

BLACK BATTLE



THE BATTLE OF LINLITHGOW BRIDGE RE-ENACTMENT OF 4 SEPTEMBER 1526 P14



NEW LIVES DOWN UNDER
BRUCE JAMIESON P12



JUNIOR PARK
RUN P27

DEACONS' COURT P23

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CONTENTS

4	One Linlithgow Business Improvement District New Year, New You, New Businesses	18	Linlithgow Bridge Primary School Of the pupils, by the pupils , for the future!	26	Linlithgow Athletic Club 350 runners/walkers turn out for inaugural parkrun at Beecraigs
6	Linlithgow Planning Forum New Local Development Plan delayed, premature development?	19	Linlithgow Rose FC You can't win them all, determined to win promotion	27	Junior parkrun Running is fun, youngsters running for life
7	Book Review, Lisa Nettleton The Tales of Beadle the Bard J.K. Rowling	20	Skin Happy Reintroducing Tina, dedicated to skin care	30	Paul Rolfe Emerging trends in bathroom and kitchen design
8	Linlithgow Academy Pillar of the community, detailed plans for engagement	21	New Hopetoun Gardens Planting evergreens - find out what grows best	31	Westport Vets Cookie making herself at home.
12	Bruce Jamieson New lives down under	22	Linlithgow Jazz Jazz, 26 years in Linlithgow		
14	Battle of Linlithgow Bridge Old Battle revisited and significance explained	23	The Deacons' Court Welcomes royalty; new Halberdiers and Town Crier		
16	LAMP Cabaret Celebration of musical favourites by dazzling local stars	24	LADAS Waiting list is open again; early year tasks		
17	Fraternity of Dyers New Deacon - meet Jamie Smart	25	Linlithgow Golf Club New Course layout explained		



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**So here we are in a new year.
So what's new in Linlithgow?
Quite a lot as it happens.**

2026 is the start of a second half century for the **Deacons' Court** set up 50 years ago in 1975 following the demise of Town Councils in Scotland. Its role is heritage based as the organiser and fundraiser for Linlithgow's ancient ceremony of checking the town's boundaries – Linlithgow's Riding of the Marches - held every year on the first Tuesday after the second Thursday in June – one of Scotland's oldest civic traditions possibly dating back to the thirteenth century. In this article read about the recent visit of Princess Anne to mark the historic occasion – and the successful search for new volunteers for key roles.

While not "new" the role of **One Linlithgow Business Improvement District (BID)** is to create new ideas and means to introduce businesses old and new to the Linlithgow community. It is an independent organisation of levy paying business members which welcomes new businesses to the town and organises regular local business promotions online and in print. It takes part in the National "Shop Local" campaign to drive home the importance of spending locally. In this issue it suggests some things that can be done to cope with winter weather, to get fit and to eat well while introducing some businesses new to Linlithgow.

2026 is also the year when the new **West Lothian Local Development Plan** was due for publication. This is the plan that determines Linlithgow's development over the next 10 years. However, the planning authority's initial submission for approval of the details has not met the new standards set and has been returned for review and resubmission possibly introducing

a further year's delay. As pointed out in recent editions of the magazine Linlithgow has some urgent concerns in relation to provision of suitable accommodation for both first timers and the older generation of downizers. Our **Planning Forum** article explains the details.

The excellent standard of education at primary and secondary levels has long been one of the characteristics of the town with maximum appeal to potential residents. In this issue **Academy Headteacher Grant Abbot** sets out the standards and actions designed to ensure the next generation is well prepared to move into the wide world of work. At primary level, helping prepare for the move to secondary, **Linlithgow Bridge Primary School's Literary project** encourages all pupils from P1 to P7 to participate in all aspects of reading, writing, analysis and reporting.

Another new project for this year is a major commemoration of the **Battle of Linlithgow Bridge**. The battle took place in 1526 and although a significant event in a regal power struggle of the time has been largely overlooked in the history books. This article is an introduction to the major event due to be held later in the year and highlights various other opportunities for involvement meantime.

On sport, **Linlithgow Rose FC** had a great start to their campaign for promotion to SPFL 2 and now in the run in to the end of the season they are showing determination to maintain that high standard in what is a very competitive Lowland League. The town has shown it can turn out in big numbers for important matches, and this is certainly an occasion when support is critical to getting over the line so the call is going out for your backing.

With a new **senior parkrun** established at Beecraigs in December last year and the **junior parkrun** now well established at the Cycle Track, parkruns are catching on and are fun helping all ages to form new habits to keep in good shape and make new friends.

Coming up shortly, **Linlithgow Jazz** will be holding their regular monthly session in St Margaret's Hall on Saturday 7 February. Founded in 1999, now under the management of Sue McHugh, the event is attracting large audiences so book early for The Classic Jazz Orchestra appearing on that date.

Later in the month, **Linlithgow Amateur Musical Productions** are promising an unforgettable evening of cabaret at Linlithgow Academy on 27/28 February. This follows a highly successful event last year showcasing local talent in a relaxed setting.

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LINLITHGOW 'ASTRONOMICAL' WINTER.

The Official dates for winter depend on the definition. 'Astronomical' winter starts with the Winter Solstice, on 21 December, and ends with the Spring Equinox on 20 March 2026. A 'Meteorological' winter, used for weather records, is fixed from 1st December to 28/29 February, making it easier for comparisons.

Sunday 21st December this year felt a lot like the night before Christmas eve... Eve, than an astronomical start to winter. Therefore, for those amongst us who really don't like winter, who maybe suffer from a bit of Seasonal Adjustment Disorder (SAD), we will start late and finish early. In Linlithgow, we now have invented a shorter definition: an 'AstronoLogical' Winter that starts on 21 December and finishes at the end of February.



The Cross, Linlithgow December 2025.

There you go, we've just shortened Winter by 40 days to cheer up those who need it. Spring is now just two payslips away from reducing our personal share of the nation's unsecured credit card debt.

SOME LIKE IT HOT.

'Well, nobody's perfect' as Jack Lemmon once said at the end of the 1959 crime comedy movie. None of us are but these days, even if we don't like winter, for home comforts we still have central heating, under-floor heating, loft insulation, ground source heat pumps and wood burning stoves to keep our cribs toasty, warm and hot. There are plenty of local specialist trades and suppliers to make our homes warmer and snugger through the winter.

Linlithgow Stoves on the High Street offer a range of top-quality wood burners and accessories and professional advice. If you're thinking about getting one, this could be a great starting point.

For those who just really can't bear our astronomical winter, the only option might be a break in the sun to re-charge the batteries.



Family-owned **Linlithgow Travel** (Linlithgowtravel.com) are a local travel agency that has been curating bespoke journeys for over 8 years.

A NEW YEAR AND A NEW YOU.

After the leftover drink is boxed away and hidden from site in the loft, we bravely step on the scales to see how many pounds have been put on. We've already promised ourselves this will be year of healthy living and supreme fitness.



The **Pure Gym No Contract offer** at £27.99 a month looks attractive. (puregym.com/gyms/linlithgow/). It's even open 24 hours/day, 7 days a week to put us in great shape for the Spring. Or there's **Xcite Linlithgow** (Westlothianleisure.com/venues/excite-linlithgow) team offering delivering an extensive programme of group fitness classes from four indoor studios and coaching courses for children.

The bike gathering rust in the shed could even get a run around the **West Lothian Cycle Circuit** (westlothiancyclecircuit.org) for just £4 a session & £2 for the kids to get them off the iPad. After all, it's a 1km world class tarmac cycle facility right on our doorstep.



The bike might need a pampering repair session at **Andy's Bike Clinic**, but if it's beyond fixing, then an investment a new bike from **Elevation Cycles** (Elevationcycles.co.uk) might fit the bill.



The Elevation Cycles.

Then there's even **Linlithgow Loch** to run around in the new socks and trainers that Santa brought.

VEGANUARY. NEW YEAR, SAME YOU.

Throughout the year, Veganuary.com encourages and supports people and businesses alike to move to a plant-based diet as a way of protecting the environment, preventing animal suffering, and improving the health of millions of people.

VEGANUARY

Veganuary has inspired and supported millions of people to try vegan since 2014, with participants from almost every country in the world.

They have worked with businesses to drive up vegan options in shops and restaurants and have made veganism more visible and accessible through our work with national and international media.

In Linlithgow, we have a fair number of food outlets with some excellent vegan dishes. A quick Google search for “**Linlithgow vegan food**” shows up a surprising number of places that offer vegan options on their menus.

On the High Street places offering vegan dishes include Aran, Mason Belles Kitchen, The Crannog, So Strawberry Caffe, Cafebar 1807, White Dove Coffee Roasters, Flat Flat White, The Coffee Neuk, West Port Hotel, The Four Marys, The Lochside Café and Nero Pizzeria. Mac’s of Linlithgow even offer 3 flavours of vegan ice cream and Complete Health offer vegan products so you can make your own.

If you’re thinking about trying some vegan options this winter, there is plenty of local options to try.



WELCOME TO LINLITHGOW

Cut 17

Following Cut 17’s expansion from Falkirk, cutting started in November 2025 on the corner unit at the Vennel. Their slogan is “evolving the modern image” with the look and vibe of the place targeting and appealing to men wanting to look their best. Online bookings can be made directly from a platform called Booksy. cut17.booksy.com/h/



Interestingly there is a note on Booksy:- *“Booksby guarantees that reviews with the “Verified Booksy user” tag have been added by registered Booksy users who have had an appointment with the provider. A registered Booksy user has the opportunity to add a review only after the service has been provided to them.”*

Cut 17 is open from Monday to Saturday from 10am to 7pm.

Location: 28 The Vennel, Linlithgow.

Call: 07885 670892

Andrew Ure The Wee Whisky Shop

It was with great sadness that news of the sudden passing of Andrew Ure was announced in the first few days of 2026. Andrew died while walking on Ben Vane with his dog on December 31, one day after celebrating his 41st birthday.



Andrew opened The Wee Whisky shop on Linlithgow High Street in December 2024 and was earning great popularity in the town throughout 2025. A father of two young boys, he was also the lead singer of Falkirk band The Ray Summers, who previously supported Paolo Nutini and Doves.

His brother David said *“So many people have lost a part of their world, as he meant so much to many. For me, I've lost my wee brother, my best pal, my business partner, my sounding board, and the daily reason I used my phone. Heartbroken doesn't even come close.”*

Our sincere condolences from Linlithgow to all Andrew’s family, friends and colleagues. We were just getting to know Andrew and all the staff in the Wee Whisky Shop.

By way of a fitting tribute, we would like to borrow the words of Billy Joel. In 1977 he released his album titled The Stranger, with “Only the Good Die Young”:-

*“They showed you a statue and told you to pray
They built you a temple and locked you away
But they never told you the price that you pay
For things that you might have done...
Only the good die young”*

By learning more about Andrew, his music, outlook on life and spirit of adventure, we hope for those who knew him this will resonate at such a very difficult time.

Feta Greek Kitchen

Recently opened in December 2025, serving up warm pita gyros and souvlaki to creamy tzatziki, loaded mezze plates, vibrant salads, and slow-cooked traditional dishes, Feta Greek Kitchen bring you the true taste of Greece. Every



meal is freshly prepared with Mediterranean ingredients, bold spices. Whether you’re dining in, ordering takeaway, or ordering online, Feta Greek Kitchen serves sunshine, freshness, and flavour in every bite. A local person commented on social media

“We had a lovely family dinner at Feta Greek Kitchen. Food was delicious, and service and atmosphere was great. Nice addition to Linlithgow and would highly recommend.”

