youthful energy promises an evening that oscillates between upbeat rhythms and poignant melodies, featuring an engaging mix of solo acts and group performances, plus well-known and newer numbers.

Following the tremendous success of last September's sell-out performance, which saw tickets run out two weeks ahead of the event, LAMP has responded to the overwhelming demand by adding an extra two shows to this year's schedule, including a convenient Saturday matinee. The selection of Linlithgow Academy Theatre as the venue, and the low ticket price, underlines LAMP's commitment to continue to provide the joy of theatre to the local community.

This year's cabaret extends beyond the traditional boundaries of musical theatre, incorporating songs from well-loved films and radio, alongside classic stage hits. It's an artistic endeavour that reflects LAMP's evolving vision, aiming to capture a wider audience while celebrating the broad

spectrum of musical theatre genres. The inclusion of performances by the talented children's company adds a dynamic layer, bringing fresh perspectives and enthusiasm to the stage.

In our commitment to enhance the overall experience, we've made several significant improvements: attendees will now enjoy the comfort of allocated table seating, performers will take to a raised stage, we've expanded our bar offerings, and we've increased the number of group performances, promising more of the collaborative and high-energy numbers that our audiences have come to love and expect from LAMP's dynamic productions.

The cabaret is designed to be more than a musical showcase; it's a full-fledged social event. With a selection of drinks and snacks available, the atmosphere is primed for relaxation and enjoyment. The setup encourages attendees to mingle and revel in an evening of musical appreciation and fun. The energy and joy captured in the photographs here, are a testament to the kind of experience attendees can expect - a night where Linlithgow's artistic talents are celebrated in a communal setting.

Feedback from previous attendees highlights the event's appeal. One attendee remarked, "From start to finish the evening was full of fun, smiles, and sing-song. Already looking forward to the next one!" Another added, "What a lot of talent we have in Linlithgow - a great local evening out!" These testimonials underscore the cabaret as not just an evening of high-quality entertainment but also as a delightful social outing.

With tickets now on sale, those wishing to experience this unique blend of music, talent, and community spirit should book promptly. Join us for an engaging, memorable, and joyous evening at the Linlithgow Academy Theatre.

LAMP Cabaret 2024
Friday 23rd February at 7pm Saturday
24th February at 2pm and 7pm

Tickets £10 full, £7 under 16 or over 65.
Book via the website; www.linlithgow-musicals.co.uk or using the QR Code below.



THE LITTLE FIR TREE CHRISTOPHER CORR

From an original story by
Hans Christian Anderson

*"Deep in the forest,
There lived a little fir tree
Who longed to see the world."*

Christopher Corr has beautifully adapted this classic tale by Hans Christian Anderson allowing new generations of readers, young and old, to discover the story of the little fir tree which grows slowly in a great forest surrounded by much larger trees.

The little fir tree is envious of his more statuesque neighbours, and expresses feelings of envy and discontent. He wishes with all of his heart that he might grow tall, thick and strong like them, especially when he learns from the birds swooping around the forest that the most mighty trees are being felled to make cabins for people and ships that will sail the oceans. How the little fir tree longs to see more of the world!

The little fir tree is so caught up with his longings that he fails to notice the beauty of the moments that surround him. He does not see the butterflies that flutter around his branches. The birds of the forest chirrup some advice to him.

*"Don't wish your life away,
little tree.*

*Every moment is precious.
Look at the sunlight falling
Through the green leaves.
It is so beautiful."*

Time passes slowly by and one autumn the little fir tree is delighted to be chosen by the lumberjacks who visit the forest. He is loaded onto a cart and wheeled into town, where he is then transferred into a grand house and placed in a beautiful room. The little fir tree is decorated as a Christmas tree and admired by all who see him. He feels proud and happy to be a part of such a special moment for the family.



In the days following the Christmas celebrations, the little fir tree is carried outside the house into the garden shed, where he remembers with longing his days in the forest. He remembers the animals and birds who would visit his branches. He remembers the seasons, the wind and the sun, and how they would feel as they moved through his leaves. The little fir tree is lonely and realises that he was happiest when he was surrounded by the natural world.

