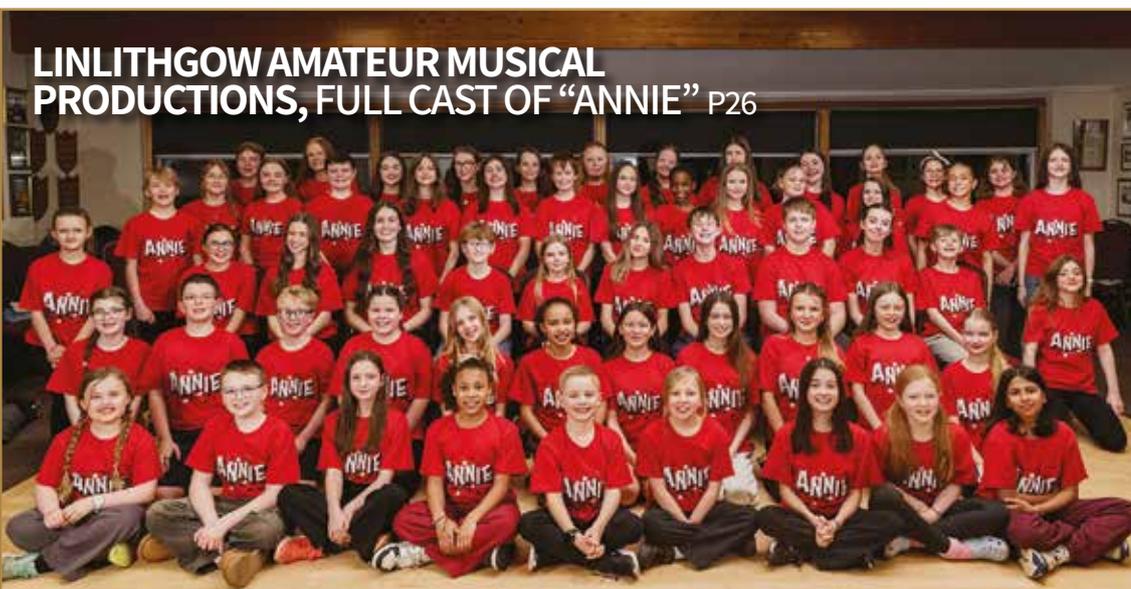


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LINLITHGOW COMMUNITY MAGAZINE
BITZACK



ESTD. 2011

LINLITHGOW'S NEWS BY LINLITHGOW'S PEOPLE
BITCH

ISSUE NO.120
MARCH 2026

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DAVID TAIT
EDITOR



In this issue we feature several of the town's "institutions" – community voluntary organisations that have stood the test of time and prospered.

Gala Day (1930), The Reed Band (1956), Rotary (1955), Probus (1976), Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council (1975), Rugby Club (1970), roots going back to 1922), LAMP (1985), Linlithgow Museum (1991), Linlithgow 41 Club (1968).

The long standing success of the above organisations will be an inspiration for community voluntary organisations formed more recently. For example, **Linlithgow Community Development Trust, Linlithgow and District Allotment Society (LADAS), Linlithgow's Voluntary Visitor Group, and Linlithgow Food Revolution**, all of whom are featured in this issue.

Of course there are many more besides and as long as the resource for state funded organisations remains in the doldrums there is likely to be a growing need for community based voluntary organisations to supply our varied needs. As long as total tax revenue is dependent on what people are willing and able to pay, the gap between what our taxes can pay for and what is required can only be filled by voluntary input. By way of an example, voluntary litter pickers are recognised as an element of an overall Local Authority plan to keep streets and roads clear of rubbish.

On education, **Linlithgow Academy** deals with the troublesome matter of the use of smartphones and the move to "mobile-free classrooms"; explaining how the difficult balance between access to useful sources of information and the draw of "social media" is achieved. Successful outcomes require active participation by all relevant parties. At primary school level there are updates on the excellent projects being undertaken by "The Scribblers" at **Springfield and Low Port Primaries** and **Linlithgow Bridge Primary's** "Pages from the Bridge".

How things have moved on from "times tables"!

The interest of Linlithgow's business community is the preserve of **One Linlithgow Business Improvement District**. The main focus of their article is the action being taken to resolve the unsatisfactory process of rubbish collection from the town's prized High Street and surrounding areas. A new Council-wide initiative – **Cleaner Communities, Litter Prevention Action Plan** - is in the process of introduction backed up by capital investment and a plea for the support of all members of the community to participate in maintaining the high standards expected of the town's principle social and shopping centre.

The **Planning Forum's** main focus of interest is future residential development and associated infrastructure improvement. The need to address the lack of adequate provision for routes to alleviate traffic flow through the town centre was first raised as far back as the 1970's as the development of Springfield progressed becoming the first major expansion of residential capacity. The next Linlithgow local development plan will determine whether or not the long delay will continue with no long term solution provided for. The Forum article's second point of concern is the further expansion of Edinburgh Airport's capacity and in particular the associated proposed future flightpaths which would introduce routes overflying the Springfield area and the development land to the east of the town. The previous attempt to introduce new flight paths created determined objections leading to cancellation of the test period. The current proposal is explained in their article.

Bruce Jamieson takes us back to the days of the Darien Scheme and Rotary answers the frequent question "why two Linlithgow Rotaries?" **LAMP** lines up tomorrow's stars for a production of "Annie" and the **Reed Band** gets into celebratory mode as its 70th

year unfolds.

Battle 500 continues its project to bring definition to the events before, during and after the long under recorded battle at Linlithgow Bridge.

Gardening tips are provided by **New Hopetoun Garden Centre** and the **Allotments Society** with a view on prospects for farmers provided by **Jamie Smart**.

You probably won't read every page but hopefully you will find something of interest and learn something new about your town.

As always, many thanks to everyone who helps produce the magazine and all our advertisers, subscribers and donors.



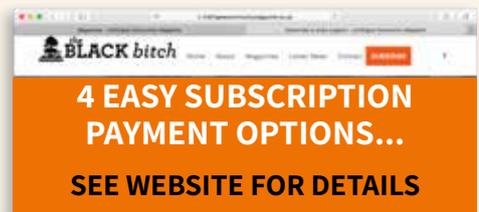
Become a BB Magazine subscriber

In this issue we have highlighted some of the long-standing Linlithgow voluntary organisations, along with some set up more recently, with the aim of spreading awareness of their various purposes and to help with recruitment and their vital fund-raising activities.

The magazine too is a voluntary not-for-profit organisation whose publication costs increase in direct proportion to the number of printed pages in each issue which in turn determines how many articles and general information can be included in each issue.

Our current subscribers and donors make very valuable contributions which is much appreciated and allow us to plan ahead and commit to a wider range of content than would otherwise be possible.

With that in mind if you enjoy the magazine, find its content interesting and informative but are not already a subscriber or donor may we draw your attention to **our website at: www.linlithgowcommunitymagazine.co.uk** where you can find various options under the heading **SUBSCRIBE** to donate a fixed amount or subscribe from as little as £2 per month or any other amount to suit your budget. **All will be greatly appreciated.**



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CLEANER COMMUNITIES, LITTER PREVENTION ACTION PLAN

One Linlithgow has welcomed a new and improved approach to make sure West Lothian has a clean, safe and welcoming environment for everyone.

West Lothian Council have backed the adoption of new Service Standards within its Cleaner Communities Team, as well as a new Litter Prevention Action Plan (LPAP) for 2026/27.

The standards set out how the council will work to tackle environmental issues such as littering, fly tipping, graffiti, dog fouling and more, through a combination of education, enhanced infrastructure, community engagement and more stringent enforcement.

The area has already seen an improvement in performance in the independent litter audits from Keep Scotland Beautiful, increasing to 90.2% in January 2026.



Power washing pavements in Linlithgow

The introduction of new service standards for both proactive and responsive work, appointment of an external contractor and modernisation of the **Urban Clean Team** is expected to lead to further progress in the future.

Executive councillor for the environment and sustainability **Tom Conn** said: *"I welcome this new focus on West Lothian's environment, which takes a holistic approach to try and tackle the challenges.*

By using a mix of education, improving infrastructure, engaging with our communities and carrying out strict enforcement, we hope to continue to see improvements in the environment we all share.

It's not acceptable that the council continues to spend £2.9 million every year to tackle issues like litter or fly tipping, along with the volunteers like West Lothian Litter Pickers who give up their free time, all to address something that simply shouldn't happen in the first place."

One Linlithgow, the town's Business Improvement District, was sent the full report to inform all businesses about the new service standards.

It has been circulated to all levy paying businesses with a clear message that we all must do our bit to maintain and improve the

standards of the look of our beautiful High Street.

This includes following the guidelines for trade waste on the High Street, business signage and outside seating.

For the full report, visit Linlithgow.co.uk/cleanerCommunities

KEY POINTS IN THE REPORT

Flyposting – all unauthorised posters and advertisements placed on council property will be removed as part of routine environmental maintenance or in response to reports.

Dog Fouling – will continue to be dealt with on a reactive basis and will respond to intelligence led reports by adjusting patrol routes when resources allow.

Graffiti – Offensive graffiti on council owned property will be removed within 48 hours of reporting. Other graffiti will be removed within 10 days where resources allow.

Commercial/ Trade Waste – To improve communications with local businesses to prevent instances of footpath obstruction and/ or site waste.