Location: 271 High Street, Linlithgow.

Contact: infonet@fetagreekkitchen@gmail.com

Facebook: [Facebook.com/FetaGreekKitchen/](https://www.facebook.com/FetaGreekKitchen/)

One Linlithgow Email: office@onelinlithgow.com
Tel: 07708 194592

GONE QUIET BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

A REVIEW OF PLANNING ISSUES IN 2025



Regular readers of the Black Bitch may recollect several planning issues which have attracted attention during 2025, specifically:

The West Lothian Council's Local Development Plan

Proposed future housing developments.

Linlithgow's 7% population decline in 10 years.

The proposed redevelopment of the Vennel.

St Michaels hospital.

The High Street gap sites.

Some of the topics must arouse the “oh no, not that again!” reaction since they have been Black Bitch regulars for several years. However, they are important and will ultimately require action which will significantly impact our town.

WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL'S LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The November Black Bitch reported that the planning process, that will determine how Linlithgow develops over the next 10 years, was to meet a key milestone on 7 November when two expert Scottish Government planning Reporters were due to reach a decision on over 1000 pages of evidence submitted to them in July by West Lothian Council. The Reporters duly responded to West Lothian Council on 7 November stating that the report submitted provides a comprehensive and well-structured overview of key planning topics, demonstrating significant engagement with both

the community and stakeholders. Then came the “however”.

However, there are several critical gaps in information that must be addressed requiring West Lothian Council to resubmit a revised evidence report. These critical gaps are significant, and West Lothian planners anticipate at least three months' work before resubmission. Principally amongst several points the Reporters require:

A transparent description of the method used by West Lothian Council to determine its future housing needs.

An up-to-date and complete infrastructure assessment to comply with the new Scottish Government National Planning Framework. Previous West Lothian Council local development plans have not described the infrastructure requirements of future developments, leaving this to the planning application stage when the infrastructure requirements of the new development would be discussed between the developer and the planners.

A clear articulation of health needs and future primary care requirements. This requires West Lothian Council to engage with NHS Lothian in a more comprehensive manner.

A thorough analysis of “local living” across all towns and villages. Most local authorities in Scotland approach this by including comprehensive settlement statements for all towns and villages within the local development plan. West Lothian Council has always taken the view that West Lothian is one community and that settlement statements can

be briefly summarised as a list of potential development sites in each settlement. The council's view is that “local living” requirements are those of West Lothian as a whole. The Reporters disagree.

The consequence of the requirement for resubmission is a significant delay in the consultation on the draft local development plan. Planners have indicated that a revised timetable will be issued in March 2026 and we are probably talking about the autumn of 2026 before the 12-week consultation period on the draft local development plan commences. This is all very disappointing since the five-year 2018 local development plan is well out of date.

PROPOSED FUTURE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AND LINLITHGOW'S 7% POPULATION DECLINE IN 10 YEARS

The Black Bitch of July 2025 drew attention to the falling population of Linlithgow highlighting the disparity between Linlithgow and comparable local towns which have growing populations. Whilst West Lothian has an increasing population of working age residents, particularly the 19 to 39 year olds, Linlithgow has a decreasing number in this group indicating that our younger adults leave to find affordable housing. For Linlithgow to be a sustainable community with affordable housing we need planned development resulting in 1.5% to 2% (about 75 to 100 houses) annual growth. Since 1997, only 614 houses have been constructed in Linlithgow, a shortfall of the 1800 or so houses required to maintain stability and counter population decline.

The Linlithgow Local Place Plan is clear that any development in the town should be in the southeast quadrant of the town and should be conditional on the provision of the roads and other infrastructure identified in the plan. Planned growth to accommodate the next generation is necessary to maintain a sustainable and balanced population. To do nothing is a distinctly unattractive option. Quality housing for the young and those wishing to downsize, including the necessary infrastructure as a consequence, is demonstrably necessary.

Currently, the only development being planned is on the Wilcoxholm land to the north of the Edinburgh Road where the 2018 Local Development Plan permits 200 houses on approximately 50 acres of land. In a mixed medium-density development such as Springfield, about 10 houses per acre could be expected. 4 houses to the acre would imply an estate of large expensive housing such as those recently built by Cala. Low-cost housing at 4 units per acre would be uneconomic. Hallam Land, the developer agent for the landowners of Wilcoxholm, has submitted a planning application for 220 houses on that part of the land between the canal and the Edinburgh Road, approximately 31 acres. This application is with West Lothian Council planning awaiting consultation and decision. Documents relating to this application are online at <https://planning.westlothian.gov.uk/publicaccess/>

and can be viewed by entering the reference 1007/P/25 in the bottom box of the form. There is strong opinion that whilst 220 houses can be accommodated on the land south of the canal at about 7 units per acre, there must be a contribution towards the infrastructure works specified in the Linlithgow Local Place Plan, which can only be afforded from income from a high proportion of large houses or from a more numerous mixed development at a density similar to Springfield. This requires a fundamental change to the outdated 2018 Local Development Plan where housing numbers were constrained by the capacity of Linlithgow Academy. Now that Winchburgh Academy is operating this constraint no longer applies. All this gives rise to the argument that the Hallam Land proposal is premature and should await the adoption of West Lothian Council's next Local Development Plan probably at the end of this year.

ST MICHAELS HOSPITAL, THE VENNEL AND THE HIGH ST GAP SITES

Despite many emails to West Lothian Council over several years we are no further forward on 31st December 2025 as we were on 1st January 2025. Will we make any progress in 2026? – we will continue to try but don't hold your breath!

John Kelly
Secretary
Linlithgow Planning Forum

THE TALES OF BEADLE THE BARD J.K. ROWLING

J.K. Rowling's **The Tales of Beedle the Bard** offers a fascinating glimpse into the folklore of the Harry Potter wizarding world. First mentioned in the Harry Potter series, this slim collection gives readers the chance to experience the stories that magical children grew up hearing at bedtime. For Muggle-borns, like Harry and Hermione, these tales were initially unfamiliar when introduced – a subtle reminder of how much shared childhood stories shape our sense of belonging, perception and memory.

The book contains five short fables, each carrying a strong moral message. Much like the Brothers Grimm, Rowling does not shy away from darker themes: selfishness and cruelty are punished, kindness and wisdom rewarded. As one story puts it,

"Kindness springs from a good heart; and a good heart alone can change the world".

These morals can at times feel both traditional and slightly unsettling, as the best fairy tales often do.

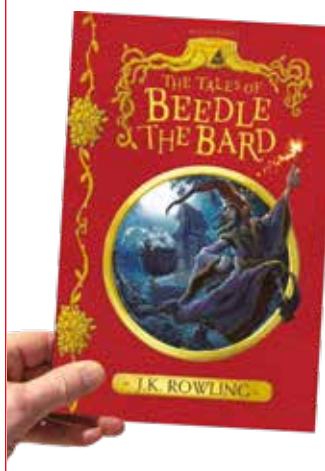
The standout story is undoubtedly **The Tale of the Three Brothers**. Simple but haunting, it tells of three men who cheat Death and are each given a magical gift – a wand of unbeatable power, a stone that can summon the dead, and a cloak of invisibility.

"Then Death stood aside and allowed the three brothers to continue on their way, and they talked with wonder of the adventure they had had, and of the gifts Death had given them".

These objects become the Deathly Hallows, so central to the final chapters of the Harry Potter saga. Even read in isolation, the story has a chilling elegance, but for fans it carries the added thrill of seeing how myth feeds directly into Rowling's larger narrative.

Though brief, **The Tales of Beedle the Bard** has enriched J.K. Rowling's magical universe with the texture of folklore, adding depth and resonance to stories adored by many fans across the world.

The Tales of Beedle the Bard is a charming companion piece to the Harry Potter canon – part cautionary tale, part cultural artefact – and a reminder, as Dumbledore observes in his commentary, that **"Stories can be more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten".**



Lisa Nettleton

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



WINTER TERM

2026

**LINLITHGOW
ACADEMY**



A snapshot of a busy winter term (and why it matters beyond the school gates).

If you do not normally read school newsletters, you are not alone! They can feel like they're "for parents only" or "just for people with children at the school". But every so often there's one that's really a community update in disguise, a picture of what young people are learning, what they are worrying about, what they are achieving and how local organisations are quietly shaping their futures.

Linlithgow Academy's end of term newsletters are just that including the most recent 'December 2025 newsletter'. As we head into 2026, here are the highlights that we think matter to the wider town: the projects that reached out into the community, the skills pupils are building right now and the moments that show what a modern local school looks like in practice.

A school that's "busy" in the best sense

As you would expect it is always busy, senior pupils have just completed winter assessments and staff have continued to go well beyond the basics to create opportunities for young people. In January, many pupils return not just to lessons, but to big decisions, including the start of course choice planning for the 2026-27 session.

Wellbeing and support: not just a slogan

One of the clearest themes running through our newsletters is support. Acting Depute Head Teacher Ms Dyer highlights pupil wellbeing as a key priority, pointing families (and, by extension, anyone supporting a young person) to the school's "Supporting

Learners" information and to House Teams and Additional Support for Learning website pages. It is a reminder that schools are increasingly the first place young people turn to when life feels complicated and that we are building systems to catch problems early.

Just as importantly, the newsletter shares a wide range of trusted support organisations (from Childline to Samaritans, plus specialist charities), signalling something simple but powerful, it is okay to ask for help and there are multiple routes to get it.

Pupil voice, community values and a bake sale with purpose

A lot of "youth voice" talk can be vague but there are concrete examples

> The Cultural Connections group brought Día de los Muertos to the school community through a bake sale that raised £107, but also modelled real-world skills: budgeting, planning, organising and teamwork.

> They have also been creating a slideshow celebrating all the languages spoken across the school, a small project that can have a big impact on belonging.

Meanwhile, the Young Carers Group took part in an emergency planning workshop led by Carers of West Lothian, helping pupils think through what to do if their caring role suddenly becomes more demanding. These are young people carrying adult-sized responsibilities.

Careers and "Pathways with Purpose": employers in, horizons out

One of the most community-connected strands is "Developing the Young Workforce". Over the term, pupils heard from (and worked with) organisations including the Royal Navy, Hearth Architects, Vets for Pets, Next Pharma and Sight Scotland Veterans. The practical session from Sight Scotland Veterans, including everyday challenges

like making a cup of tea with sight loss is the kind of hands-on empathy building that sticks.

Linlithgow Academy's NPA Journalism class also recently welcomed former pupil and BBC journalist Hope Webb for an inspiring visit. Another valuable opportunity to connect pupils to professional pathways.



There is also a strong signal for January: more opportunities are coming after the winter break, with pupils encouraged to watch school communications for new "Pathways" sessions.

Learning that looks like... Oreo cookies, glaciers and argument building

Across faculties, what stands out is how often learning is active, applied and outward facing:

> **Geography:** S1 pupils used Oreo cookies to model plate tectonics (delicious and memorable), while S3 pupils tackled climate change by testing ocean acidification and sea-level rise through experiments. National 5 pupils took fieldwork into the local area, traffic counts, noise pollution checks, environmental quality surveys then processed data using ICT skills.