Christopher Corr's adaption of this traditional tale has been descriptively worded for young readers, with plenty of scope for further discussion about the emotions of the little tree, and the passing of the seasons. His illustrations are beautiful, colourful and add a modern, vibrant character to the story.

Corr has written an ending of hope and regeneration for the little fir tree in this version of Hans Christian Anderson's tale. The little fir tree is replanted in the forest where he began and, this time, he appreciates what it feels to be truly happy with his life.

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



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Hand Printed Coasters
Can be personalised

JAZZERCISE LINLITHGOW



AT JAZZERCISE LINLITHGOW WE'RE STARTING 2024 WITH SOME FABULOUS NEWS - WE HAVE A NEW TRAINEE INSTRUCTOR JOINING OUR TEAM!

"Hi! I'm Rhiannon. I'm currently training to be a Jazzercise instructor and I'm absolutely loving it! Originally from sunny Devon, I moved to Linlithgow 25 years ago and attended Linlithgow Academy for a short spell. As well as being a mum I'm also a chartered accountant and work four and half days a week. Our home in Linlithgow is a bit crazy with our 3 lively children, ages 4, 7 and 10. I started going to Jazzercise classes about 2 years ago as a bit of time out for me - I hadn't always appreciated how important it is to look after yourself as a parent, but now I do - and Jazzercise-ing is how I do this.

Being able to attend the shorter evening classes (Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6:30pm, 45mins) really helped - I could be out of the house for only an hour and be back in time for the kids' bedtime... but feeling refreshed (a bit sweaty!) and ready to have a great sleep myself.

The feeling you get after (and during!) a Jazzercise class is absolutely awesome. Everyone is so welcoming and encouraging, and after having welcomed a shy me 2 years ago, they continue to show their support with a sea of smiley faces when I look out from the stage.

Although named 'Jazzercise', it is not based around Jazz or Jazz music. There is a whole range of music and genres with routines choreographed to hit songs that are changed up all year long. The hit music playlists keep you motivated to work hard. You'll hear music you know plus discover new music that'll get you in the mood for dancing.

You'd think I was on commission for how much I rave about Jazzercise, but I'm not! - my friends hear all about it and parties at our house now seem to include an element of Jazzercise towards the end of the night! So, it seemed like the best challenge to accept when Karen was looking for a new trainee. Karen is a very inspiring, uplifting, fun and much loved Instructor and Franchise owner of 19 years - keeping us all feeling amazing during class, whatever our fitness level.

"I'm currently working towards my assessment in February which includes annual CPR training, a physiology exam and a virtual audition demonstrating a selection of routines. It's hard work but great fun... and a welcomed change from accounting!"

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LINLITHGOW AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENT SOCIETY **JANUARY ON THE ALLOTMENT**

January is generally a very cold month with hard frosts freezing the ground although there are no guarantees with British weather. Although tempting not to be out in the garden and allotment, it is important for us to continue the work started in November/December: planning for the year ahead and preparing ground for the new season. Weeding always feels satisfying at this time of year as the ground stays clear and you feel like you're getting somewhere. It's best to dig out the weeds rather than hoe them, as the damp soil means that weeds that are hoed could resprout. In an ideal world, the plot will be dug over, limed or manured if required, and the leafmould slowly forming in a cage. In the real world, any decent days are used in a last ditch effort to catch up! Not catching up now can lead to catch up all year!

Some seed planting can be done this month and some planting on of seeds planted before the turn of the year. The big problem when planting at this time of year is available light. Covering cardboard with aluminium foil and standing it to the north side of the seed tray will reflect extra light and help prevent leggy, drawn seedlings without the expense of special horticultural lights.

Another option is to use grow-lights. These lights are now LED lights, are efficient and don't use too much energy. These can make a huge difference to new seedlings. Seedlings don't become leggy and are stronger. If you have a greenhouse ventilate on warmer days to prevent moulds getting established. Cold, damp air can quickly cause new seedlings to die or 'damp off'. But ensure vents and doors are closed firmly if the weather gets rough.