Table & Chair Permits – will ensure businesses hold a valid permit for tables and chairs on footpaths or open space. Without a permit, businesses will receive a fine.



GRADES OF CLEANLINESS & ZONING

The Code of Practice is based on the concept of four standards, or grades, of cleanliness:

Grade A: no litter or refuse.

Grade B: predominantly free of litter and refuse, apart from a few small items.

Grade C: consistent distribution of litter and refuse with minor accumulations;

Grade D: heavily littered with significant accumulations.



Cleanliness is assessed based on the presence of litter and refuse and categorised into four grades.

A new KPI will be introduced to measure this standard from the time an enquiry is logged, handled and closed off.

3.1 Response Time

Category Zone	Time taken to respond to cleanliness standard			
	A	B	C	D
1 Town Centre *	N/A	72 hours	48 hours	24 hours
2 High density residential	N/A	1 week	72 hours	48 hours
3 Low density residential	N/A	2 weeks	1 week	72 hours
4 Areas not falling into zones 1-3	N/A	2 weeks	1 week	72 hours
5 Amenity Beaches	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6 Motorways	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
7 Rural roads and verges	N/A	N/A	2 weeks	5 days

Table 1: Category response times from time reports are received, triaged and logged on system.

* Village Centres will fall under the same time parameters as town centres within WLC's standards

LITTER PREVENTION ACTION PLAN

This is the Council's commitment to creating a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable local environment. The plan takes a proactive, preventative approach, recognising that tackling the root causes of littering and fly tipping is more effective and sustainable than solely relying on reactive cleaning services.

It focuses on changing behaviours, strengthening partnerships, and improving the visibility and accessibility of waste disposal infrastructure.

The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse divides land into a series of zones

Zone 1: Town Centres - Areas with high levels of pedestrian traffic, commercial activity, and regular public use.

Zone 2: High-Density Residential Areas

Zone 3: Low-Density Residential Areas

Zone 4: Other Land Uses

Zones 5 and 6: Beaches and Motorways

Zone 7: Rural Roads and Verges



This zoning system helps inform cleansing priorities, response times, and resource allocation across West Lothian, ensuring that the Council meets its statutory obligations while addressing local environmental needs effectively.

The plan will build on actions taken by the Cleaner Communities Team over the last two years to tackle litter and fly tipping such as:

- > The introduction of the 'Don't Waste West Lothian' fly tipping campaign.
- > The introduction of three dedicated Glutton street cleaning teams.
- > Roll out of mobile CCTV cameras to deter dumping.
- > The introduction of smart compactor bins.
- > Partnership working with community litter picking groups.

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF ROBERT CALLANDER EYEWEAR

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Our small, experienced team has worked together for many years, and that continuity matters. Familiar faces, friendly conversations, and genuine care make every visit relaxed and personal. Helping you find your perfect glasses and sunglasses is still the most rewarding part of our day.

As we celebrate 25 years, we want to say a heartfelt thank you to all our clients who have supported us over the years. Your



loyalty has allowed an independent local business to thrive, and we're incredibly grateful. We also have lots of exciting plans lined up for our anniversary year and can't wait to share them with you.

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2026 STARTS WITH PLENTY OF ACTION ON THE PLANNING FRONT



All seemed to go quiet in December last year so the previous issue of the Black Bitch reflected on the year with a few predictions of what could happen in 2026. January has got off to a flying start with:

The response to a planning application for a 220 house development at Wilcoxholm Farm adjacent to the Edinburgh Road.

The proposed new timetable for the West Lothian Council Local Development Plan.

The Community Council submission of its response to the Edinburgh Airport airspace change proposal.

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR A 220 HOUSE DEVELOPMENT AT WILCOXHOLM FARM ADJACENT TO THE EDINBURGH ROAD

Also noted in the last issue of the Black Bitch was the planning application for 220 houses on land between the canal and the Edinburgh Road, from the canal bridge to Wilcoxholm farm, an area of approximately 31 acres. The planning application was submitted by Hallam Land, the developer agent for the landowners. 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. During the past few weeks members of the Linlithgow Planning Forum (a committee of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council) have worked their way through the application. The Community Council is a statutory consultee and must be consulted on all planning applications in the Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge area. The result of this work is an objection to the planning application backed up by 23 pages of statements, evidence and opinion presenting a logical statement of where the application falls short of satisfying planning legislation and guidelines. The objection letter from the Community Council can be viewed online at the reference above, alongside the 60 or so objections from individual residents of Linlithgow.

The Community Council do not oppose the principle of housing development on the site, indeed the proposals are to some extent consistent with the Community Council's own Local Place Plan and could, with the significant modification outlined in the objection letter, receive support.

The problem with the application is that it is simply an application to build 220 houses on the southern part of the site with no explanation of what is to happen to that part of the site between the canal and the railway adjacent to Maidlands. The application is without a comprehensive masterplan that includes a detailed and comprehensive design code. It is important that the architecture, urban design qualities and distinctive characteristics of Linlithgow are reflected to protect the place quality of Linlithgow and this must be described. There is no indication of any supporting infrastructure such as a footbridge over the canal and connected footpath link to the end of Maidlands to give a pedestrian link to Springfield Primary School and the town centre. The outline plan shows a layout of vehicle dominant roads and standard suburban plots with house and driveway with little attention to natural landform or to footpaths and cycleways connecting to the town centre. There is also a presumption that the development is set apart neither integral with Linlithgow nor part of a wider plan for Linlithgow as described in the Local Place Plan.

The objection is made for all these and other more technical reasons relating to planning legislation and guidance. **The Community Council letter concludes by**

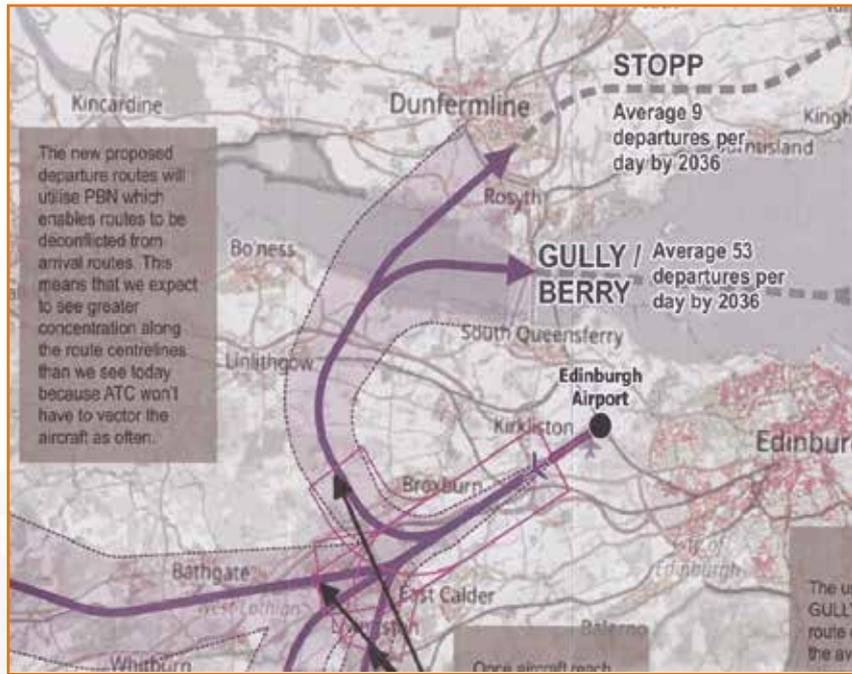
stating "In closing we do hope that our response will be taken by both council, landowner and developer in the collaborative spirit intended by Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council towards an attractive, well designed, well integrated and valued extension to Linlithgow. This is an important site being the first major development in Linlithgow since the construction of the Springfield estate in the 1970/80's".

REVISED TIMETABLE FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE WEST LOTHIAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The last issue of the Black Bitch described the changes required to West Lothian Council's Evidence Report by the Scottish Government reporters the result of which is a delay to the publication of the West Lothian Local Development Plan. The Evidence Report describes the basic information required for the plan. The plan describes where development should take place. The new timetable to be approved by Councillors shows a resubmission of the Evidence Report to Scottish Government reporters by April 2026 with formal approval by Scottish Ministers by September 2026. This will allow Councillors to approve the draft Local Development Plan for consultation by November 2026. Then begins a 12-week consultation with all West Lothian residents, which should be completed by March 2027. The timetable allows a year for final modifications and examination by Scottish Ministers with the final approval of the West Lothian Local Development Plan by Councillors in May 2028.

EDINBURGH AIRPORT AIRSPACE CHANGE PROPOSAL

In May 1977, after the construction of a new runway and terminal building, Edinburgh Airport reopened for business operated by British Airports Authority (BAA). At the same time new flightpaths were developed and effectively operate to this day. In 2012 BAA sold the airport to Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), an aggressive, successful American infrastructure fund manager. During the stewardship of GIP passenger numbers have increased significantly to a record 15.8million in 2024. However, the number of air transport



movements (take-off and landing numbers combined) have fallen from 128,172 in 2007 to 116,693 in 2024. The apparent contradiction is explained by larger aircraft and higher load factors. In June 2024 the French infrastructure company VINCI Airports acquired a 50.01% majority stake in Edinburgh Airport Ltd and are effectively the controlling partner. Edinburgh Airport states in its proposal for new flightpaths that it "proposes to modernise the airport's flightpaths to better meet technical requirements and take advantage of improved navigational capability. By modernising the airspace, minimising noise and environmental impacts and improving operational efficiency, this proposal [the change from the current flightpaths] seeks to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the forecast growth in aviation".