> **History:** S1 pupils designed earthquake-resistant buildings using Japan as a case study. Older pupils focused on building and defending arguments, a transferable skill whether you are writing essays, debating policy or just trying to make a point clearly.

> **RMPS:** Pupils explored big questions – punishment and prison design;

Follow all the news and events at Linlithgow Academy:
<https://linlithgowacademy.westlothian.org.uk/>

practising Islam in Scotland and the realities of prejudice and animal rights from religious and non-religious perspectives, building empathy, ethical reasoning and respectful debate.

If you ever wonder what young people are being asked to think about, it is not just “facts for exams”. It is the kind of critical thinking communities rely on.

Big experiences: Iceland, cabin crew training and real confidence

Two standout “this will stay with them forever” experiences:



> The Iceland trip (38 S5–S6 pupils) finally happened after nearly two years of planning, with a packed itinerary: Reykjavik, waterfalls, black sand beaches, glaciers, geothermal sites and even a Northern Lights finale. The write-up puts a strong emphasis on pupils’ behaviour and enthusiasm, a point that matters when schools take young people into the wider world.



> Travel & Tourism pupils had a cabin crew experience day at Edinburgh College, practising safety announcements and service, exactly the sort of confidence-building that can change how a young person sees their own options.

Achievement worth cheering (even if you do not know the pupils)

There is plenty here to make the town quietly proud:

> An S1 pupil, Ava, won the Wonderverse poetry competition, selected from over 12,900 submissions, a huge achievement for any writer, let alone someone in their first year of secondary school. **See page 11 for full poem.**

> Sports highlights include

pupils competing nationally and internationally — sailing at European championships, tennis titles and finals abroad, cross country medals and a senior netball tournament win.



> In Art & Design, the introduction of “Artists of the Project” gives a simple but meaningful spotlight to craft, focus and creativity.



> In STEM Racing (F1 in Schools), two Linlithgow Academy teams took 1st and 2nd in the Scottish Regional Finals (Development Class), qualifying for the UK National Finals in March 2026, a serious achievement in a competitive field.

> In the CyberFirst Girls UK Competition, which aims to inspire girls who are interested in technology to pursue a career in cyber security our Team, Code Blooded placed 8th. This competition saw teams tackling challenges from cryptography and logic to artificial intelligence and networking.

The school as a community hub: food, skills, service

Some of the most quietly impressive parts are in Technologies and Hospitality: pupils earning food hygiene



certificates, working in the canteen, building barista skills, running lunch events and catering for a large in-school event. That is not just “learning to cook” it is professional practice, teamwork, time-planning and customer service.



In Design Technology and Woodwork, the emphasis on accuracy (down to +/- 1mm tolerance), finishing quality and safe tool use is exactly what employers mean when they talk about work-readiness.



Science in Action: From Curious Experiments to Real Research

Across the school, science learning grows from hands-on curiosity to genuine scientific practice. Younger pupils begin with practical investigations, from powering bulbs with lemon batteries to exploring renewable energy, heat transfer and eco-design. Others take on STEM challenges such as analysing a simulated meteorite discovery at Beecraigs Park.



By S3, science is tied directly to modern issues: pupils examine the sustainability of electric cars, explore DNA technology and inheritance and conduct chemistry experiments linked to corrosion and everyday materials.

continued p10/11.

At senior level, learning mirrors real scientific work. National 5 and Higher classes study topics such as space, energy, equilibrium and human biology, while Advanced Higher pupils undertake independent research projects, including work in Heriot-Watt University laboratories.

This pathway, from early curiosity to applied thinking to authentic research shows how young people are developing the scientific literacy and problem-solving skills that communities increasingly depend on.

Looking ahead: key January–March dates locals might notice

As we go into January 2026, Linlithgow Academy is moving straight into a busy run of events:

S5/6 Parents' Evening:
Thursday 8 January

Careers Evening / Moving Into Senior Phase: Thursday 15 January

S4 Parents' Evening:
Tuesday 20 January

Science Fair:
Thursday 26 & Friday 27 February

Spring Concert:
Wednesday 25 March

Even if you do not attend, these dates hint at what is happening behind the scenes: course decisions, pathways planning and showcases of learning.

Why this matters to the wider Linlithgow community

A school newsletter might look inward, but the story here is outward: young people learning about climate, justice, faith, ethics and health, building confidence through travel and professional experiences, connecting with charities and employers and representing the area in sport, arts and STEM.

In other words, the Academy is not just educating pupils, it is helping shape the next wave of volunteers, workers, carers, creators and citizens in Linlithgow.

If you want to read our termly newsletters you can do so via this QR code:



And as we start 2026, that is a community story worth sharing!

Grant Abbot,
Head Teacher



Follow all the news and events at Linlithgow Academy: <https://linlithgowacademy.westlothian.org.uk/>

KD
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“Distant Possibilities”, Ava S1.

Mark Grist (judge) said:

“Ava, this poem is stunning. It balances real scientific precision with the wonder of creation, and your language choices are gorgeous throughout. The structure builds beautifully, like a story unfolding across time. It’s an extraordinary piece of writing - I loved it. Well done!”

As the proto-planetary disk
Cooled down
Water droplets formed
On asteroids
Floating around

These boulders collided
Forming the Earth
A burning rock
Time ticking forward
On the clock

Whilst the molten Earth
Careered around the sun
Out of the void
Came another one

As the two embraced
The Earth began to spin
The debris formed the moon
As the next of kin

After millions of years
Once the Earth was cold
Water rained down
Like liquid gold

Oceans formed
Helped by the atmosphere
Gravity's command
Holding it dear

Prokaryotes floating between
Those ancient waters
Of vibrant green
This was the past
Its story told
All of space left
For explorers bold.



Managing your child's myopia: a parent's essential guide



Specsavers

CHILDHOOD myopia, also known as short-sightedness, is an eye condition that is becoming increasingly common. The condition impacts a child's vision, by making it difficult to see objects far away clearly, which can lead to difficulties at school or at home.

Diana Kelly – store director at Specsavers Linlithgow, answers some of the most commonly asked questions about myopia and the steps you can take to manage the condition.

What is myopia?

Diana says: 'Myopia is also known as near-sightedness or short-sightedness. In a myopic eye, light is focused at a point in front of the retina, meaning the image that falls on the retina is blurred. This means that if your child is myopic, they can see close objects easily – like reading a book or looking at a phone – but things at a distance, such as words on a whiteboard or on the TV, will look blurry.'

What are the signs my child has myopia?

'The most common symptoms of myopia are blurred vision, eye strain, squinting or headaches. If your child is complaining that their eyes are feeling tired or they're having trouble seeing into the distance, they might be suffering from myopia. You can also keep an eye out for other easy-to-spot symptoms, like excessive blinking, eye rubbing or clumsiness.'

How do we detect myopia in children?

'Regular eye tests are vital in spotting the signs of myopia early and can help slow its progression. No matter how old your child is, here at Specsavers Linlithgow, we can test their eyes. For older children, we use the standard letter charts, but with younger ones, we can use shapes or pictures.'

'To work out how short/long-sighted your child is, our opticians will shine a light into their eyes – this is called retinoscopy.'

Can myopia in children be reversed?

'There's no 'cure' for myopia, but the good news is that a pair of normal glasses or contact lenses can easily correct it.'

'At Specsavers, we also have something called "myopia management" which uses special glasses or contact lenses. These work by using a special lens that refocuses the eye and helps to slow the progression of myopia in a child's eyesight.'

'Clinical studies have also shown that these can slow down the rate of myopia in children by up to 60%!'

What can you do for a child with myopia?

'There are a few everyday tips you can follow to help your child if they have myopia.'

1. Make sure they're spending time outside, at least two hours a day ideally.
2. Try and limit their screen time.
3. Make sure they're not holding books too close to their eyes
4. Try and ensure they get a good night's sleep!

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

NEW LIVES DOWN UNDER

Bruce Jamieson

A new year often brings new beginnings and in the year 1844 it certainly did for Linlithgow resident James Dawson who had been born at Bonnytoun Farm in the year 1806. After attending school in Linlithgow, and spending a short time at Edinburgh University, James worked for a while in the Dawson distillery at Bonnytoun.



Bonnytoun Home Farm today.

When it was decided to move the whisky factory to the St Magdalene site on Edinburgh Road, James decided that he much preferred working in the farming side of the family's business. After a few years, he then decided it was the right time for him to move on and try his luck in London.



St Magdalene Distillery from the east.

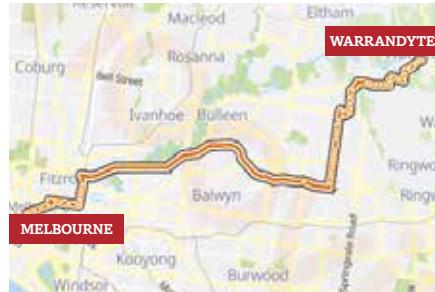
So, with his wife, Joan Park - a niece of famous Scottish explorer Mungo Park - he set up a business in Hackney. It did not succeed and, worried about his wife's health, James decided to emigrate to Australia.

In January 1844 they travelled in a stern cabin aboard the Cunard ship "SS China" along with all their possessions, food for the voyage and a flat packed two-roomed pine cottage. (I'm not sure Ikea stock them now!)



"SS China" was later used as a troop ship during the Zulu War of 1879.

James, along with his nephew, Patrick Mitchell, and a business partner, George Selby, purchased a small dairy farm on the Yarra River, northwest of Melbourne, near present day Warrandyte. Here, in their duly erected wooden cabin, their only child, Isabella, was born.



Two years later, they embarked on an arduous, 23-day journey in a bullock cart to a larger farm called Kangatong, on the outskirts of Sydney. James stayed there for 22 years and developed it into a successful sheep ranch. During this time, his daughter became fascinated by the life of the Aboriginal people who lived around the station.

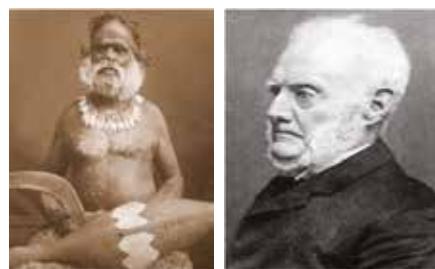


Isabella Dawson.

James too developed an abiding interest in a race which had too often been persecuted. He became their champion and, along

with his daughter, studied their language, culture and customs, eventually publishing the landmark book "Australian Aborigines." James was a prolific writer and he also kept a meticulous scrapbook of notes, newspaper cuttings and other memorabilia which he used in the many lectures he gave.

After the death of his wife in 1879, James paid a visit back to his native town and delivered a presentation in the Linlithgow Burgh Halls which included magic lantern slides of Aboriginal life and customs, including a photograph of the memorial he had erected to commemorate the last surviving member of the Djargurd Wurrung tribe.



Left: The last of his tribe: Wombeetech Puyuun. Right: James Dawson in 1879.

Whilst in Linlithgow, James visited his father's, Adam Dawson's, grave

marker set against the south wall of St Michael's Church. After two years on his travels, he returned back to Australia and died in 1900, aged 93. He is buried with his wife and other members of the family in Camperdown Cemetery.