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

Harvesting:

>> Continue to harvest kale, kalettes (a cross between brussels sprouts and kale) and leeks.



With careful successional planting, some ploholders still have cauliflowers, broccoli, cabbage, perpetual spinach, carrots and parsnips for picking.

Sowing:

>> Do not be in a hurry to sow seeds in January. Many seed suppliers give sowing times for those living in the south. In our climate, waiting until there is warmer weather can give better results. There is often no difference in the final results if sown later. Sowing too early, when the weather is cold, can slow down germination. If you have a greenhouse or polytunnel this can allow earlier sowing and growing of some vegetables. They can extend the season, increasing yield and giving some vegetables a better start. This can also allow a greater variety of crops to be grown.

Some seeds that can be sown January/early February (indoors):

Chilli and sweet peppers. As chilli and sweet peppers have a very long growing season, they are best sown in a heated propagator inside. The short day lengths over the winter do not affect their growth, unlike most other vegetable plants, which require plenty of light. Another tip (from the famous gardener, Geoff Hamilton, an inspiration to many gardeners) was to start peppers off in very small containers and pot them on successively into slightly larger pots each time so that they become rootbound. This makes them produce more flowers and consequently more fruit as the plant feels under stress. It works!

Tomatoes: Some advocate sowing tomato seeds indoors this month but because they germinate quickly I have found it best to

sow in mid-February to early March. If we have mild weather sowing in January works but where we live this cannot be a given.

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

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

Transplanting:

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

Planting: >> It is not too late to plant garlic cloves. Garlic can also be sown in modules if you haven't already planted yours out. Start off the cloves in small pots or modules in multi-purpose compost in a coldframe or cold greenhouse. They'll take off very quickly and, once they're up, you can plant out into the beds. Shallot sets can be planted in the same way.



>> Plant soft fruits, e.g. blackberries, blackcurrants, gooseberries (until the end of March). Planting of fruit bushes and trees can be done until March but choosing a time when the soil is not frozen or water logged is best.

>> Plant raspberries (until the end of Feb).

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

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

>> Cut all autumn raspberry canes to ground level if you have not done so already.

Val Corry,
Chair LADAS



Please note the website address for the LADAS is linlithgowallotments.wordpress.com where you will find out more about us and how to join our waiting list.

GARY CLINTON, THE MUSIC MAN**NEW YEAR / NEW MUSIC**

The start of a new year can be an exciting and important time for everyone. A chance to reset, recharge and perhaps establish some new goals and resolutions. For me I am always really intrigued at what lies in wait from a musical point of view both from a personal perspective and also from my guitar student's.

I think I've said in the past that one of my favourite things about learning musical instruments is it's never finished. We never get to the point where we say 'well, that's me completed the guitar.' There is always something to learn. And I think the same can be said for those who don't play an instrument but love listening to music. New music is constantly being released as well as new tours and gigs being announced.

Certainly many of my students are already looking forward to new releases in 2024 as well as live shows they've got tickets to and in some cases gigs they are playing themselves. So it's an inspiring time for musical people as, in my opinion, the two biggest inspirations for getting involved in music is undoubtedly seeing our favourites perform live and also listening to music, whether that's via streaming or indeed vinyl.

PHYSICAL MUSIC SALES

It will come as no revelation to anyone that vinyl has been increasing in popularity over the past decade or so however maybe it will surprise a few that CDs are making a comeback in the UK. That's right – a whole new generation of music fans will be finding out in 5/6 years how terrible those plastic jewel cases really are as they steadily perish over time! However I shouldn't be negative about what is a positive sales statistic concerning the physical music market.