To facilitate growth the airport is introducing 3 new flightpaths which overfly Linlithgow named STOPP, GULLY and BERRY. Unfortunately, trust in airport operations reached an all-time low in 2015/16 when the airport trialed a new flightpath called TUTUR 1C which resulted in significant noise intrusion and disruption to residents principally in the Springfield area of Linlithgow due to the low altitude, full power turns aircraft were required to make. The trial was terminated early due to the extent of the public outcry. The 3 new flightpaths are identical or close variants of TUTUR 1C and

are intended for 24/7 operation. This time the airport is not intending to run a trial but rely on the mathematical modelling of the noise profile which is intended to show a level of noise acceptability.

The Community Council have replied to the consultation in a lengthy response with 5 main points:

Linlithgow residents value the tranquillity of the town. The consultation document does not explain the projected noise levels of typical aircraft over and above the ambient noise levels currently experienced by Linlithgow residents.

Why is the airport not conducting an airspace trial as previously?

The option appraisal document lays great emphasis on the age of the existing flightpaths but does not appear to explain their disadvantage or the consequence of their continued use. It is only the increase in air transport movements which require the revised flightpaths.

Can the current runway, taxiways, stands, gates, terminal facilities, parking and access roads etc, accommodate the anticipated increase in passengers and flights?

Simply, why is it now necessary to regularly overfly those residential areas currently largely unaffected by aircraft noise?

John Kelly
Secretary
Linlithgow Planning Forum

BALANCING TECH AND WELLBEING

A School Community Conversation

LINLITHGOW ACADEMY



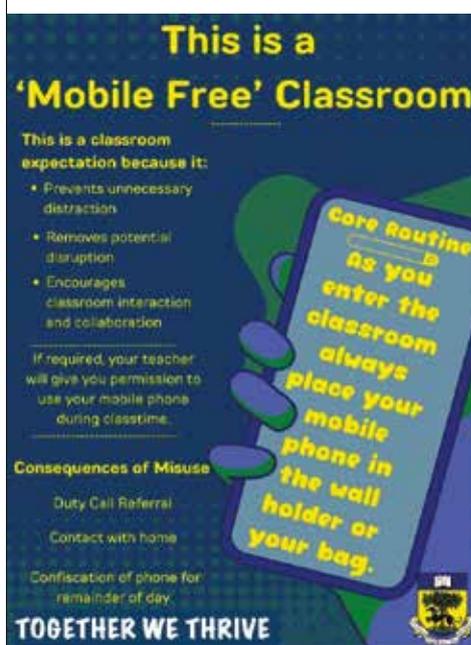
Across Scotland and the wider UK, schools are grappling with a modern challenge, how to support young people to learn, focus and thrive in an age of constant digital connection. At Linlithgow Academy, the move toward ‘mobile-free classrooms’ commenced in 2024 and reflects a growing national conversation about smartphones and social media and the impact these have, not only on learning, but on wellbeing, relationships and community life.

Although every school’s approach differs, the reason behind these decisions tends to be the same, with young people, staff and families noticing the similar patterns. Teachers report rising levels of distraction; pupils acknowledge finding it hard to regulate their own screen time; and parents/carers seek guidance on navigating the fast-paced digital world their children live in.

Listening to the School Community

Linlithgow Academy’s initial shift toward a mobile-free classroom environment followed extensive feedback from staff, parents/carers and pupils back in March 2024. We noted overwhelming feedback not only from teachers and parents about the negative impact unrestricted phone use was having on pupil learning, but also anecdotally from pupils themselves. Far from resisting change, many young people reported wanting help to limit their phone use during classroom lessons. Parents/carers also felt (overwhelmingly) a total school ban was not what they wanted, but rather more controlled usage of mobile phones when learners were in classrooms.

The shift to this new classroom ‘protocol’ was described by our staff as “transformational,” noting that pupils are “back cognitively into lessons,” with more discussion and dialogue in classrooms. I would contend this is still the case nearly 2 years on, with now only a few instances where teachers are reporting inappropriate mobile phone usage in their classrooms. This positive impact has been produced by realistic, straightforward, and sustainable protocols that are well understood by all, and, importantly, are perceived to be fair by over 1200 pupils and over 90 staff.



Across Scotland, teachers have reported the same trends that were initially seen in our classrooms: 92% of teachers say mobile phones interrupt lessons and many link excessive screen use to declining concentration and wellbeing. The Scottish Government has acknowledged this growing evidence base and empowered Headteachers to limit or ban phones as appropriate for their school communities. We have done this with our current school approach.

For a community like Linlithgow Academy, one that values wellbeing, learning and strong relationships, the rationale behind our current policy probably matters more than the operational rules themselves.

A mobile-free classroom approach:

- > supports deeper learning, with pupils more focused and more involved in discussion.
- > builds healthier digital habits, helping young people learn to self-regulate.
- > strengthens peer relationships, reducing online conflict and increasing in-person connection.
- > ensures fairness, acknowledging that without one-to-one school devices for all, thoughtful, purposeful use of mobile phones do have a role.

The current local and national debate is moving again and now focusing on whether mobile phones should be banned in all schools and whether social media apps for under-16s should face even tighter restrictions or also be banned. As this develops, we may need to review our current school protocol. However, in our school setting, it is important to acknowledge the subtle difference between phones and the apps on them. Phones relate to how these devices are used in school, while apps do raise wider online-safety concerns across all digital devices.

This makes the issue more nuanced, especially because all our pupils do not always have access to another dedicated digital learning device, making them reliant on their phone, not only as their main digital learning tool, but arguably as essential for a range of everyday school functions: paying for school meals via banking apps, accessing QR-code surveys or allowing parents/carers to monitor their journey home are some basic examples.

As such, although mobile phones can undoubtedly be a source of distraction, they also act as valuable learning tools especially when no alternative device

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

is available. We need to ensure we do not unintentionally widen inequalities, leaving some pupils unable to access online educational content, digital textbooks, or classroom learning platforms.

Our school's current approach deliberately focuses on removing unregulated, non-learning-related phone use in the classroom, rather than removing mobile technology entirely from school. Teachers can permit mobile phone usage if these are genuinely needed for learning, an approach that aligns with current guidance.

We therefore acknowledge two truths at once: digital skills matter greatly in modern education; and unregulated phone use can seriously hinder classroom teaching and learning. As a school, we thus try to balance being pro-learning and responsive to the complex environment of our classrooms. If this situation shifts, then we will need to shift with it.

A Conversation for the Whole Community

Whether at school, at work or at home, we are all navigating the same question: how do we balance the benefits of technology with the need for focus, connection and ensuring the wellbeing of our young people? Linlithgow Academy's 2024 approach was a thoughtful, community-driven response, one that recognises both the challenges and the possibilities of modern digital life. This approach may well need to be revised as local and national dialogue shifts, but currently, within our classrooms, our approach is working well.

[You can read the public summary of our mobile free classroom protocol and associated items on our school website here:](#)



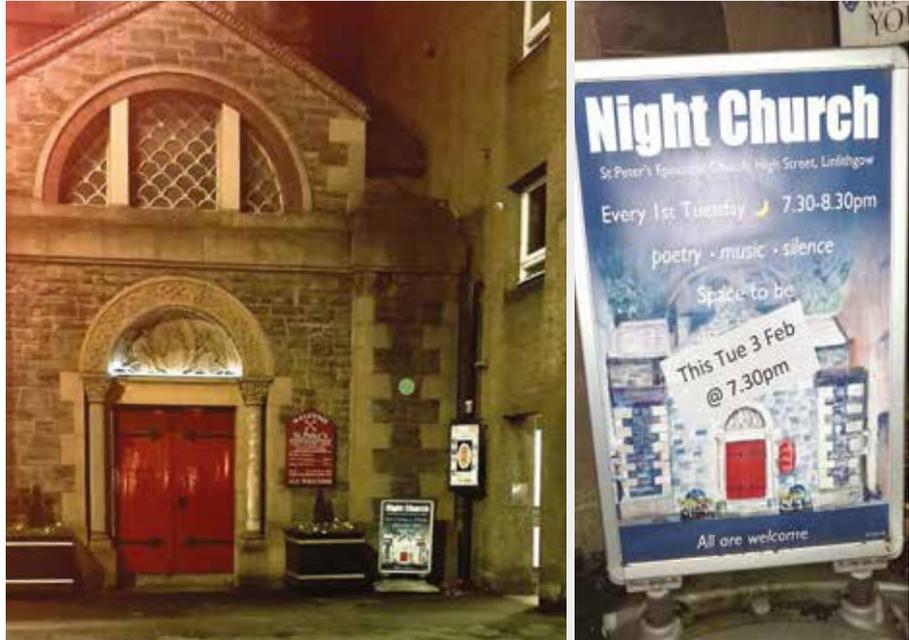
Grant Abbot,
Head Teacher



NIGHT CHURCH A PLACE FOR PEACE AND REFLECTION

St Peter's Scottish Episcopal Church (the little church on the High Street with red doors) can claim to have been an innovating church adapting to 'the times'. The latest innovation has been the provision of Night Church on the first Tuesday of the month at 19.30pm. *

Night Church is an idea which began in Copenhagen. It involves subdued lighting with candles generating soft light, recitations of poetry and music around themes which broadly follow the liturgical seasons e.g. Lent, Easter.