Left: Adam Dawson's memorial in Linlithgow. Right: The Dawson family headstone in Camperdown.

Another successful Linlithgow emigrant was James Hardie whose family were long-established Linlithgow tanners, operating out of an establishment at 248 High Street.

The production of leather was big business in 19th century Linlithgow. The New Statistical Account states that, "the leather trade, in its various branches, is the staple employer of the town. There are five master tanners employing 28 men, at a wage of between 9 and 13 shillings per week, and nine master curriers employing 50 men with an average pay of 14 shillings per week."



Hardie's Tannery workers.

James Hardie was the youngest of five children, a bright lad who, after an education at Linlithgow Grammar School, entered the family business as an office manager and bookkeeper, at which post he remained for some 20 years before deciding to emigrate to Australia. Many Scots had gone before him - not least the 8207 Scottish convicts who had been transported there as a punishment, in the late 18th and early 19th century.

By the end of the 19th century, around 9000 Scots a year were voluntarily entering Australia and Hardie heard from numerous emigrant friends who encouraged him to join them. The 1880s was a period of economic

downturn in Scotland and this probably influenced his decision – or, at the age of 35, he may just have developed itchy feet.

In 1886, James boarded the brand-new, Royal Mail Ship “Oroya” at the Port of London and spent 40 days travelling in the vessel which its owners advertised as “a 475-foot, floating hotel equipped with electric lighting, an on-board bakery and steam-heated cabins.” The brochure, issued by the Orient Line Shipping Company, also stated, “The saloon is 40 feet long, taking in the whole breadth of the vessel, and containing tables sufficient to seat 130 passengers. There is no cow on board but instead there are numerous churns of milk, taken on board at port, kept in ice blocks and thawed as required for daily use.”



RMS Oroya.

James Hardie settled in Melbourne where, using his knowledge of the leather industry, he set up a business importing and supplying machinery and chemicals for Melbourne’s tanneries. His business partner was a fellow Linlithgow emigrant, Andrew Reid, who described Hardie as, “*a man with a sombre disposition who applied a serious, Presbyterian work ethic to his business, impressing the major tanners in the state of Victoria to the extent that he was elected as secretary of the Master Tanners’ and Curriers’ Association.*”

Hardie’s partner brought an increased dynamism to the business, setting up a branch in Sydney and doubling the size of their Melbourne office –premises which opened in 1902 with celebrations that the “Melbourne Herald” described as “a traditional, exuberant Scottish shop-warming!” His company was described in the article as “importers, shippers, and leather and bark factors.”

In 1893, Hardie married a girl with Scottish roots, Clara Buncle, the daughter of John, an Edinburgh manufacturer and inventor who had emigrated to Melbourne in 1852. James and Clara went on to have four children.

In 1901, convalescing from an extended illness, Hardie took his wife on a seven-month trip, beginning with a journey to show her his roots in Linlithgow. She was apparently most impressed by the Victoria Hall!



Linlithgow High Street C 1900, dominated by the Victoria Hall.

They travelled on to London where James came across fibro cement - a new type of roofing slate - and immediately he set up a contract to import it into Australia. He returned home with a shipment of the new material which he thought would be ideal for the construction of Australian buildings, being resistant to heat and termites. It proved an astute business move and soon Hardie was the sole Australasian and Pacific agent for the product. Among the firm’s earliest Melbourne customers was the Victoria Railway Company.

The product made him his fortune and

he moved into successively grander Melbourne mansions - all called either ‘Lithgae’ or ‘Lithca’ - diminutives for his birthplace. Always a serious, anxious man, when his company was going through a difficult economic period, he decided to retire and, in 1912, sold out to his partner and moved into a house he named, of course, “Lithca” in the Melbourne suburb of Malvern. He died eight years later of what is described on his death certificate as arteriosclerotic heart disease.

Finding out that he is buried in Brighton Cemetery, on the outskirts of Melbourne, I emailed a local researcher called Travis Sellers who very kindly photographed James Hardie’s grave

marker. Buried with him are his wife, his son Alexander, his daughter Mary and two grandchildren: Allan who died in 1944 and Vera who died in 1969.



Brighton Cemetery, Melbourne, and the Hardie family grave.

The company he founded continues to operate in Australia, still under the name ‘James Hardie’, and now specialising in a variety of building materials, employing over 2500 people with a branch in Ireland serving Europe and, very recently, an American office in Chicago – all of this because of one man who left Linlithgow for a new start in life.

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THE BATTLE OF LINLITHGOW BRIDGE

Nick Drainey



The air was filled with the stench of fear as the reality of civil war kicked in.

The Earl of Lennox's soldiers were lined up, shoulder to shoulder, pikes gripped in their hands, knuckles turning white as they stared up at the forces ranged against them.

At the top of Pace Hill – about where Avontoun Park now stands – were the Earl of Arran's men, about to charge down towards them, the blur of faces turning into individuals as the two armies collided in a push of pike.

And among those faces would be friends, neighbours, even family.

The Battle of Linlithgow Bridge wasn't just a bloody clash between noble factions fighting for control of the Crown – many of the men in the ranks were ordinary Linlithgow folk, obliged to take up arms on that fateful day 500 years ago. It's a matter of 'kill or be killed', sometimes by members of their own families and community.

Lennox was marching to Edinburgh with around 10,000 men to try to free the 14-year-old King James V from the control of the Earl of Angus when he encountered an army of some 2,000 men under Arran at Linlithgow Bridge. Douglas reinforcements were underway from Edinburgh, but would they arrive in time?

As it turned out the ensuing slaughter was swift and merciless for the Lennox contingents; it was as brutal as 16th Century warfare could be.

"To stand in a pike block to fight your neighbour is virtually impossible to imagine," says historian **Jon Cooper**.

"What would it take for someone to

do it? You could choose not to fight but you would be condemned as an 'outdweller' or an 'outlaw', as would your wife and children." That means you would effectively be cast out of your home, unable to earn a living within the burgh boundary and with no certainty that other communities would allow you to settle there. Or worse, you could be made an example and killed for refusing to fight.



The Battle of Linlithgow Bridge saw the local population, on both sides, faced with this situation. Questions of fear and doubt were everywhere; what will become of me and my family, how can I fight my neighbour, will I see tomorrow?

Jon, who will be talking about 16th century warfare and the Battle of Linlithgow Bridge at a Linlithgow Civic Trust talk in March, says: **"The people of Linlithgow would have heard rumours that Lennox was coming their way and that Arran was preparing to intercept him. They would have been worried. Okay they had experienced a similar call up months earlier when the Hamiltons had sided with the Queen and Lennox in what proved to be a non-event – but now they had swapped sides and the fight was on."**

The male townsfolk of fighting age would know they were expected to take up arms for Arran no matter who the opposition were.

Jon adds: **"The average guy in the town or fields would hear the church bells chime calling them to the muster, or had seen the 'Hot Rod' – burning peat on the end of a spear – displayed on the High Street."** But who they would be fighting was anyone's guess as Lennox would have gathered up various militias and retinues as he made his way from Stirling.

Jon says: **"In a civil war it is different than an England v Scotland clash, or a religious war fought by secluded communities. In a civil war between lords, you might well recognise someone on the other side, it might be your brother-in-law, cousin or friend called to arms by their loyalty and debt to their laird."**

"The man opposite is wearing the same kit and clothes as you and speaks like you; essentially you are the same."

The only distinguishing features were the house badges the soldiers wore, or the banners and coats of arms they fought under, or simply 'marks' such as a sprig of oak in the headgear of men allied to the Hamilton family.

Lennox's forces, although far superior in

number, were routed on September 4, 1526. It is widely thought the advantage of higher ground played a large part but Jon believes the local men fighting for Arran would have been spurred on by the thought of their families being so close.

"One of the reasons people of Linlithgow defended the bridge so well could have been that their wives and children were back in the town. The militia would have known there was a real risk of murder, rape and pillage if they ended up on the losing side."

After the battle, for those on Arran's side, there was a chance to return to normality, safe at home. For those who had taken up arms for Lennox, the future was rather less secure.

They had effectively been fighting against the King by trying to seize him

from his official protector. The fact that the King finally made it onto the battlefield to witness Lennox's murder was key to the Douglas justification for the killing and subsequent retribution. This was treason and that was a serious charge and one that meant some would have to make themselves scarce or face the hangman. Others might have found the victors had taken over their lands and faced exile.



For the average militia man, the problem could be closer to home. Jon says: *"Imagine meeting the family of the man you had slain at the market in the coming months ... what do you do? Make up a story to pretend you weren't there or claim you were forced to fight. Imagine you had speared someone and then you bumped into their father, brother or son on the High Street the*

next month, it might not end too well."

Whatever side you had ended up on, the bitter reality of warfare would have an effect. Jon says: *"The Battle of Linlithgow Bridge was a battle of power between Lords, Kings and Queens."*

"But left behind were broken communities which lost family, friends, homes, crops and livelihoods."

Jon will present his second Linlithgow Civic Trust lecture of the season at Queen Margaret's Hall on March 19 at 7.30pm. Go to www.battle500.org.uk for more details.



BATTLE
LINLITHGOW BRIDGE 1526

QUIZ Battle 500 is running a fundraising quiz, hosted by the legendary Davie "Deep Sea" Paterson.

Teams of four (at £10pp) are invited to the quiz, which also includes a raffle, stand-up/sit-down bingo and heads or tails.

It will take place at Linlithgow Bowling Club on Saturday February 21 and funds raised will go towards organising and running all events commemorating the Battle of Linlithgow Bridge.

LINLITHGOW PLAYERS

The Linlithgow Players first performed at Linlithgow Palace in 1540 to the court of James V of Scotland (as far as records show) - a politically charged drama by David Lindsay that was reported to Henry VIII of England.

They will be returning again in August to perform their playlet, *While the Battle's at the Brig*, written by Peter Anderson and Eleanor Bain.

The play is set on the morning of September 4, 1526. Three generations of townsfolk are in a heightened state of busyness. They've seen "the Wapinschaw at the Peel". Uppermost in their minds is the battle of Flodden, only 13 years earlier. They reflect on the terrors and old Tam's lucky escape whilst the womenfolk grapple with new divided loyalties. Pregnant Kate prays for both mobilising armies: under Lennox and Douglas. Her brothers will fight for one and her husband the other. Meanwhile, our cheeky Lithgae fruit-seller keeps everyone on track.

While the Battle's at the Brig is at Linlithgow Palace Courtyard at 3pm on Sundays August 9, 16, 23 and 30.



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LAMP CABARET: SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL STARS



SHOWS
27/28
FEB

Images: Lee Fletcher Photography



Get ready for an unforgettable evening as LAMP Cabaret returns to Linlithgow Academy on February 27th and 28th!

This year's cabaret takes you on a sparkling journey through musicals throughout the years, showcasing show-stopping numbers from classic favourites to contemporary hits.

With a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere, audiences are free to play games, enjoy a drink from the bar and soak up the fun, making it the perfect night out for friends, family and theatre lovers alike. LAMP Cabaret is dedicated to **showcasing local talent**, and this year's performances highlight some of the **stand-out stars from last year**, bringing their energy, charisma and unforgettable voices to the stage once again.