Whilst the number of CDs sold actually dropped 7% in 2023 (a big improvement on the 20% drop in 2022) overall revenue increased 2% due to inflation and if this trend continues, we may see the actual number of CDs sold increase in the coming years. If so, it may begin to slightly bridge the gap (or should I say chasm) which exists between the revenue from physical music formats and that of streaming: £311m vs £2.2bn respectively. Wow. So I wonder if I can encourage anyone in our town to join me on the physical music challenge of 2024!?

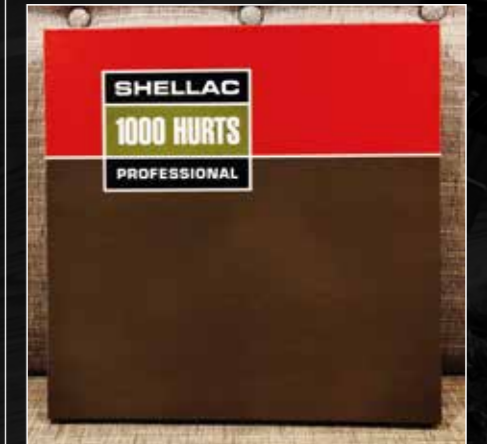
BUY A VINYL A MONTH IN 2024!

If you are someone who is just getting into buying physical music, or maybe you are rekindling a love affair from youth, why not aim to buy 1 vinyl for each month of 2024? (And perhaps use our local record store, **Lowport Music!**) Or if you are trying to watch the pennies, the humble CD is definitely a much cheaper option but still provides artwork and liner notes plus a very good quality audio resolution. They just don't quite have the same romance and vintage aesthetic as records. So to inspire everyone, I thought I'd share my new vinyl acquisitions as they have inspired me to buy more this year, than any other year of my life.

**NEW VINYL / OLD MUSIC**

For the last 2 Christmases I have asked my wife for vinyl. I send her maybe 8 or 9 albums I want and then my young son chooses a few which works out quite well because typically he doesn't know the artists and chooses based on the artwork. (A good way as any for making my mind up for me!) So I think you'll understand why he chose 'La Di Da Di' by Battles.

Battles are one of my favourite artists. They are a mostly instrumental, experimental math rock 3 piece from NYC and I find their music incredibly interesting and different. Typically their innovative sound is based around colourful and repetitive sonic bizarreness played against some very exciting drumming. It's the exact opposite of commercialism in music.



Another record I got Christmas past was '1000 Hurts' by Shellac (the sleeve of which is made to be like the 2" analogue recording tape box) who are fronted by legendary recording engineer Steve Albini whose production back catalogue includes Nirvana, The Pixies and PJ Harvey. Over a long career, likely thousands of bands have sought his signature production sound and ethical approach to recording in terms of refusing to take producer royalties from the albums he records.

Lastly another two records that found their way into my home this Christmas were ones I bought my wife as she had been expressing an interest in vinyl over the past year. 'Feels Like Home' by Norah Jones contains a song that was played when we got married and is also a really beautifully recorded and performed album of country & folk love songs; the other was **Brotherhood Of Man - Greatest Hits** - a favourite album from her youth and whilst the ABBA-like pop material isn't my cup of tea, I was surprised to find out I did know their biggest hit - 'Save Your Kisses For Me'!



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



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HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LINLITHGOW!

WHY? WHAT BIRTHDAY?

Well, this January, Linlithgow has been a Fairtrade town for 20 years. It was awarded that status on 28 January 2004 – the first Fairtrade town in the Lothians and only the fourth in Scotland.

GREAT! BUT WHAT'S A FAIRTRADE TOWN?

Basically, it's a town that's committed to promoting Fairtrade, whose work has been recognised by the Fairtrade Foundation. And it's not just a one-off award; the status needs to be renewed every three years on the basis of campaigns and activities to promote Fairtrade in the town. It was recently renewed just two months ago, so we'll stay a Fairtrade town till at least November 2026.

SO WHAT CAMPAIGNS AND ACTIVITIES HAVE THERE BEEN?