For example, in April poetry may be read reflecting Easter, renewal, resurrection. Or in September 'The tree of life/creation'.

The atmosphere is designed to be both welcoming while creating a sense of quiet reflection.

While churches in the Anglican/Episcopal tradition have been holding evening worship for over a thousand years-Night Church is different. This isn't like evensong or compline.

In Denmark, night church has been described as "church for people who don't really do church... and for those who do!"

It's a sacred place where people are welcome regardless of their views or beliefs. You can pop in for a few minutes or for the full hour. There is no formal worship. People who come are there to find a moment of peace and space.

You can meditate, listen to music and poetry and get away from the tumults of modern-day life.

Just a little sprinkling of prayer given by the Rector, **The Rev'd Rosie Addis.**

The session is usually constructed with music and poems interspersed with periods of silence which allows for relaxation. In fact, it can be so relaxing it's tempting to doze off!

As I write this, cold rain is lashing against the windowpane. It feels like I haven't seen sunshine for a long time. Light is something we crave as human beings. The Bible frequently uses candlelight to symbolise light in darkness and mark significant events like the Messiah's arrival. Light in night church plays an important role in building the right atmospherics and metaphors: the virtue of light overcoming darkness as good overcomes evil.

There is an emergence of rising interest in matters 'spiritual' or 'real' among young people. Perhaps Night Church is an idea whose time has come. Who knows perhaps people attending night church will enhance the chances of a spiritual experience?

David Manion Vestry member St Peter's

KEEPING LINLITHGOW'S STORY ALIVE



Linlithgow Museum has always been free to enter, and we are proud to keep it that way. Our doors are open to everyone, inviting visitors of all ages to explore, discover and enjoy the rich and fascinating history of our town.

Behind the scenes, a small but dedicated team works throughout the year to care for our collections, create inspiring exhibitions, and deliver learning and community programmes that bring history to life. Every object, display and activity helps tell the story of Linlithgow and the people who shaped it and continue to do so.

By becoming a member, or by choosing to show your support with a small contribution during your visit, you play a vital role in helping us continue this important work. Your generosity helps us protect our collections, develop new exhibitions, and ensure that our museum remains welcoming, accessible and free for everyone, today and for generations to come.

WHAT'S ON THIS YEAR

Our 2026 exhibition programme promises a packed and varied year, with something to delight every visitor. Highlights include:

>> A nostalgic journey through life on Linlithgow High Street from the post-war years to the 1970s, capturing the memories, shops and stories that shaped daily life

>> A photography competition celebrating the High Street today, with entries showcased in a special exhibition later in the year

>> The much-anticipated return of the talented **Stitch Matters group**, presenting their beautiful hand-stitched and handcrafted textile work

LINLITHGOW MUSEUM

Opening times: Friday/Saturday 10am-4pm and Sunday 1pm-4pm

www.linlithgowmuseum.org

Jennifer Brown
Museum Co-ordinator



>> A lively living history weekend with the 94th Regiment of Foot, whose dedicated re-enactors will bring the past vividly to life in full military dress and weaponry.

We also hope to explore Iron Age life, revealing what everyday living was like for people who once built and inhabited crannogs on the loch, through fascinating artefacts and stories.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we chart our course into 2027, our team is already working on something stellar, and we can't wait to share more details in the months ahead but for the time being plans are moving along at warp speed!



GALA DAY WILL BE A DOUBLE CELEBRATION FOR THE DUNCAN FAMILY

Images: Andrew West and Cat Egerton



The long-serving former Town Crier, **Davie Duncan**, will crown the Queen at this year's Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Children's Gala Day. And in what will be a double celebration for the whole Duncan family, the Queen-elect is Davie's grand-daughter, **Sophie**, who is a P6 pupil at Linlithgow Bridge Primary School.

This year's Gala Day will take place on Saturday June 20th, and the spectacular procession from the Brig to the Low Port and crowning ceremony against the wonderful backdrop of the Palace will, once again, be one of the highlights of the local social calendar

Preparations for the big day have taken a major step forward following the recent draw. The main retinue is as follows:

Queen-elect, Sophie Duncan; Chief Lady-in-waiting, Isabella Morrison; Champion, Lloyd Porteous; Herald, Caleb Tripney; Provost, Keelan Whyte; 1st Lady-in-waiting, Daisy Smith; 2nd Lady-in-waiting, Lauren Goater; 1st Maid of Honour, Emilia Dixon; 2nd Maid of Honour, Hannah Foster; Mary Queen of Scots, Alicia Greig; Queen of Flowers, Emily Pinto; Queen of Fairies, Elsie Oliver; Crown Bearer, Elliot Cogan; Sceptre Bearer, Theo Douglas; Train Bearers, Daisy Darragh & Kate Allan; Scottish Soldiers, Benjamin Martin & Damon Blackburn.

The Gala Day costs over £38,000 to stage and the hard-working committee members organise a programme of fundraising events throughout the year.

The next two events are a daytime disco in Linlithgow Bowling Club on Saturday March 7th from 2pm until 6pm and a prize bingo in the Rose Club on Wednesday April 22nd. at 7.30pm.

Following the Parents' Information Session on Sunday February 15th, chairperson, **Anne Wilson**, told me:

"We are so excited for the Gala Day this year and think it is going to be our best one yet! Preparations have been under way since September!"



We were delighted that Davie Duncan accepted his crowning duties. A well-deserved honour for our Town Crier of over thirty years - and what a great way to celebrate by crowning his own granddaughter. A first for the Gala Day! We know the family are thrilled!

Last year we brought in the theme of using the Queen's school colours in our retinue. The feedback we have received has been so great and we will continue this in 2026 with the colour purple for Linlithgow Bridge school. Look out for our beautiful bower girls leading the procession!

As always, we need support in fundraising. We hope that readers of the magazine will support our forthcoming events. Further details can be found on our social media pages."



Davie retired last year from his role as Town Crier after over thirty years, but will be back in the spotlight again when Sophie will be proclaimed as "Queen of Hearts" in the magnificent setting of the Peel. Instead of making the announcements in front of the stage - which he has done for many years - Davie will be centre stage, as he carries out the prestigious role of Queen's Crouner. He will be only the fourth man ever to have taken on this duty.

Murdoch Kennedy



DISASTER AT DARIEN

Bruce Jamieson

A few years ago, I had the good fortune to travel through the Panama Canal aboard the Cunard ship, 'Queen Victoria'. As we sailed across the huge, man-made Lake Gatun, my mind conjured up visions of a group of Scots, including some from Linlithgow, who 300 years before, had tried to establish a trading colony in this forbidding land of jungle, crocodiles, howler monkeys and the screeching parrots which flew through the trees beside the ship.



Lake Gatun from the decks of the 'Queen Victoria'.

Those intrepid pioneers, 1200 of them, had sailed from Leith in July 1698, aboard five ships, 'Saint Andrew', 'Unicorn', 'Dolphin', 'Endeavour' and the 56-gun Indiaman, 'Caledonia'. This last-named ship had been specially built for the expedition in Lubeck in Germany - a port with which many Scottish ships, including those from Linlithgow's port of Blackness, regularly traded. The ship bore two flags - the saltire and a pennant commissioned by the 'Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies'.



The Flag of the Company of Scotland bearing the rising sun of hope for the expedition.

On board the 'Caledonia' was **Alexander Masterton**, the son of Linlithgow's Provost Masterton who had married Margaret Glen, daughter of James Glen who had been Provost from 1631 to 1645. Their son was a seasoned mariner, having sailed on his father's merchant ships from Blackness to several ports in the Low Countries and on the Baltic. He held the rank of Boatswain's Yeoman, the senior

crewman of the deck, responsible for the ship's rigging, anchors, cables, sails and deck maintenance.



The tidal harbour at Blackness was protected by its castle.

The Scottish plan to establish a trading venture based in Central America did not go down well in England where the powerful East India Company, backed by King William III, did everything they could to scupper the initiative. But the Scots persevered and incredibly raised the money themselves to fund the expedition. In order to avoid observation by English warships, the Scottish fleet sailed right round the north of Scotland, through the most appalling sea conditions which occasioned mass seasickness amongst the sailors.

Hunger, illness and other problems afflicted the voyagers, and it was a sorry group of would-be colonists that arrived on the Darien Peninsula four months later. They called their new land 'Caledonia' (an ancient name for Scotland) and set about building a township which they christened 'New Edinburgh'.



The Darien area of Panama and a close up showing the Scottish colony.

The venture had become a patriotic crusade in Scotland - partly out of a desire to show English vested interests what could be done. It is estimated that almost half of Scotland's available finance was ploughed into the scheme and among the investors, attracted by the Company's portfolio, were Linlithgow's immediate **Past Provost Robert Turnbull, Provost Alexander Masterton** and another of his sons called **Thomas**.



The Darien Kist in which the trading company stored its money and documents.

Although they were relatively wealthy merchant burgesses, Linlithgow's investors could ill afford to lose the money which they had invested. Scotland in the late 17th century was far from being an affluent nation, in the grip of a widespread famine during which it is estimated that around one third of the population died from starvation. Both Provosts Turnbull and Masterton had dealt with many cases of hardship and deprivation in the burgh. On occasion, it was recorded that babies had been left on the steps of the Burgh Halls, in the hope that the Burgh Council would make arrangements to look after them. The town's charitable almshouses, situated in the Kirkgate and at the Low Port, were full - and poverty stalked the land.