Following the continued success of previous cabarets, LAMP has created an experience that goes beyond traditional musical theatre. Expect a dynamic mix of solo acts, group performances and a celebration of musical favourites from every era, all delivered with the high-quality performances and sparkle audiences have come to expect.

Whether you're a seasoned theatre-goer or new to LAMP, prepare to be entertained, dazzled and inspired. The show promises an amazing atmosphere, laughter and a joyous celebration of local performers.

One delighted audience member reflected, *"I am so glad I managed to get one of the few remaining tickets for this spectacular performance - I was utterly blown away by the performances, and in tears for most of the evening! I can't thank you*

enough for the precious gift of your creative expression and all the ways it moved me."

Tickets are available now - don't miss your chance to see this must-attend theatrical event of the season!

LAMP Cabaret 2026

Friday 27th February at 7pm

Saturday 28th February at 7pm

Tickets from £10. Book via the website; www.linlithgow-musicals.co.uk or using the QR Code below.



Team LAMP

ALL CHANGE FOR THE FRATERNITY OF DYERS.

The historic Fraternity of Dyers in Linlithgow, which has a prominent role in the annual Riding of the Marches celebrations, has a new man at the helm, following the recent appointment of Jamie Smart to the prestigious position of Deacon.

Local farmer Jamie has been a member of what is reputedly the town's oldest organisation for nearly thirty years and in assuming the role of Deacon, is following in the footsteps of his late father, **Sandy**, who held the position between 1968 and 1973. He is delighted to be taking on the role and told me:

"I never thought that one day I would be Deacon of the Dyers and am deeply moved that the Fraternity has given me the honour. On Marches Day, I know it will be emotional for me and just hope that I can represent the Dyers even half as well as previous Deacons"

The Fraternity was first established in the late seventeenth century, with early records dating from 1667. Its aim was to provide support during periods of illness and hardship for dyers and their

families in Linlithgow, and by 1670 the Fraternity had accumulated sufficient funds to offer loans when required.

The Fraternity of Dyers is the sole survivor of Linlithgow's various trade fraternities, such as the Hammermen, Tailors, Baxters, Cordiners, Weavers, Wrights, Coopers and Fleshers. The office of Deacon Convenor or Lord Deacon was held exclusively by the Deacon of the Hammermen for many years, but later by the other Deacons in rotation. The Deacon of the Dyers now holds this honoured position and as "Lord Deacon," has a major role in the annual Riding of the Marches.

For many years, the Fraternity of Dyers was a Friendly Society, but it exists today as a social and charitable organisation and does good works to support the local community. The card-carrying membership is now around the mid-forties, a far cry from the 1950s, when numbers had dwindled to a handful. The Dyers are prominent on Marches Day, where, in their distinctive black morning dress and grey top hats, the members and their guests bring

up the rear of the procession, behind Unison Kinnel Band.



Jamie Smart takes over from **Alistair Old** (second left), who was a diligent and innovative secretary from 2011 until 2023. Alistair told me:

"How time flies!! Three years ago, I was elected as the Deacon of the Dyers. It has been an amazing time presiding over the affairs of the centuries-old Fraternity. There have been so many highlights, including presenting the new Dyers Cloth trophy at Linlithgow Academy and attending many social events, both locally and nationally, representing the Fraternity."

As the eighty-sixth recorded Deacon of the Dyers, I am proud to have followed in a long line of well-known Deacons including Sandy Smart, and my immediate predecessors Bobby Bennie, David Bennie and Crawford Flint, who gave me great support in my role as secretary.

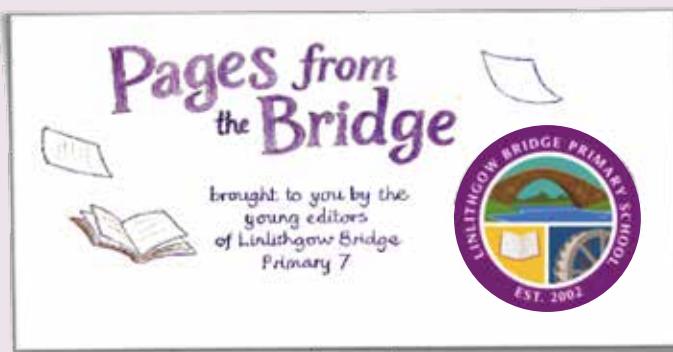
During my time as Deacon, I have worked on establishing closer links with the Armed Forces and with the Dyers of Glasgow and the Dyers of London. Many will have seen in recent Marches parades several uniformed officers from the Army, including officers with local ties to Linlithgow including Colonel Ross Brookfield, Lt. Col Jamie McMeekan and Lt. Calum Hodges from the Parachute regiment.

It is with great pleasure (and a little sadness, if I'm honest) that I now officially hand over the chain of office to our new Deacon, Jamie Smart, who is well qualified to take up the role, with his strong family connections to the Dyers and indeed the Marches. It goes without saying that I wish Jamie every success in his time as Deacon and hope he enjoys the role as much as I have during the last three years."

Murdoch Kennedy



"I never thought that one day I would be Deacon of the Dyers and am deeply moved that the Fraternity has given me the honour. Jamie Smart



Pages from the Bridge
brought to you by the young editors of Linlithgow Bridge Primary 7

LINLITHGOW BRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL
EST. 2002

A Literacy Showcase from Linlithgow Bridge Primary School Collated by Primary 7

Reporter: Leon Paterson

Photographer: Ruby Shackleton

My name is Leon Paterson and I'm the Primary 7 reporter for January. I'm excited to share all the brilliant reading and writing that took place across Linlithgow Bridge Primary School before the holidays. December was full of creativity, festive cheer and fantastic learning and now we're looking back at everything we achieved together. Thanks for reading! Leon Paterson, P7 Reporter

Primary 1:

Autumn Adventures and Tree-House Tales

P1 enjoyed *After the Storm* by Nick Butterworth, linking their reading to an Autumn theme. The children created beautiful drawings of the tree house from the story and even built their own versions using Kapla and loose parts. Their writing is at the early stages, focusing on simple sentences and CVC* words, inspired by collecting autumn treasures in the wildlife garden.



*"My tree-house has a bath for the animals."
"I like my tree house because it has lots of different places for the animals to relax."*

Primary 2:

Adventures Under the Stars

Before the holidays, P2 explored *Here We Are* by Oliver Jeffers, linking their learning to the Earth, Sun and Moon. They wrote imaginative stories inspired

by *The Way Back Home*, also by Oliver Jeffers, and created descriptive pieces about space adventures.

"We loved learning about space and writing our own journeys!"



Primary 3: Magic and Moats

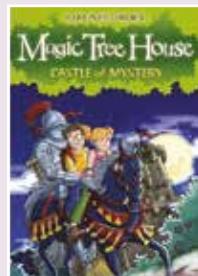
P3 enjoyed *Castle of Mystery* by Mary Pope Osborne from the Magic Tree House series, connecting their reading to Linlithgow Palace and Mary Queen of Scots.

They wrote recounts and shared favourite moments:

"It was really funny when Jack was in the moat and he thought Annie was a crocodile because she was wet and splashing about!"

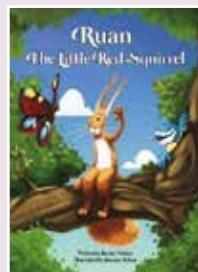
"I really enjoyed the bit when Jack found the bookmark hidden inside the castle book."

"I found the part scary when Jack and Annie slid down the hole at the top of the castle and landed in the freezing cold moat."



Primary 4: Dahl Delights and Woodland Wonders

P4 read *Matilda* by Roald Dahl and wrote narrative adventures inspired by *Ruan the Little Red Squirrel* by Rachel McGaw. Their stories were packed with woodland magic and adventures!



Primary 5: Riveting Reads and Persuasive Debates

P5 were hooked on *The Tiger Skin Rug* by Barbara Henderson, linking their reading to an interdisciplinary topic on bridges. They also debated whether homework should be banned, writing persuasive pieces full of strong arguments.

"My favourite part was when John, the main character, completes his training and is sent up onto the bridge as part of the rivet gang. The men in his gang are very mean but others give John tips for how to face his fear of heights."

Primary 6: Royal Tales and Historical Headlines

P6 explored *The Boy, The Witch & The Queen of Scots* by Barbara Henderson, learning about Mary Queen of Scots and life in the 16th century. Their writing included double-page spreads and newspaper articles about her imprisonment.

"It's been fascinating learning about different times."

Primary 7: A Dickensian Christmas

P7 brought the festive spirit to life with *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. We imagined Scrooge on social media, created character portraits and wrote expository pieces on how Dickens used



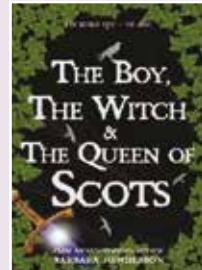
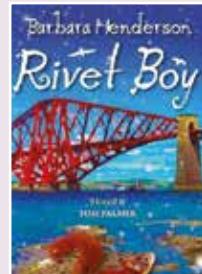
the Ghost of Christmas Present to teach his readers about generosity and care.

"Reading about Victorian times made me imagine being cold and hungry with no one to help."

"It shocked me how big the gap was between rich and poor. It felt like two completely different worlds."

"I felt angry that the poor had to work so hard just to survive while the rich didn't seem to care."

Looking Back December was a wonderful time for reading and writing across the school. From magical castles to Victorian streets, our pupils explored stories that taught us about kindness, courage and creativity. We're proud of everything we achieved and look forward to sharing more exciting learning in the next edition of *Pages from the Bridge*!



THE ROSE GO MARCHING ON!



The 2025-26 season has been something of a mixed bag for Linlithgow Rose Football Club. I met up with Head Coach, Darren Wilson, and President, Jon Mahoney, to get their views on how things were going both on and off the pitch.

Darren told me:

"It's been a period of mixed emotions for myself at Linlithgow Rose. Earlier in the season, we enjoyed some fantastic moments, including a ten-game winning streak that really showed what we're capable of. More recently, we've picked up important victories against Penicuik in the East of Scotland Qualifying cup and Cumbernauld Colts in the Lowland League, which underlined the quality and resilience in the squad.

We've also faced a tough run of fixtures against Queen's Park, Clydebank, Bonnyrigg Rose, and Tranent. The Scottish Cup game against Queen's Park at Prestonfield was a special occasion - a bumper home crowd, live TV coverage, and a chance to test ourselves against a full-time Championship side. We were without key players that day, with Dylan Paterson injured and Olly Hamilton suspended, but the squad gave everything. While the result didn't go our way, the performance was something we could take pride in.

On the flip side, the result against Bo'ness at Newtown Park on December 27th was hugely disappointing. It wasn't good enough and fell well below the standards we set for ourselves. That one really hurt, and we know how much that fixture means to our supporters. We share their frustration.

This period has taught us a lot about our squad - in the good times and in adversity. We've learned who can step up, who can dig deep, and what we need to do as a

management team to improve the group. These lessons will shape how we move forward.

We've had setbacks like every club I am sure, but losing key players like Dylan Paterson and Ciaran Greene for the season has been a huge blow, as well as dealing with knocks to Louis Maguire, Paul Kennedy, and Olly Hamilton. We're looking to strengthen the squad and bring in the right players to make sure we stay competitive at the top end of the table.