Lots over the years! There have been Fairtrade Fayres, fashion shows and Eastern bazaars – complete with belly dancers! We have held campaigns on ethical practices in the clothing industry, and the benefits of Fairtrade gold. We've given talks to local groups and campaigned with Linlithgow shops and cafés. And across the 20 years we've worked with all the local schools to tell them about Fairtrade, showcase their work and hold competitions. Perhaps you've seen our stall at the Advent Fayre or our Christmas tree at the Festival of Christmas Trees in St Michaels, or perhaps you remember our 'Fairtrade caterpillar' of painted stones at the Vennel during lockdown.

On a wider front, we have worked with our neighbouring Fairtrade towns of South Queensferry and Falkirk, as well as the other Fairtrade groups across West Lothian. We've hosted Fairtrade farmers and producers in the town, and just a year or two ago the Scottish National Fairtrade Conference was held here.



AND WHO HAS BEEN DOING ALL THIS?

This has all been arranged by the Linlithgow Fairtrade Partnership – a local group of volunteers, consisting of interested individuals, representatives of the Linlithgow churches and the three Local Councillors. Although we hold events across the year, most of our activity is around Fairtrade Fortnight. It's a small group and there's always room for one or two more – so contact us on linlithgowfairtrade@hotmail.com if you're interested and want to know more.

GREAT! SO FAIRTRADE IS NOW WELL-KNOWN IN THE TOWN. SURELY 20 YEARS IS ENOUGH!

It is certainly the case that most folk now recognise the Fairtrade Mark, and know that it means the farmers who grew the product and the producers who made it are paid a fair and sustainable wage for the work they do. And many also know that Fairtrade promotes safe working practices and gender equality, and gives back a share of the profits for the farmers and producers to use for community benefit.

But it's not 'job done', because exploitation still exists and new challenges and inequalities are arising all the time. In addition to the pressure to sell their goods for the lowest price, small-scale farmers and producers in the global south are the very ones who are most affected by climate change – whether it's flood, drought or higher temperatures lowering yields. That's why Fairtrade is working with farmers to combat climate change by planting shelter belts of trees, using bio-stoves for cooking instead of wood fires, and diversifying their crops.

So Fairtrade is just as important now as it was 20 years ago. When you put Fairtrade products in your basket you know that those who produced it are being paid a fair wage for their labours and that you are helping them combat the effects of climate change.

Linlithgow
Fairtrade
Partnership



JOLLY BABIES

In mid-winter, pushing a pram around the Peel may be losing its attraction. But instead, Linlithgow mums (and dads!) with a young baby may prefer to keep cosy inside.

Jolly Babies at Cross House in the middle of the town is just the place to meet other mums and their little ones.

Sessions are held every Wednesday from 11am until 1pm. There's plenty of chat, hot drinks, snacks and even the option of a delicious warming mug of soup.

Fiona McCracken and her team of volunteers love meeting everyone and would welcome your company. Fiona said, "Jolly Babies has been running for a year and we always enjoy welcoming new arrivals."

Contact: fiona@stmichaels-parish.org.uk

Christine Hodges
c.hodges@blueyonder.co.uk



MORRISON PERSONALISED WEALTH MANAGEMENT ACQUIRED BY CALTON WEALTH MANAGEMENT



Calton Wealth Management ('Calton'), the fast-growing and progressive financial planning firm based in Edinburgh, is pleased to announce that the purchase of Morrison Personalised Wealth Management (MPWM) is its first fully completed acquisition. Founder and Managing Director **Ian Morrison** joined Calton as an employed advisor from November 1, 2023.

Tom Ham, Calton CEO, said, "This first acquisition is an important milestone for all of us at Calton. MPWM is a great business with its clients' best interests firmly at its heart, and that's down to the culture that Ian has grown there. He also has a vast amount of experience and technical knowledge which he is keen to pass on. Ian will play a vital new role in the business as we go forward: his mentorship and expertise will be invaluable in shaping the next generation of Calton advisers."