John Slezer's late 17th century depiction of Linlithgow.

Linlithgow was economically challenged - its industries virtually non-existent, apart from small scale linen production, witnessed by Daniel Defoe as he toured the area, recording that *"the water of the lough here is esteem'd with the best in Scotland for bleaching or whitening of linen cloth: so that a great deal of linen made in other parts of the country, is brought to Linlithgow either to be bleached or whitened."*

Local agriculture was equally primitive, operating along the run-rig principle where land was reallocated annually - giving no incentive to the peasant farmers to improve. Each year, the poor soil and simple equipment

produced just enough to live on - with occasionally a little surplus to sell at the weekly markets held at the Cross.



A section of the Dalhousie Estate map showing the strips of run rig farming.

A succession of exceptionally poor harvests from 1695 to 1702 led to the Linlithgow populace wondering if they had offended God and were being punished with another “Seven Lean Years” – like that described in the Book of Genesis.

It was in this climate that the Linlithgow merchants decided to invest their meagre savings into the Darien Scheme. Both Alexander and Thomas Masterton put in £100 each – the equivalent of £20,000 today – and they were to regret it as the trading plans were an unmitigated disaster.

The colonists who were trying to set up their colony in Panama fell foul of the heat, tropical diseases, germ-carrying insects and the hostility of the Spanish who claimed that the area was theirs. By July 1699, over 700 Scots were dead - including Provost Masterton’s son.

It did not help the situation either that the goods taken by the adventurers were hardly the items required by the native population. The Scottish ships had been loaded with commodities including Bibles, blankets, wigs and clay pipes!

Communication was extremely slow in those days, so the disastrous state of affairs was unknown back in Scotland and consequently a second expedition set off. When it reached Darien, the new arrivals found that New Edinburgh and the nearby Fort St Andrew were in a dilapidated condition and full of men suffering from sickness and low morale. One of the second wave of ships to arrive was the inaptly named “Hope of Bo’ness” – for hope there was none – despite a brief victory over an attacking Spanish army of 1600 men.

The company was soon wound up – leaving Linlithgow’s merchants well

out of pocket and harbouring deep resentment towards England for the part played by its merchants and the monarch in not helping the scheme and refusing to rescue the survivors. Very few would-be colonists made it back to Scotland. Those that did received a commemorative medal – small recompense for the wages which they were still due and the hardships they’d endured.

The Darien medal featured the saltire, African animals and two members of the Panamanian Kuna tribe. The Latin motto translates as, “Wherever the world extends, united strength is more powerful.”



In 1705 Robert Turnbull was again elected Provost of Linlithgow and he fought hard to prevent the Act of Union between

Scotland and England - arguing that it was only being contemplated as a result of Scotland’s poor economy - partly brought about by the Darien failure.

The Parliamentary Union of 1707 went ahead but it was a grim-faced Provost Turnbull who led the Marches parade that year.

It is reported that the tension-filled day was conducted “in solemn fashion” ending in a riot between the Smiths and the Tailors.

What a lot went through my mind on that cruise down the Panama Canal!

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Folk Fae Lithgae **JEAN McKEOWN**

Jean McKeown hails originally from Coatbridge and first came to Linlithgow with her husband, Barry, in 1993. Their careers had taken them to Buckinghamshire and when they decided to re-locate back to Scotland, Linlithgow seemed a good choice, as Jean explained:

"We decided on Linlithgow because Barry was going to be in Edinburgh and I was in Glasgow and also my brother lived here for a while and we really liked the town. My dad came from Armadale and my mum also grew up there, so I did have some West Lothian roots".

Barry has always played rugby and had been heavily involved with a club in Buckinghamshire, where Jean also helped out on match days. She told me that it wasn't long before they both found themselves at Linlithgow Rugby Club, just along the road from their house at Kettilstoun Mains:

"I did laugh because from our kitchen window, you could just about see the rugby posts and I thought, 'here we go!'

Barry and Jean threw themselves wholeheartedly into the local rugby club and Barry became club captain in 1996. That involvement really helped them adapt to their new surroundings, as Jean told me:

"That to me is one of the amazing things about rugby, or any sport. If you are involved and you move somewhere new, you can slot right in. You meet people and all of a sudden it makes the change in your life that much easier. That's what communities are all about. The rugby club has been a huge part of our family life since we moved to Linlithgow".

Barry has coached at all levels within the club and is one of the volunteer ground staff. Son **Calum** started off playing for the micro and mini teams and now holds a regular berth in the first fifteen. In 2018, the committee advertised for a finance director. Jean had finished working and with her background in financial services, she felt that this was something she could turn her hand to. She quickly embraced the role and became more involved in the formal running of the club. Five years later, she was honoured to become one of the very few women in Scotland who hold the position of President within a rugby club.

Linlithgow Rugby Club has come a long way since it was founded in 1970. The impressive facilities at their Mains Road base, including the popular Indoor Training Centre (ITC) stand testament to the long years of dedication and commitment by the members. The ITC is the base for the town's civic festival in the run-up to the annual Riding of the Marches and the club is very proud to be able to offer this space to the wider community.

The rugby club's current healthy position does not come without its challenges and Jean is only too willing to meet these head on. She told me:

"Increasing regulations and licensing do have an impact on the running of the club and managing these is a challenge. We are trying to do that without impacting on being a rugby club, which is important. I always tell people that they've built this amazing facility, but we now have to maintain it and run it, continue with it and make sure it's fit for purpose for the future generations".

The first fifteen is currently sitting near the top of National League Division Four and their exciting style of play has won many plaudits. Of the sixty players involved in the senior squad, over ninety-three per cent have come through the club's development system and this is something Jean is immensely proud of. And the club is proud of Jean. A spokesman told me:

"Jean has brought drive, enthusiasm and ability to the roles she has fulfilled. She has been a breath of fresh air to the club, not only because of her support for the on-the field activities, but also in engaging the parents and some of the other people round the club, making them feel part of things as well. We are a community club. We couldn't cope with all the things that go on off the field, such as licensing and regulations, without somebody like Jean".

Murdoch Kennedy



LINLITHGOW RUGBY CLUB EMBEDDED IN THE COMMUNITY

It has been another hugely positive season for Linlithgow Rugby Club, with plenty to celebrate both on and off the field.

Our senior side, **The Reds**, continue to make their mark in National League Division 4. After earning promotion two seasons ago and consolidating last year, the team currently sits fourth in the table, just a point off third place. With 11 league wins so far, it's been an impressive campaign - made even more special by the fact that most of the squad are home-grown players who began their rugby journey here as **Wee Reds** in primary school.

Youth development remains at the heart of everything we do. We have around 250 young people registered, fielding teams from Primary 1 through to Under-18. Last season both our Under-16s and Under-18s lifted Conference League titles, with the Under-18s repeating that success this year. Our pathway begins with the **Tiny Reds** for pre-school children, progresses through the **Wee Reds** micros and minis, and continues into secondary school with the **Young Reds**. At the other end of the age spectrum, our **Vintage Reds** Walking Rugby programme offers a fun outlet for the over-60s.

A key strength of the club is our commitment to developing rugby beyond our own membership. Through our Development Officers, we deliver outreach programmes across schools throughout West Lothian, introducing the game in a safe, inclusive and enjoyable way and helping it grow locally.

As a community club, inclusivity is central to our approach. We work hard to keep membership subscriptions fair and accessible. Doing so means we must also fundraise to maintain and improve our facilities at Mains Park, ensuring we provide a welcoming, high-quality environment for players, families and visitors.

Fundraising events are therefore vital - and they also happen to be great fun. **RedsFest** has quickly become one of the biggest dates in the local social calendar. This year's event on **Saturday 16th May** will feature the fantastic beer festival, live music and the ever-popular men's 7-a-side tournament, alongside a women's 7s tournament showcasing the continued growth of the women's game. The beer festival will offer 24 different beers, two ciders, the club's usual bar



favourites and a dedicated spritz bar. Beer festival, live music and great rugby - a day for the whole community.

This year also marks our **30th year running the town's Fireworks Display** - a much-loved local tradition, alongside hosting the **Marquee events** during the Civic Festival and the Marches.

Our expanding social calendar includes **comedy nights**, held two or three times a year and featuring nationally renowned comedians, with the next on **Friday 3rd April**. We have also reintroduced our quarterly **quiz night**, and this season launched **pre-match lunches** at First XV home games, giving supporters the chance to enjoy good food and great company.

Beyond rugby, we remain proud to play an active role in the wider community, from hosting major local events to supporting charitable initiatives at home and abroad, all made possible by more than 60 dedicated club volunteers.

Whether you are a player, parent, supporter or simply curious about getting involved, there has never been a better time to be part of Linlithgow Rugby Club.



Fly Half



1. "Happy Captain" Club Captain leads his team off the field after another win.
2. "Winning Team" The Reds side lifted the trophy in 2025.
3. "RedsFest2" Great day out - high quality 7-a-side rugby partners the beer festival.
4. "Ukraine" Club members collected over 100 bin bags of warm clothing to send to Ukraine

THE SUPER SCRIBBLERS

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



Are you a talented actor and want to get into musical theatre? Well, here are a few amazing amateur theatre companies which you might be interested in. The Super Scribblers have interviewed some of the people who work there and asked their opinions on what it was like working in these amazing amateur theatre groups. We also researched what the top 10 musicals of all time are. Is your favourite musical on the list?