We have big games coming up in the league and cup competitions as we hit the business end of the season. Every point matters, and we know how important these fixtures are for our ambitions. The support from the town means everything to us, and we'll keep working hard to make Linlithgow proud."



Jon Mahoney gave me an insight into important work taking place behind the scenes:

"Off the field the club is preparing for its annual SFA review. This is something all clubs in the Lowland League and above need to undertake - we've been part of the process since 2012. The review determines the level of "award" each club will receive. Levels range from Entry to Platinum. To qualify to play in the SPFL (the next level up from Lowland League), the minimum standard is Bronze and is a significant step up from Entry level - with significant additional costs.

Over and above Entry Level, the club needs to:

>> Ensure coaches are qualified to a much higher level than is necessary for Entry level

>> Employ or secure the services of a doctor

>> Employ or have access to a physiotherapist who is a member of

a relevant professional body

>> Employ or have access to an accountant who is a member of an accredited organisation

>> Present fully audited accounts to the SFA (the audit process runs to a cost of several thousand pounds)

>> Provide cover for at least 500 people

>> Ensure the pitch area is of a certain size

>> Ensure that the floodlights are at a specific minimum lux level

For a club which plays in a league which is to all intents and purposes unfunded, blending the need to invest in the playing squad with the costs attached to running the club so that both elements can align to the requirements of the SPFL - where significantly higher levels of funding are available - is a challenge we try to meet head on. It simply can't be done without the support of the community of Linlithgow and of course our many wonderful sponsors. We're forever grateful for that support, but of course as costs and standards rise, we need to work harder than ever to keep the club moving forward.

ROSE FIXTURES:

The community will have the chance to "Rally round the Rose" in the forthcoming fixtures, which include an intriguing battle against Hearts B at home on Saturday February 7th. The Hearts side will include sixteen-year-old Linlithgow twins, Alfie and Stanley Wilson, who recently signed professional contracts with the Gorgie club and who are widely tipped to have a great future in the game.



SAT. JAN 24th
Caledonian Braves (Home) 3pm

SAT. JAN 31st
Cowdenbeath (Home - League Cup) 3pm

SAT. FEB 7th - Hearts B (Home) 3pm

SAT. FEB 14th
Civil Service Strollers (Home) 3pm

SAT. FEB 21st
Gala Fairydean Rovers (Away) 3pm

SAT. FEB 28th
Cowdenbeath (Away) 3pm

Murdoch Kennedy





Award winning Clinic
Skin Salon of the
Year 2025

Tina Arnot
Laser, Light and
Skincare Specialist

REINTRODUCING SKIN HAPPY – CARING FOR SKIN, CONFIDENCE AND WELLBEING

With Skin Happy celebrating its sixth birthday this February and welcoming many new clients over the past year, now feels like the ideal time to reintroduce myself. I'm Tina, the owner of Skin Happy here in Linlithgow, and I'd love to share more about what I do and why I do it.

Last year was a proud milestone when Skin Happy was awarded Skin Salon of the Year. This recognition meant a great deal to me, as it reflects my passion and commitment to providing safe, effective and genuine caring treatments that help clients feel confident, carefree and of course, skin happy.

Skincare is at the heart of everything I do. I specialise in advanced, results-driven treatments using only clinically proven and medical-grade products and equipment, including:

- > **Laser treatments** for hair removal and tattoo removal.
- > **Light-based therapies** such as IPL (Intense Pulsed Light) and Phototherapy for skin rejuvenation, thread vessels, blood spots, pigmentation reduction or removal, rosacea, acne management and ageing skin.
- > **Microneedling with EPN** to improve scarring, acne scarring, uneven skin texture and fine lines.
- > **Cryotherapy** for the safe removal of skin tags, general skin lesions, warts and verrucae.
- > **Pelvic floor health treatments**, supporting those experiencing incontinence, pelvic floor weakness, recovery after childbirth, or post-prostate surgery.

> **Tailored facial treatments and chemical peels** for a wide range of skin concerns, including acne, rosacea, uneven skin tone, ageing skin, or simply maintaining healthy, glowing skin all designed to support healthy, balanced skin.

> **Personalised homecare routines** to maintain results and improve skin confidence at home.

> **Bespoke skin plans** for everyday skin health as well as special occasions such as weddings.

I am passionate about caring for people in a therapeutic, supportive way, helping each client achieve healthier skin by working with the body's own natural processes.

My background is medical. I retrained into aesthetics in 2017. I am still a registered Dental Nurse (of 16+ years) and prior to this 15 years in Pharmacy, latterly in this career I was the Principal Pharmacy Technician at the Western General Hospital and Pharmacy Lecturer at Edinburgh's Telford College. I hold CIBTAC and VTCT Level 3, 4 and 5 qualifications, all of which are required to be a Laser, Light and Skincare specialist.



● LASER

From the thousands of results, I have achieved at Skin Happy, a small selection can be viewed on the results page of my website. Images are limited, as many clients prefer not to have their photographs shared online. However, the hundreds of five-star reviews across my website speak clearly about the

care, trust and results experienced at Skin Happy.

If you are interested in any of my services, a no-obligation consultation can be booked online via any of the Book Now buttons. If you are unsure which treatment may be right for you, you can email info@skinhappy.co.uk with your questions. I am always happy to help, and if I am unable to, I will do my best to point you in the right direction.



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I'M HERE TO HELP
YOU FEEL CONFIDENT
CAREFREE AND
SKIN HAPPY.



BOOK NOW

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



[SkinHappy](#) [skinhappyme](#)

BOOK YOUR NO OBLIGATION CONSULTATION NOW.

If you are interested in any of my services, a no-obligation consultation can be booked online via any of the Book Now buttons.

DOES YOUR GARDEN NEED A FEW MORE WINTER EVERGREENS

Does your garden need a few more winter evergreens to give it more structure all year round?

We always recommend that a third of your plants should be evergreen, holding onto their leaves to delight you all year. This is our north facing border photographed this January. It is partially shaded with an acidy soil which is never too wet or too dry, and is loved by evergreen plants Skimmia, Rhododendron, Pieris and Oriental Hellebore hybrids. It offers a generous view from inside the conservatory at this time of year.



There are many well behaved dwarf conifers to furnish your garden. These three Podocarpus varieties are naturally dwarf but we clip them into neat tight balls when we are cutting the beech hedge in September. They are happy in

partial shade or sun. In the spring their new growth is very colourful: creamy, fiery and bluish. This dulls down during the summer but leaves us with these stylish round balls. The different coloured leaves were selected by observant nurserymen in their native home of sub-alpine New Zealand.

Perhaps one of the most popular evergreen shrubs is this *Choisya Sundance*. In the south of the UK nurseryman Peter Catt spotted some golden leaves growing low down on his bush of *Choisya ternata*, the Mexican orange blossom. He cut the branch off and rooted it and was delighted that it proved to always produce golden leaves and to be hardy across the whole country. It glows best in a sunny position and has fragrant flowers in May. Its parent originally came from Mexico and was discovered by the Swiss protestant clergyman Jacques Choisy.



In the sunnier side of the garden we have a Bay tree, also called Sweet Bay or Bay Laurel, that we clip into a pyramid every year and pick the leaves to use in the kitchen. The botanical name of this plant is *Laurus nobilis* and the 'laurel' leaves were used by the ancient Greeks and Romans as garlands for their heroes in the military and athletics, a symbol of victory, glory and honour. You probably know that in ancient mythology the Nymph Daphne was transformed into a bay tree to escape the advances of the god Apollo! Our title of 'Poet Laureate' is derived from this origin too.

Finally for a sunny position, to add a rich burnished purple into your garden we have Pittosporum Tom Thumb, which grows into a neat dome about 60cm (2ft) tall

by 60cm across. Its new growth is a bright green colour but it soon turns to this rich purple colour which delights us all winter long. Again it was spotted by a New Zealand nurseryman as a dwarf 'sport' of *Pittosporum tenuifolium purpureum*.

NEW
HOPETOUN
GARDENS

Dougal Philip
and Lesley Watson
New Hopetoun
Gardens

so much more
than just a
garden centre

NEW
HOPETOUN
GARDENS

WILL YOU TRY SOMETHING NEW
IN YOUR GARDEN THIS YEAR?

PERHAPS SOME EVERGREEN PLANTS TO FURNISH IT
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?

NEW SEASON SEEDS AND SUMMER BULBS AS WELL AS
POTS OF SPRING FLOWERING BULBS ARE IN STOCK NOW!
www.newhopetoungardens.co.uk

LINLITHGOW JAZZ

.... Jazz of different styles, from traditional to big band, gypsy jazz, swing, mainstream, vocals and/or instrumentals.



Trumpeter Colin Steele

Established in 1999, Linlithgow Jazz (formerly known as Linlithgow Jazz Club) is run by Sue McHugh and has built up a solid and growing audience of jazz lovers from Linlithgow and beyond. Although it started out as a platform for mainly early traditional jazz, Linlithgow Jazz now promotes jazz of different styles, from traditional to big band, gypsy jazz, swing, mainstream, vocals and/or instrumentals.

The Tenement Jazz Band opened up the 2026 season to a sold out audience on 3rd January 2026 as they breathed new life into New Orleans jazz.

SUE MCHUGH

Sue McHugh started out singing with Glasgow jazz bands, but following her move first to Edinburgh, then Linlithgow, work and other life got in the way and she had a long break from singing. Around 2002, Sue decided it was time to dip her toe into jazz singing again and went along to Linlithgow Jazz Club.

THE EARLY DAYS

Linlithgow Jazz Club was set up in the late 1990s by **Bob** (an excellent clarinet player) and **Julie McDowell** and held gigs fortnightly. One of those nights was given over to Bob's trad band - the West End Jazz Band – and the other was a visiting band, nearly always traditional jazz. Starting in the Masonic Hall, the nights got bigger and moved to the Burgh Halls, where they remained for several years and it was there that Sue first started going, first to sing the occasional song with the West End Jazz Band and later to hear more mainstream jazz.

During this time, Bob had the wonderful Janet Siedel Trio from Australia and

Barbara Morrison from USA. Always supportive, Bob hired Sue and her band for quite a few gigs there also. Following the Burgh Halls' refurbishment, different venues were tried such as West Lothian Golf Club, but the club found its home for the now monthly gigs in the Queen Margaret Hall.

A NEW BEGINNING

By 2013, the West End Jazz Band were no more, and Bob and Julie decided to close the Jazz Club. Keen to see live jazz continuing in Linlithgow, Sue offered to take it over and – armed with a cash float, lights and PA system provided by Bob – the next incarnation of Linlithgow Jazz Club began.

Not a huge fan of traditional jazz, Sue tried to vary the performers each month – still with some older style jazz to keep the regulars happy – but with some more mainstream jazz in the mix, sometime vocals and sometimes instrumental. At this time, attendance was generally around 30-40 people but this has increased over the years with an average attendance now of around 90 with many events selling out in advance.

NAME CHANGE

The name change to Linlithgow Jazz was intended to sound more welcoming and less like a club in case people found that off putting. However there is a solid core of around 50 people who come most months, sometimes even buying tickets without knowing who the performer is, such is their trust that – whatever the style of jazz – the players will be excellent and the music enjoyable!