Morrison founded MPWM in 2016 following a successful career with a chartered IFA and was Founding Partner at Prudential Financial Planning. He is a Chartered Fellow of both the CII and CISI and is a Pension Exam Assessor for the CISI. In addition to his client work, he will take on responsibility for training and career development with the firm's growing stable of trainee advisers. He cites Calton's independence, its culture and the strength of its client-centric values as a motivation for joining.

Ian Morrison said, "I am thrilled to be joining forces with Calton. My work is guided by the ethos of providing the highest quality, professional and personal service to clients for a reasonable fee. With the regulatory world changing, there is more pressure on smaller firms to join vertically integrated firms to then become a salesperson for the bigger firm's products. By contrast, I'm confident that by joining Calton, I will be joining a business that shares my values, one that is independent, client-centric and focused on the highest quality advice and services. I look forward to training and developing staff and advisers within Calton to achieve their professional qualifications and goals."

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The Housing Market

*How is the housing market likely to perform in 2024?
At Paul Rolfe we are seeing a brisk start to the year both in terms of enquiries to view properties and for property valuations.*

This seems to be borne out by Rightmove's own reporting that on Boxing Day, always a busy day for traffic to their website, property views were up by 17% on Boxing Day 2022 and that over 10,000 new properties were listed nationally over the holiday period, the biggest number since 2011.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), conducts monthly surveys of its members, and their November 2023 survey reported significant reductions of its membership with negative opinions on what was likely to happen to the volume of sales and prices achieved. Almost a third of surveyor's responding felt they would likely see an increase in the volume of sales in the immediate future.

Prospective house sellers should bear in mind that if the volume of property on the market increases compared to the

last 12 months, buyer's will have more choice and that pricing their property realistically will become even more important.

The consensus amongst Scottish based members of RICS, which we concur with at Paul Rolfe, is that market conditions are stable, properties continue to sell for home report value or slightly above, though are taking longer to sell.

Whilst the stabilising of the base lending rate and falling inflation should see an increase in buyer confidence. This is likely to be limited though, as the Monetary Policy Committee, although not raising the base rate, are still taking a restrictive stance on money supply and therefore we don't believe fixed rate mortgage rates offered will return to levels of two years ago. Any reductions in interest rates in the short term will be small and driven by a more competitive stance taken by lenders.

A Variable Picture Across the UK

According to research conducted by IAD, Scotland has outperformed other parts of the UK in terms of annual average house price movement. Last year in the UK as a whole prices fell marginally by -0.2%. However the results vary depending on which region of the UK mainland you look at. In England prices fell by -0.5%, but in Wales the drop was a more significant -2.7%, though in Scotland the average price of a property rose by + 2.5% to £195,387.

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PETS' CORNER



Westport Vet's Pet of The Month is Sparkie Heath, a collie cross who's around 14½ years old.

Hello I'm Sparkie Heath



This month Westport Vets Pet of The Month is Sparkie Heath, a collie cross who's around 14½ years old. Sparkie's owners say he looks like a shrunken collie dog. They are not sure what breed he's crossed with because he is a rescue, but they think from his temperament and the set of his ears that it might be a corgi!

His family say that as he's older he has become a lot calmer but he still has a 'silly' half-hour most evenings when he wants them to play with him. He loves it when they chase him (slowly!) round the house trying to 'steal' his tennis ball. Typical collie, he absolutely loves tennis balls! Also, when he's eaten something particularly tasty, he will wander around the garden rubbing the sides of his muzzle on the grass, and then this behaviour often turns into him barking and chasing/jumping from side-to-side - he looks very funny and makes them laugh doing this!

When he was young he loved swimming and would swim whenever he got the chance - in the canal, the lagoon, the river, and the loch! Nowadays he doesn't swim much but very occasionally if it's warm, he will lie in the burn to cool down.

Despite his age he still loves his walks, and still loves to go out for

walks with Lothlorien Dog Services. His owner says Lothlorien have been wonderful since they got Sparkie from the Dog's Trust in 2009: making sure they trained him properly in the early days, and now keeping an eye on him to make sure he doesn't overdo things on his group walks. Sparkie also loves his treats, his favourites being cheese and liver paste.