Top 10 musicals of all time

- Number 1. Les Misérables
- Number 2. The Lion King
- Number 3. Phantom of the Opera
- Number 5. Cats
- Number 6. Billy Elliot
- Number 7. Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat
- Number 8. The Rocky Horror Show
- Number 9. Starlight Express
- Number 10. Mamma Mia
(BBCmaestro.com)

The Scribblers Favourite Musicals!

- Donald - The King and I
- Mrs Wilson - Les Miserables
- Phoebe - Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
- Alina - Wicked!
- Maia - Hamilton
- Mrs Johnston - Sunshine on Leith
- Serena - Annie
- Evie L - The Greatest Showman
- Evie H - Wicked!
- Mia - Hamilton
- Freja - The Greatest Showman
- Dallas - The Greatest Showman

Glass Act Theatre

Glass Act Theatre is an acting club held at the Low Port Centre in Linlithgow from 5.35 - 6.25pm for P1-3 and 6.30 - 7.25pm for P4-P7. They play acting/drama games, produce small shows at Christmas and Halloween and then put on a big summer show in theatres for the public. Glass Act Theatre helps younger children develop their acting and theatre skills and their confidence. If you're interested in a drama club that is fun and inclusive, then this is for you!

Meet Rebeka - The Star Behind Glass Act Theatre!

We caught up with Rebeka, the amazing founder of Glass Act Theatre,

to find out what makes her love drama so much.

What inspired you to start an acting club for kids?

"I wanted to create a drama club where kids could come and be creative," Rebeka says with a big smile.

How long have you been acting?

"About 15 years! I've studied acting for almost 10 years too," she tells us. Wow, that's a lot of stage time!

What's your favourite musical?

"Billy Elliot! I love the story, and the songs are by Elton John," Rebeka shares.

And your favourite musical song?

"Dancing Queen from Mamma Mia!

It's so fun and makes me want to dance every time," she laughs.

What's the best thing about Glass Act Theatre?

"I get to work with super creative people every day!"

Rebeka's passion for theatre is contagious, and she's all about helping kids shine on stage. Who knows? Maybe you'll be the next star at Glass Act Theatre.



LAMP Since Linlithgow Amateur Musical Productions began in 1985, they have been a cherished part of the community, lighting up the local stage with the enchanting world of musical theatre. They have two productions at Linlithgow Academy every year during the Easter and October school holidays. This year's October production was "Anything Goes".

We interviewed SPS early years practitioner **Mrs Easton**, who is a member of LAMP and here is what she had to say;

Mrs Easton has been part of **L.A.M.P** for an incredible 16 years—and she knows it because she proudly received her 15-year award last year! When we asked about her favourite show, she didn't hesitate: "Elf!" *It's a holiday classic that always makes her smile.*

So, why does she keep coming back to L.A.M.P? "I love singing and dancing, and I've made so many friends over the years," she says. Plus, being part of the group has boosted her mental health, which makes every rehearsal even more special. Her absolute favourite thing? Catching up with

everyone and having a good blether! She also loves learning new songs and looks forward to the famous Bauble Christmas Party every year. Here's how it works: everyone brings a bauble and places it in the middle of the table. One person's name gets pulled out of a hat and they take a Christmas bauble, then the next person gets called and they can either take another or steal the last person's one! It's all part of the festive fun that makes L.A.M.P feel like family.

We also caught up with Hayley, who is the choreographer at junior LAMP, and asked her a couple of questions.

What inspires you for all the LAMP choreography?

I get inspiration from the children's personalities when they get excited dancing and it encourages me to come up with new ideas.

Why do you love being the LAMP choreographer?

We have such talented children who I love working with.



QUIZ

Test your Musicals knowledge with this quiz:

Q1 In the musical *My Fair Lady*, Professor Henry Higgins makes a bet that he can transform which Cockney Flower girl into a proper lady?

Q2 Which famous musical features a young girl named Dorothy who is swept away to a magical land over a rainbow?

Q3 The famous song 'Singing in the Rain' comes from which classic musical film?

Q4 In the musical *Annie*, what's the name of her dog?

Q5 Which musical tells the story of two star-crossed lovers, Tony and Maria, set against a backdrop of rival New York gangs, the Jets and the Sharks?

G.L.E.E

Glee is an amazing event available to kids from ages 11 and up. Created in the mid 1850s GLEE is a competition where all kids sing and dance together. It is great opportunity as kids work together and create bonds and friends. Many schools choose to compete in the competition including Springfield P.S. who have competed for the past three years.

G.row L.ead E.ducate E.volve

We sat down with SPS music teacher, Mrs Bell, to chat all things GLEE. When asked what inspired her to teach music, she smiled and said,

"Singing brings me joy and happiness, and I want to share that with others." Mrs Bell has led SPS through two competitions, earning two second-place finishes and even making it to national finals! Her top tip for budding musicians? "Take any opportunity you can—like joining your local theatre!" And if you're dreaming of winning G.L.E.E, she says the secret is "Confidence, teamwork, and discipline."

What's her favourite part about G.L.E.E? Watching all the hard work come together into something amazing.



LIFE FIT WELLNESS

The Life Fit Wellness clinic at Kingsfield Golf and Leisure Centre was set up in 2019, as an expansion of our long established, successful clinic in Falkirk. Life Fit Wellness and the Arkley family of Kingsfield have a relationship going back many years so the foundation of the clinic within the golf centre was a natural step to take.

Life Fit Kingsfield has grown in popularity and demand since 2019 and we now offer our services 6 days a week. We provide high quality physiotherapy, golf screening, Pilates and pelvic health physiotherapy. Due to popularity, the Pilates classes have recently moved to the Low Port Centre, where the capacity is greater.

Given the location of the clinic, we see golfers of all abilities and manage a range of golf related injuries. However non golfers are very welcome too! We treat people from all walks of life with a variety of complaints, from low back pain to post-op rehab and everything in between!

The physiotherapy service at Life Fit Kingsfield is run by **Emmet Kennedy and Morven Murray**, who also spend time at the main clinic in Falkirk. Emmet is a very experienced physio who has been with Life Fit since 2012. With Emmet you will find a friendly but professional manner and get a simple but effective approach to managing pain and injury. Emmet also leads the golf screening programme at Life Fit.



Morven has been part of the Life Fit family since 2020. She is an extremely diligent physiotherapist

and is dedicated to her patients. Morven has a passion for challenging her patients through appropriate strength-based rehabilitation. Morven also runs the Pilates service in Linlithgow, 1 to 1 sessions in Kingsfield and classes at Low Port.



Kate Leishman heads up the pelvic health programme. She splits her time between working in the NHS and at Life Fit, offering clinics at Kingsfield

and in Falkirk. Kate is experienced and expert in her field and aims to put her patients at ease and help them navigate problems that can be quite sensitive. Pessary fitting is a particular area of expertise for Kate but she is skilled at managing all aspects of pelvic health, from continence issues to pelvic pain.



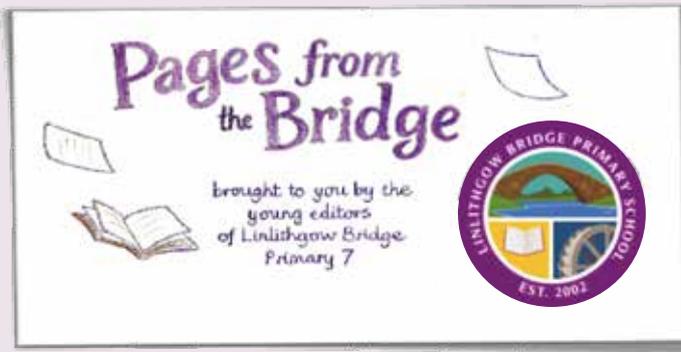
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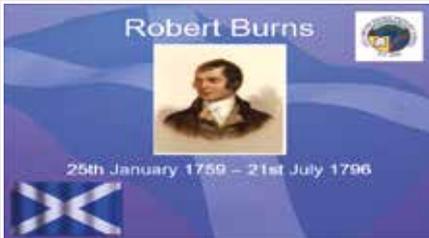
SCAN ME



Reporter: Freya Ahir
Photographer: Jack Summers

My name is Freya Ahir and I'm the Primary 7 reporter for this edition of 'Pages from the Bridge'. January was an exciting time for literacy across Linlithgow Bridge Primary School, with every class diving into Scottish texts, exploring Scots vocabulary and celebrating our rich culture through reading, writing, talking and listening. I'm delighted to share all the amazing learning from P1 to P7.

Whole School Scots Language Celebration



All classes took part in our annual Scots Celebration Assembly. This included performances, poetry recitals, music, artwork and storytelling. The hall was full of creativity and Scottish pride. *"It felt amazing to share our learning with the whole school."*

Primary 1: The Gruffalo in Scots



P1 enjoyed listening to *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson told in Scots. They learned brilliant new Scots words including muckle, plook, mirk, tod, scran and dippit. Using this new vocabulary,

they created Gruffalo headbands for role-play and retold the story in their own words.

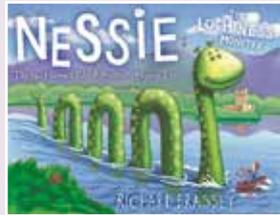
The class also made their own clay Gruffalos and labelled different features using Scots words.

"My Gruffalo has muckle horns and a mirk tail."



Primary 2: Nessie the Loch Ness Monster

P2 explored the text *Nessie the Loch Ness Monster* by Richard Brassey. Their big questions were:



Who is Nessie? Is she real? What does she look like?