Sue received a lot of requests from performers wanting to play here, many from other countries. While Linlithgow

Jazz did have visits from Australia and the US, their gigs now feature mainly homegrown performers - Scotland has a vast number of excellent, world class jazz musicians so there is a large pool of talent to pick from.

TICKETS

Concerts are generally on the first Saturday of the month and the ticket price is currently £13 for most nights. Tickets go on sale about a month in advance and are sold at the previous month's gig, then online at TicketSource and from our fabulous local bookshop Far From The Madding Crowd. There isn't a bar, but tea and coffee are available at the interval and attendees are encouraged to bring their own drinks and snacks. The aim of Linlithgow Jazz is to provide top quality, entertaining live jazz in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

2026 SCHEDULE

Programming is generally done 6 months in advance and the next few months see the return of the **Classic Jazz Orchestra** in February, singer and violinist **Seonaid Aitken and her gypsy jazz ensemble** (always a sell out) in March, Sue McHugh and her quartet with top trumpeter **Colin Steele** in April, the balmy **Bossa Trio** in May and **Jerry Forde's New Phoenix Jazz Band** in June. This is a nod to the previous club as the New Phoenix drummer is Jack Wilson who, as a very young boy, was the drummer in the West End Jazz Band!

More information can be found at:

<https://www.linlithgowjazz.co.uk/>

www.facebook.com/LinlithgowJazz



THE DEACONS' COURT

GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR ENDS ON A HIGH

'The First Tuesday after the Second Thursday' in June may seem far off at this point in the year, but the plans and preparations for Marches 2026 are well and truly underway. For the Provost, Bailies, and members of the Deacons' Court, the autumn and winter months have been very busy indeed!

November brought the Court's AGM, which saw **Davie Duncan** stepping down from the role of Town Crier after a tremendous 32 years' service. And so, the question was asked, who would fill those historic shoes? After much interest from across the town, **Duncan Stevens** was elected for the position. Duncan, a 'Lithgae Lad' all his life, was delighted at the nomination saying that *"it is an honour to be elected to the ancient and prestigious position of Linlithgow Town Cryer"*. Duncan has served on the Court for eight years, most notably as a Halberdier for the past four years.

However, with Duncan's new position and his fellow Halberdier also stepping down from the role, new appointments were also made to these positions in **Phillipe Amatller** and **Emma Bryce**. Phillippe has made Linlithgow his home for the past 31 years



and is grateful for the chance to serve as a Halberdier, saying that it is an honour and one that he is proud to be a part of.

Emma was born and raised in Linlithgow and is the second woman to hold this role in the town's history. She is ecstatic to follow in some family footsteps too, including her Uncle **Davie Duncan** (recent Town Crier), and her Great-Grandfather who also served as a Halberdier. Both Emma and Phillippe look forward to joining Duncan to take their places in our town's history, heritage, and traditions.



Happily, the trio did not have long to wait to don their new uniforms, as they joined Provost Green and the Deacons' Court to welcome Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal and Vice Admiral Sir Timothy Laurence to the Royal Burgh on Thursday 18th December 2025. This special occasion was in honour and recognition of the 50th anniversary of The Deacons' Court, and its members past and present, in upholding and carrying forward the traditions of the Riding of the Marches.

The Court was joined by guests from local community groups, schools, and organisations to welcome the honoured guests for a special celebratory service of thanksgiving at St Michael's Church, during which the new Court Flag was dedicated after being unveiled at last year's Marches celebrations. Members of the Deacons Court then proceeded to the Burgh Halls where they got to meet and spend time in conversation with the royal party. The day was also beautifully soundtracked by the musical offerings of Linlithgow Reed Band. The whole afternoon was very special and one which will live long in the memory of all involved.



And so, with the past two wintery months being far from quiet, the Provost, Bailies, Town Crier, Halberdiers and all members of the Deacons Court now return to their responsibilities planning and preparing for Tuesday 16th June 2026.

Long Live the Marches!

Ashley Wilson





STOP PRESS
We are having our
SEED POTATO SALE
IN THE HUB IN LINLITHGOW
ON 7 MARCH.

Although this might seem like a dormant time of the year there is still plenty going on to have good crops throughout the year.

January tasks:

Checking stored vegetables: potatoes, onions, and squash. Stored vegetables can spoil quickly if one starts to go bad. Check every few days removing any soft or mouldy produce straight away. Good airflow and cool, dry conditions are important.

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

With careful successional planting, some plotholders still have cauliflowers, broccoli (e.g. the variety Rudolph), cabbage, perpetual spinach, carrots and parsnips for picking.

Sowing:

Don't rush to sow seeds this month. If you have a greenhouse or polytunnel this can allow earlier sowing and growing of some vegetables. This can also allow a greater variety of crops to be grown.



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

> **Chilli and sweet peppers.** Sow 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.

> **Tomatoes:** tomato seeds can be sown indoors this month but 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. Plotholders have had success growing the banana-shaped shallots from seed.



Salad leaves, broad beans and onion seeds can be sown inside this month.

Transplanting:

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

Planting:

- > It is not too late to plant garlic cloves.
- > Plant soft fruits, e.g. blackberries, blackcurrants, gooseberries (until the end of March)

> 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.

> January is ideal for pruning apple and pear trees while they're dormant.

> Remove dead, damaged, or crossing branches to improve airflow and shape.

> Always prune on a dry day to reduce the risk of disease entering cuts. Avoid pruning if frost is forecast, as this can damage freshly cut wood.

'Forcing': to produce lovely pink sweet stems of rhubarb, put manure around the crown, if available, and cover with an upturned black dustbin to keep out the light. Put a rock on top of the bucket. Keep checking and pick when ready.



For those who have an established vegetable garden and want information about what to do each month we have a post on our website that gives growing information, month by month. This is on the left hand side of the home page.

Our website address for LADAS is linlithgowallotments.wordpress.com



IMPORTANT NOTICE: We are happy to announce that the **waiting list is now open again**. Please contact us using the CONTACT US page on our website.

Val Corry
Chair LADAS



A NEW ERA FOR LINLITHGOW GOLF CLUB

Linlithgow Golf Club is in the process of converting the existing eighteen-hole layout to two loops of nine holes that start and end at the clubhouse.

This is the first major redevelopment of the course since the late 1980s and by reconfiguring the layout, it will place the clubhouse at the centre of the course.

I met recently with club stalwart, David Manns, who has just stepped down from the position of Captain.

David explained that for many years, new golf courses have been designed to return the player to the clubhouse after playing nine or eighteen holes, for example, Kingsbarns, Castle Course at St Andrews, Renaissance near North Berwick and several more. The benefits of this are many and include flexibility for the time constrained golfer, more options for course maintenance programming, nine-hole competitions, which are becoming increasingly the norm, and improved accessibility for those who may not be able to play eighteen holes.

David gave me the background to the current redevelopment:

"Linlithgow Golf Club was originally designed as a nine-hole course in 1913 and developed over many decades, by acquisition of land, into a traditional eighteen-hole course. The current ninth green is at the far end of the course from the clubhouse. Various ideas have been muted over recent years to redesign the course and, in 2023, a proposal was formulated to place the clubhouse at the centre of the course by reconfiguring the layout.

Details of the proposal were displayed in the clubhouse for many months following a trial of the proposed routing which took place from 26th-28th April 2024. After playing the revised routing, members were asked to provide feedback on the proposal via a questionnaire. The positive response gave the committee confidence to push forward with the project and a subsequent information



New pathway to link the current twelfth green to the second tee.

evening in the clubhouse was arranged to advise the final project details of how, when and most importantly how much? The plan, informed by feedback from the survey, was defined by minimal disruption to play, maintaining the standard of the course, and low project cost using in-house expertise and volunteer labour. Only one hole will see a significant change, being played from a completely new tee, and all other seventeen holes will remain virtually untouched".

On 13th May 2025, a Special General Meeting was held in the clubhouse and a motion to reconfigure the course was carried by more than 80% of the votes cast"

David outlined the work that is currently taking place on the course:

"Work began in November to build a new tee, create a new pathway to link the current twelfth green to the second tee, and to cover part of the burn that runs through the course. It is expected that one hundred tonnes of aggregates will be used in the project, eighteen metres of piping for the burn, and approximately three hundred square metres of turf. The major works are generally in an area that does not come into play, allowing winter golf to continue unabated and, with no shortage of volunteers willing to help the greens staff, the project is on track to come into play for the 2026 season".

"It is hoped that the changes will make the golf course more accessible to golfers with limited free time available, and also keep our more senior members at the club, by allowing them to play nine holes without a long walk back to the clubhouse. Membership is on the increase and we hope that this upward trajectory will be turbo-charged by the changes we are making to herald in an exciting new era for the club".

Full information about Linlithgow Golf Club can be found on the website



www.linlithgowgolf.co.uk

Murdoch Kennedy



LINLITHGOW ATHLETIC CLUB: A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT, INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

2025 has seen another standout year for Linlithgow Athletic Club (LAC) – one marked not just by strong athletic performances, but by a deep commitment to community, wellbeing and inclusion across all ages and abilities.

At its heart, LAC continues to live by its ethos of *"Wellbeing through athletics for everyone"*, and this year that spirit has been evident both on and off the track.

Athletic Highlights Across the Club

LAC athletes have once again represented the town with pride across a wide range of disciplines. From parkruns and road racing to cross country, track, trail and triathlon, club members have competed locally, Nationally and Internationally, achieving personal bests, podium finishes and age-graded awards.

Our senior section continues to grow in strength, supported by structured coaching sessions that cater for beginners through to competitive athletes. Meanwhile, the youth section, including Run, Jump, Throw and Stars, has gone from strength to strength, introducing young people to athletics in a fun, supportive and development-focused environment.

The club has also seen continued success in championship races, team events and club competitions, with members proudly wearing the LAC vest throughout Scotland and beyond.

Events That Bring the Community Together

Two of Linlithgow's most popular running events remain firmly embedded in the local calendar.

The LAC 10K once again brought runners of all abilities to the town, supported by an incredible team of volunteers and local supporters. In 2025, the event raised £1,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support, with an additional contribution from the club bringing the total donation to £2,000 – helping people living with cancer and their families.

The festive Santa Dash continues to be a highlight for families and runners alike. This year, the event raised close to £3,000, split equally between Baton of Hope, Donaldson's School, and Pete & Natasha Wong to support the funding of a specialist running wheelchair. The club was also grateful for the generous support of the Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange, who contributed towards the Santa Dash winners' chosen charities. Together, these efforts meant LAC generated over £5,000 for charitable causes in 2025.



Supporting First Steps into Running

2025 was also a significant year for Let's Go Linlithgow, the town's Jog Scotland group, which continues to play a vital role in encouraging people to take their first steps into running. Over the year, several members successfully completed the group's Couch to 5K programme, achieving a milestone many once thought was beyond their reach. These achievements reflect the power of supportive, welcoming



environments and highlight the importance of grassroots running groups in improving physical health, confidence and mental wellbeing across the community.

A New parkrun for Linlithgow

December 2025 also marked an exciting milestone for local wellbeing with the **inaugural Beecraigs Country Park parkrun**, held on 27 December. The launch was a huge success, welcoming over 350 runners and walkers and supported by more than 40 volunteers, setting the tone for what promises to be a thriving weekly event.