They say he is quite calm and chilled now he is older, but he was very naughty when he was young. He would regularly jump into the loch and swim right to the middle in pursuit of ducks (which he never caught - he always seemed surprised when they just flew away from him), and he often chased after rabbits and squirrels. He didn't seem to have any sense of danger and would jump off high walls, or over the stair gate in the kitchen, and once he even jumped out of an upstairs window (fortunately he landed on a flat roof, which broke his fall and saved him from hurting himself). Nowadays what he likes best is sleeping, usually you can find him snoring on the sofa or his owners' bed.

Nowadays his favourite place is at the Oakwell Allotments. He loves lying comfortably by the plot, watching his owners working hard doing the digging/weeding/harvesting. When he was younger he loved Cockeroy Hill but that's a bit much for him now - he

doesn't really like going uphill anymore! He also loved walking round the Avon Lagoon and going to Muiravonside, his absolute favourite being Rosemount Park.

Sparkie still loves his walks, but they are much shorter now and go very slowly! His appetite is undiminished, so his owners are careful to manage his weight. He has osteoarthritis, but he has Yumove tablets which help, and monthly injections of Librela which make a significant improvement to his mobility. He is blind in one eye and eye pressure is closely monitored and gets daily eye drops. He is also getting a bit deaf so his owners have to stroke him gently to get his attention if he isn't facing them as he can't hear them. Despite all this he is very happy and playful still and doesn't seem to mind all his medications, especially as they are usually given with cheese or liver paste treats!

He can still get up and down stairs and on and off sofas and beds pretty well. His owner bought a set of 'dog steps' a couple of years ago, but he will have nothing to do with them and if she ever tries to encourage him to use them he just jumps over them instead!

Like Sparkie's owners have done, lifestyles need to adjust as pets age. It can be difficult to notice such slight changes when we are with our pets 24/7, it's good to be mindful of their age and make adjustments accordingly.

If you have any concerns about your pet contact **Westport Vets 01506 844165**. To book a health check or any enquiries email: surgery@westportvets.com

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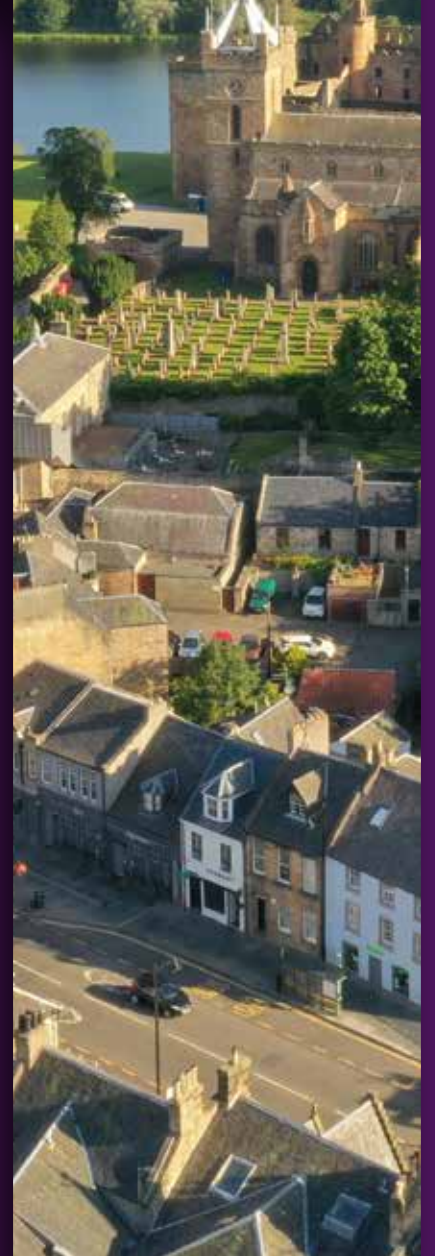
BLACK BITCH COMMUNITY MAGAZINE



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