They carried out

research, wrote information reports and even posted their writing to the Loch Ness Visitor Centre. *"I liked finding out all the different ideas people have about Nessie."*

Primary 3: Scottish Wildlife Adventures



P3 explored four Scottish animal stories: *Ollie and the Otter* by Emily Dodd, *Skye the Puffling*, *Harris the Hero* and *Lewis Clowns Around* by Lynne Rickards.

They drew puffins, completed listening and talking challenges and used "blankety blank" games to develop vocabulary and comprehension. *"My favourite part was learning how Harris helped a lost seal."*

Primary 4: Neeps and Tatties

P4 read *Neeps and Tatties* by Carey Morning, a story celebrating differences and friendship.

They explored Scots words, designed their own neeps and tatties characters and completed reflective reading tasks linked to the story. *"We liked creating characters that were all different but still worked together."*



Primary 5: Rivet Boy and Burns Poetry

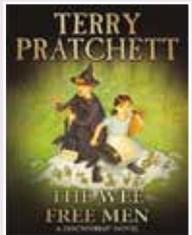


P5 continued their learning with *Rivet Boy* by Scottish author Barbara Henderson, linked to their IDL topic on bridges. They illustrated chapters, recorded summaries and added QR codes to their classroom door display.

Every pupil also learned a Scots poem off by heart, with three pupils chosen to perform at the Scots Assembly. *"I felt proud reciting my poem in front of everyone."*

Primary 6: The Wee Free Men and Scots Exploration

P6 have been reading *The Wee Free Men* by Terry Pratchett as part of their Scots language focus. The story introduced the class to the hilarious and brave Nac Mac Feeble, tiny blue warrior creatures



who speak in Scots. Pupils enjoyed spotting familiar Scots words, learning new ones and discussing how the Scots dialect helped shape the humour and personality of the characters.

They explored character traits, key events and the use of dialogue, linking this to their wider Scots work across the school.

Primary 7: Mull of Kintyre Poetry Project

P7 completed a mini project about the Mull of Kintyre, developing Scots poetry inspired by landscape, legends and history. They studied geographical and historical texts, explored lyrics from the famous song and worked in groups to share interpretations and ideas.



Three poets were selected to perform their own poems at the Scots Assembly: 'Grow' by Hannah Galbraith, 'Mull of Kintyre' by Holly Lawson and 'Mull of Kintyre' by Jiya Tuhan.

Looking Forward January has been a brilliant month full of Scottish stories, new vocabulary and creative learning. From Gruffalos to puffins and from poetry to performances, our school has embraced the joy of Scots language.

INTRODUCING LINLITHGOW PHARMACY'S NEW PHARMACIST



Linlithgow Pharmacy aims to support local residents with everything from everyday health queries to specialist treatments. We sat down with Kirsty Byrne the new full-time pharmacist behind this exciting new venture to learn more about her passion for community healthcare and her vision for the pharmacy's role in Linlithgow.

MEET YOUR LOCAL PHARMACIST - KIRSTY

Community pharmacy runs in the family. Growing up with both parents working as pharmacists, our Saturday mornings were spent helping out in their stores, learning the profession from the ground up. It always felt like a natural path, and in 1995, that journey brought me to Linlithgow as the first Pharmacist Manager of the new Boots store. After five years in that role,

I moved on to other opportunities, but my husband and I never left. We raised our family here, fell in love with the community, and always believed the town could benefit from an additional pharmacy.

As an independent prescriber for the past five years, I can now diagnose and treat conditions like UTIs, eye and ear infections, and tonsillitis without patients needing to visit their GP. It's incredibly rewarding to offer that level of care. Looking ahead, I'm excited to introduce services like weight-management support and travel health clinics, filling gaps that I know will make a real difference locally.

Community pharmacists occupy a unique space in healthcare. We're open Monday to Saturday, accessible without appointments, and able

to ease pressure on overstretched GP practices. Being able to support people quickly, in their own town, has a direct impact on their health and wellbeing.

If there's one piece of health advice I wish everyone took more seriously, it's sleep. It underpins so much—your immune system, mood, memory, even how well your medications work. Most adults need seven to nine hours a night, and prioritising that can transform your overall health.

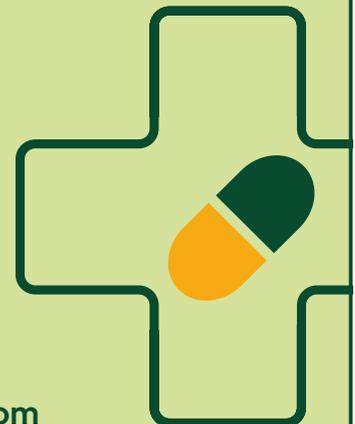
Outside the pharmacy, I enjoy spending time with family, discovering new restaurants, and travelling whenever possible. I recently returned from visiting my son in Australia, where he's currently working. It was a wonderful reminder of how important it is to make time for the people and experiences that matter most.

YOUR TRUSTED LOCAL PHARMACY



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collection
and delivery service**



LINLITHGOW PHARMACY

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500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF LINLITHGOW BRIDGE

BATTLE

500
LINLITHGOW BRIDGE 1526



WEEKEND
4 & 5
SEPT



LINLITHGOW CIVIC TRUST
Part of Linlithgow Burgh Trust
a Scottish Charitable Incorporated
Organisation (SCIO) No. SC047211

SAT
16
MAY

Tickets have gone on sale for what promises to be two nights of fantastic entertainment, learning and fun to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Linlithgow Bridge.

Bruce Jamieson will be holding one of his superb multi-media presentations at St Michael's Parish Church on the weekend of the 500th anniversary – September 4th and 5th.

It is part of Battle 500 events, supported by Linlithgow Civic Trust, and will see music, song and spoken word combined in a wonderful multi-media presentation.

“King James V and the Battle of Linlithgow Bridge”, narrated by Bruce and Thom Pollock, will provide a whole new perspective on the battle, its origins and aftermath.

The Linlithgow String Orchestra, led by Bill Jones, will perform an accompanying sound track, including 16th century music, while the audience will hear recordings of characters from the time, played by Lithgae folk. In addition, over 150 illustrations will appear on a big screen.

The script is written by Bruce, who said it is a look back on the battle and how it formed part of a civil war, affecting not only Linlithgow, but Scotland and indeed the whole of the British Isles.

Bruce said:

“It’s about more than the battle; I wanted a slightly different tack to the way the story of the battle is normally told – it looks at the history surrounding the battle and the local characters involved in it.”

The presentation starts with the bloody battle of 1526, in which thousands died when the Earl of Lennox was routed by the Earl of Arran’s army – the bloodiest

encounter in the aftermath of the death of James IV at the Battle of Flodden.

But it will then look at why the battle took place when Scotland was a fractious place with opposing sides vying for control of the young king. The evening will then go further back in time – showing an infant King James V – putting all the events into context.

But this is no dry history lesson from the former master at Linlithgow Academy, it is an event designed to entertain and enthuse. **“Touch wood it will work well,”** said Bruce **“I have tried to bring lots of locals and community groups together, and community is something I have always been passionate about.”**

Bruce has created many memorable multi-media presentations in Linlithgow including **“Flodden – the Local Legacy”**; **“St Michael’s – a Son et Lumiere”**; **“Lest We Forget – Linlithgow in World War Two”** and **“Linlithgow in World War One.”**

His latest production takes place on Friday 4th and Saturday 5th September – the exact moment in time when the Battle of Linlithgow Bridge and its aftermath took place – 500 years before. The venue is St Michael’s Parish Church – which itself plays a part in the historical events.

The presentation starts at 7.00pm. The price is £15 per adult and £12 for age 15 and under. Proceeds will be shared between the Battle 500 project and St Michael’s.

You can book tickets now at www.battle500.org.uk or get them from the Far from the Madding Crowd bookshop.

Symposium

Bruce will also be holding a symposium with Dr John McGregor on **May 16th at 7pm in St Peter’s Church**, as part of the Far from the Madding Crowd bookshop’s regular programme of author events.

The evening will be in two parts:

JAMES V – THE LOCAL LEGACY

An illustrated presentation by **Bruce Jamieson**, focussing on the impact made on the local area by King James V and some events of his reign. The Stewart monarch was born in Linlithgow Palace in 1512, and although his reign was short-lived, it impacted greatly on the burgh – as will be revealed in St Peter’s on Saturday, 16th May.

KING IN CONTEXT

Dr John McGregor will explore the wider background to the minority and personal rule of Scotland’s James V (1513-42). **“This was a period of transition”** is a never-failing truism that has served to pad out many a desperate student’s assignment; but it certainly applies particularly to 16th century Europe. Whatever the fortunes of the Stewart dynasty, the changes in progress during James’s lifetime would not have left Scotland untouched.

Tickets are £5 and all proceeds will go to the Battle 500 project. Book via the bookshops’ website, or instore now: www.maddingcrowdlinlithgow.com



THE PROSPECT OF SPRING ARRIVING

In early January we headed off to Harrogate to the major tradeshow for Christmas goods and decorations. We get excited by all the goodies we see, place our orders and then have to wait for them to be delivered in September. Meantime the prospect of Spring arriving and the need for us to focus on gardening takes over. But while in Harrogate we couldn't resist a January visit to the RHS Garden Harlow Carr. So on a dry, sunny, but icy cold day we indulged ourselves in this horticultural haven.