The new parkrun takes place every Saturday at 9:30am, starting near the Mountain Bike Skills Area and lochside in Beecraigs Country Park, just outside Linlithgow. The scenic 5k trail course offers an invigorating way to begin the weekend, with parking available at **Hillhouse car park**.

As with all parkruns, volunteers are essential to keeping the event running each week. Volunteers are particularly needed for upcoming events in January. Anyone

interested can get involved by emailing beecraigscountrypark@parkrun.com – the team would be delighted to hear from you.

Investing in Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Beyond fundraising, LAC has continued to invest directly in community wellbeing. This year saw the purchase of a defibrillator, providing an important safety resource for athletes and events and reinforcing the club's commitment to health and safeguarding.

The club also continues to support local parkrun events more broadly, helping to promote free, accessible physical activity that benefits the wider community – whether people are running, walking, volunteering or simply cheering from the sidelines.

Looking Ahead

As LAC looks to 2026, the focus remains firmly on inclusivity, development and community engagement. One date already to mark in the diary is **Sunday 27 September 2026**, when the Linlithgow 10K and Junior Fun Run will once again take place.

Entries can be made via:

10K race: www.entrycentral.com/Linlithgow-10k

Junior Fun Run: www.entrycentral.com/Linlithgow-Junior-Fun-Run

Whether it's supporting a first 5K, nurturing young athletes, hosting town-wide events or raising funds for good causes, Linlithgow Athletic Club remains proud to be a positive force within the town.

With the dedication of its volunteers, coaches, athletes and supporters, LAC continues to prove that athletics is about far more than medals – it's about connection, confidence and community.

Melanie Pendrill

junior parkrun at West Lothian Cycle Circuit, Linlithgow Leisure Centre (WLCC)

SPORT //



WLCC junior parkrun is supporting primary school pupils to enjoy regular physical activity outside of school hours. The aim is to foster a life-long love for movement as part of a parkrun primary school initiative, while enhancing performance in their other chosen sports.

Former PE Specialist **Lesley Malone**, one of several volunteer Run Directors, has been working with class teachers and pupils in schools to present information at their school assemblies.

Thanks to their efforts, there are now eight schools in Linlithgow or nearby registered as junior parkrun Primary Schools signposted to WLCC junior parkrun.

Already signed up are Linlithgow PS, Low Port PS, Springfield PS, Linlithgow Bridge PS, Winchburgh PS, Hawkhill PS, Holy Family PS, and most recently Kirkliston PS.

Lesley said: "It's been a pleasure to work with primary school teachers and pupils and we're also delighted to draw in children from the Winchburgh and Kirkliston areas.

We've had a brilliant first few years and our thanks go to all the children, families, lovely volunteer parents and Duke of Edinburgh students for making it possible. We've plans for other schools to join us... watch this space!"

junior parkrun is a free fun 2k community event for 4 to 14 year olds and their families. It takes place every Sunday at 9.30am at the WLCC and everyone is welcome come rain or shine.

As well as running, walking and skipping around the 2k route, children can volunteer and help deliver the event - giving them a chance to build their skills, confidence and independence.

Children & adults of all abilities are made very welcome, regardless of experience. Parents and carers are free to spectate, and many enjoy running the course with their little ones.

However they choose to take part children are recognised through milestones, which celebrate the act of showing up.

WLCC junior parkrun has strong links with Linlithgow Athletic Club. Many of the town's keen young athletes attend, encouraged by Linlithgow Athletic Club Youth Squad Head Coach Darren Dick and Coaching Assistant Paul Emery.

With experience children may choose to progress to a 5k Parkrun, again with an adult. These are held every Saturday at locations throughout the UK.

Local 5K Parkrun's include Auldcathie District in Winchburgh, Bo'ness Foreshore, Livingston, Polkemmet Country Park and, new to 2026, a single lap trail route through Beecraigs Country Park, near Linlithgow.

All that is required to run, or walk, any of the global Parkrun events is the barcode you receive when registering online at www.parkrun.org.uk/

Neil Anderson & Ian Fyfe are co-Event Directors of WLCC junior parkrun, supported

by regular Run Directors **Ann Allman, Gerard Wilkie, Angus Gaillie and Lesley Malone**.

Neil said: "We always look forward to welcoming the children, families and teachers. Our junior parkrun has been a growing event for two and a half years with around 15-30 merry volunteers supporting the weekly event. Numbers attending are between 50-80, there's always room for more. It's a great place to be active, have fun, and catch up with old friends, and make new ones."

Scotland's Parkrun outreach Officer **Josh McKay** said: "Engagement from schools that have signed up across Scotland to become Parkrun Primary Schools has been really good. We are closing in on a big milestone of 100 primary schools in the UK, and eight of those feed into WLCC junior parkrun. That's amazing considering there are currently only 39 junior Parkruns in Scotland. Well done Linlithgow Volunteer Team."

Any children aged between 4-14yrs interested in joining in the fun should register first via this link <https://www.parkrun.org.uk/westlothiancyclecircuit-juniors/>

Thanks for photographs by Roddy Simpson

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BATHROOMS AND KITCHENS

Bathrooms and Kitchens are key in winning over prospective buyers. Our article today covers some of the emerging trends in bathroom design as described by designers and manufacturers involved in bathroom design.

Art Deco design might hail from the 1920s and '30s, but a century later it's back and making a big splash in bathroom design. Think fluted glass shower screens or door panels, shiny ceramics, brass fixtures and marble floors. Colourful wall tiles with curvy, striped or geometric repeated patterns are also a major trend for next year.

"We'll start to see modern, straight lines replaced by wonderful art deco arches," says Richard Ghinn, managing director at Tradebase.com. *"Fluted glass is an easy way to incorporate the trend. Tiles will be eye-catching patterns and brass is increasing in popularity when it comes to fixtures and fittings."*

Wood hasn't historically been an ideal option in bathrooms. It warps and gets soggy when wet, after all, but with modern wood treatments, there are many durable options these days. You can even choose floor tiles that resemble wooden floorboards but are made of stone.

A key bathroom trend for this year is wooden wall cladding. Adding the

texture and tones of wood above tiles can stop a bathroom feeling cold and clinical.

Vanity units made from wood are a huge trend right now, too. Hanging a painting with an unfinished wood frame or a vintage mirror with a wooden surround is another option, too.

"This year, expect bathrooms to embrace wood textures, such as natural wood cabinetry," says interior designer Juliette Thomas. *"Unlike a plain painted finish, wood textures offer a warmth that makes the space feel more refreshing."*

We don't need Spandau Ballet to remind us that gold is great. Expect to find more of it in the hottest new bathrooms. Few of us will be able to run to solid gold fixtures. But there are reasonably priced gold-coloured taps, basins, shower fittings and even toilets on the market right now.

There has been a 300% rise in customer searches for gold basins in 2022 according to Tap Warehouse. If you don't fancy going for gold, mixed metallics are a solid option. Brass, chrome and other metals also look great and can provide contrast to a hint of gold. *"Gold basins look incredible and are a great centrepiece for the space. You can complement with a gold tap, or add contrast with a black tap,"* says interiors expert Polly

Shearer. *"Brass showers offer a luxe feel without the boldness of gold."*

Expect to hear a lot more about architectural lighting in bathrooms from designers. The harsh spotlights that have dominated bathrooms are finally taking a back seat. Architectural lighting means designing how a space is lit with rigorous attention to how the room is used and its various functions.

The idea is to mix and match the four primary types of lighting: ambient, task, accent, and decorative. In bathrooms, you'll need to create a calming space to enjoy an evening soak (ambient). But you'll need enough light in a bathroom to help you get ready in the morning, too. *"You may want to incorporate two different light sources in your bathroom,"* says Steven Jaques from InHouse Inspired Room Design. *"A gentle ambient bathroom light for the room with task lighting close to the mirror can help you achieve the right balance. Consider adding a window or light tunnel if there isn't one already or moving the existing window to a place that can maximise natural light."* A backlit mirror is ideal for achieving a softer atmosphere for a late night soak, while also providing enough light for make-up or shaving requirements.



PETS' CORNER



This month
Westport Vet's
Pet of The
Month is
Cookie Brown.

Cookie is a 4 year old Cockapoo who landed on lucky paws last year by finding her forever home with wonderful owners in Linlithgow.

Her owners describe her as cute as a button and very inquisitive. She is also super fast. Their own wee pocket rocket!

Cookie's owners, **Shonagh and Malc**, say:

"Cookie is settling into our life very well but she is still anxious around people. Having grown up on a farm, everything is a new experience for her; people, living in a house, living in a town, being in the cafe. It is a joy to see her being so inquisitive about everything. She has come a long way from when we first rehomed her where she wouldn't eat anything to a pupster who can't wait for her dinner and knows all the shops and people in town who give her a treat."

"Cookie makes us smile when she runs with sheer happiness. She loves to be off the lead especially running up hillsides and out in the countryside."

Her favourite thing to do is run about for the sheer joy of it. She makes them smile now that she is learning to play with toys. Her favourite toys are lampchop and 'now' a two legged fox.

A naughty habit is barking at people although this is largely due to her being anxious. She is still learning to be around people.

Cheeky habits are picking up stuffed toys in shops and stealing the kitchen doorstop!

Cookie's favourite hobby is definitely to run and explore. She definitely thinks she is bigger than she is as she tries to get over walls that are too big for her.

Her favourite place to be is on the couch in the house or running free outdoors and her happy place, without doubt, is anywhere her new Dad Malc is!

Christmas was exciting as she had never had presents before so it was hilarious and joyful to see her have fun getting all her new toys. Folk were very generous to her!

In 2026, Shonagh and Malc are most looking forward to taking Cookie to Cornwall, for adventures along the big beaches there and climbing more hills with her too.

Their New Year resolutions are to work on resolving her anxiety and subsequent barking at people. They'd also like to teach her to chase a ball but especially to give it back!

New Year is the perfect time to think about plans, aims and goals for - and with - your pets. It is also a wonderful time to remember to reflect on what you have accomplished and enjoyed together this past year.

Maintaining their best health is a given, but perhaps more focus could be put into weight management or fitness regimes. Goals with pets could be things like learning something new, or perhaps they would benefit from gaining confidence in a particular area.

Your pets' favourite thing in the world is you - so if you asked your pets what they would aim for, we are sure their answer would always be to spend more time together.

Taking the time to engage with pets, for one to one time together, is as beneficial to pet health as it is for

owner health. Caring for an animal improves human cardiovascular systems, increasing or maintaining daily exercise, can lower blood pressure and can help to reduce stress and anxiety.

Making time each day to interact with your pets, whether this is with play, for affection, or to have a mini training session, not only strengthens the human-animal bond, it aids pets' cognitive health, supports pet focus and can massively benefit their physical and mental wellbeing.

Engagement is vital in every life stage - but particularly in older animals.

The more time you spend with your pet also helps to identify any changes more quickly - whether this may be physical, or changes in their routine or behaviour. Any changes to your pets 'normals' should be discussed with your vet.

**Hello
I'm Cookie
Brown.**

If your 2026 goals include weight loss, fitness training, or simply spending more quality time with your pets, the Westport Team is here to help! Let's make this the healthiest, happiest year yet for your pet.

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