The winter garden was alive with coloured stems, early snowdrops, daffodils and heathers, but what caught our attention were the planted alpine troughs around the alpine house. The variety of troughs, with the different planting styles and the many tiny evergreen alpine plants adorning them was amazing and made a dramatic winter display. The low winter sunlight added to the drama and we couldn't help thinking how the spring and summer displays could ever beat this winter glory.



This small sandstone trough has matching sandstone bits of rock to create height and make a dramatic landscape with a fine gravel that matches both the trough and the rocks. The evergreen rosettes of saxifrage and sedum hugging the planting pockets contrast with the variegated leaves and pink flowers of Cyclamen coum. The soil used is soil-based John Innes No 1 with 50% alpine grit added to guarantee very good drainage.



The rocks used in this landscape are paler than the trough, adding extra contrast, and the colour of the gravel used is between the two, unifying the display. You may spot that all the troughs are sitting on bricks or stone blocks to lift them off the ground closer for your inspection, but also keeping the trough's important drainage holes from getting blocked. The tight sedum buns look great at this time of the year.



This long thin trough has been given a very dramatic landscape look with vertical slices and slithers of matching sandstone. The planting is still very new and has had to start with very small bits of

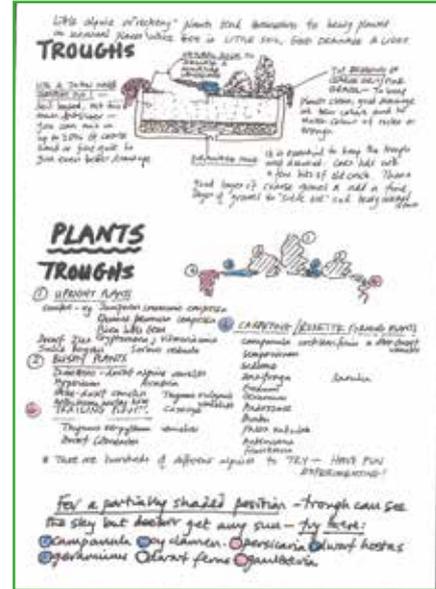
plants to squeeze them into the narrow planting pockets. The white labels are a bit 'in your face' and we preferred the black labels used in other troughs. Personally we try to push the labels down to soil level, they are still there to remind you of the names of the plants but not immediately visible.



This is a massive stone trough, a real statement and no one would manage to steal it from your front door. It will be filled up with rubble to within 25cm (10") of the top and blinded with 2cm (1") of alpine grit to stop the soil being washed

down into the rubble. Here Tufa rock (limestone) has been used to create a dramatic landscape. Saxifrages are very happy growing here with Dianthus (alpine pinks) taking over the show later on.

If you want to learn more about planting your own alpine trough, pick up our purple piglet project leaflet which is full of ideas and suggestions. Happy planting!



Dougal Philip and Lesley Watson
New Hopetoun Gardens

so much more than just a garden centre



COLOUR IS ERUPTING IN OUR PLANT SALES AREA!
CHEER UP YOUR GARDEN NOW AFTER THE WET WINTER TO TAKE YOU THROUGH TO THE SUMMER.

www.newhopetoungardens.co.uk

What's going on...

Rounding up our latest news and events across the town



Volunteer Visitor Team

The Volunteer Visitor Team are now in their third year of operation, and still enjoying the interaction with tourists, and local people too.

We have a base in the Burgh Halls, at the Reception desk, from where we meet and greet visitors from all over the world.

There is a plentiful supply of literature, tourism and history based material in the 'kit' which we store in the Burgh Halls. It's interesting, and often very satisfying to

feel that we've helped people to navigate and enjoy their time around here, and further afield.

Often they're on a time limited visit, needing information about the Palace, Loch and High Street, or specific places of interest.

Or they're investigating family history or heading further afield within Scotland - and are usually happy to share their experiences and questions with us.

We operate on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, between Easter and October. Our shifts are 11am to 1pm, and 1pm to 3pm.

We are there as team members, so if you're happy meeting people, in an independent situation, and would like to give a couple of hours, perhaps every couple of weeks, then please do get in touch.

For more information please contact :

jill@maddingcrowdlinlithgow.com

(PS. You also get a free T-shirt!)

Reed Band members are ready to party!!

The Royal Burgh of Linlithgow Reed Band made its first public appearance at a concert in the Empire Picture House - formerly the Victoria Hall - on Sunday May 6th, 1956.

This year, band members will be celebrating seventy years as Linlithgow's official Burgh Band and a number of events are being planned to mark this milestone Platinum Jubilee.

Recent years have seen a tremendous upturn in the band's fortunes and with the largest-ever membership and an established home in the Low Port Centre, the future is looking very bright.

Speaking exclusively to the Black Bitch Magazine, band president, Jonathan Molloy told me:

"The Reed Band is in fine fettle and looking forward to the first big event of a very special year - the annual Spring Concert, which will take place on Sunday March 22nd, at 7pm in St Michael's Parish Church."

"We finished 2025 on a real high,



playing for HRH The Princess Royal on her visit to the Royal Burgh to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Deacons' Court. Now, we are looking forward to the coming months, when we will mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the band in 1956. We are definitely ready to party!"

"The first piece of music that was put on the stands at the inaugural rehearsal on January 15th 1956, was a march, 'Light of Foot'. With a nod to this year's landmark anniversary, the present-day Reed Band will play 'Light of Foot' once again in the forthcoming concert.

Other highlights in the varied programme chosen by conductor, Lex McDowell, will include Hans Zimmer's atmospheric music from the hit film,

'Interstellar', in an arrangement which will feature the band accompanied by the church organ, and a selection of Mambo tunes to get the feet tapping. Meanwhile the Beginners' and Training Bands will join forces during the concert for a slice of K-Pop!"

"Tickets priced £10 will be available from Far from the Madding Crowd in advance or at the door on the evening of the concert. The compere for the evening's entertainment will be our great friend, the irrepressible Bruce Jamieson."

Further information is available on the band's social media pages.

Murdoch Kennedy



LINLITHGOW - A CHANGING TOWN

Linlithgow Community Development Trust

There have been 18 years of change in Linlithgow since an initial set of meetings about climate change were held in 2008. Looking back we can reflect on what has been achieved, and offer our support to the activities that are still ongoing.

Progress has come in many shapes and forms. Some led by community organisations, others the actions of individuals and families in their own homes, while key agencies delivered on larger projects. Linlithgow's enthusiastic uptake of more energy efficient technologies means that, despite the addition of new housing to the town, overall domestic gas and electricity usage has reduced by 35%.

Not everything worked and some pilot activities acted as catalysts for other projects to develop from. Without listing everything that's happened, perhaps we can remind ourselves of some of these efforts and pause to consider what might be the next steps for the benefit of our community and to help with the changing climate in years to come.



In no particular order:

Community:

Allotments created on private land near Park Farm (LADAS)

Three community orchards and wildflowers planted

Two schemes for household Solar Thermal and Solar PV panels.

LinlithGO Solar installed PV panes on the Rugby Club and Golf clubhouse roofs.

Linlithgow Tool Library established

Linlithgow Repair Shop fixing household items

Linlithgow Community Shed and ReFab making good use of scrap materials.

LCDT supporting e-bike hire, electric van and various active travel (walking and cycling) projects including local schools.

St. Michael's church replacing all lights with LED.

Linlithgow Bridge Scouts hall - fitting new windows, insulated cladding and solar.

1st Step Bikes restoring and servicing bikes.

West Lothian Cycle Circuit opened offering traffic free space for community wheeling activities and cycle sport.

Linlithgow Academy Active Travel School hub established 2025.

LUCS upgrading one of their canal boats to electric power.

Burgh Beautiful and others tree planting on the high street and at other locations around town.

Individual Households:

Fitting cavity wall and loft insulation.

Installing electric car charge points, solar panels and battery energy storage

Replacing inefficient gas boilers and switching to heat pumps too.

Car owners switching to hybrid and fully electric cars.

Creating spaces in gardens to grow fruit and vegetables.

West Lothian Council:

Fitting solar panels on Springfield community centre, on the Academy and at Beecraigs country park.

Improving various cycle/pedestrian paths around town.

Installing five public electric car charge points

Partnering with Sustrans to build a ramp and path from the canal to the leisure centre.

Upgrading street lights to more efficient LED.

Scottish Canals:

Canal towpath resurfaced, solar lights and ramps constructed to be a puddle free alternative pathway across town.

Scotrail:

Installing more and improved bike racks at the train station.

Move away from old diesel trains to new electric trains.

The above list, although far from comprehensive, illustrates the many changes that have and still are taking place in Linlithgow.

But are we done? Far from it. Many homes are still cold and costly to heat, too many vehicles still pollute and congest our wee High Street, our food is still predominantly imported, air and loch water quality are still issues to improve and we are not yet preparing for the effects of excess heat or storm floods.

So, what are Linlithgow's next steps to be? There is much still to be done to deal with the ongoing climate crisis and ideas for future projects would be welcomed. If you have an idea or would like to get involved with one of our current projects, please contact LCDT on hello@trust-linlithgow.org.uk.



Lindsey Campbell





WHY ARE THERE TWO ROTARY CLUBS IN LINLITHGOW?

A question that is often asked by some folks in Linlithgow. Others aren't even aware that there are two – often referring simply to “Linlithgow Rotary”. However Linlithgow does have two Rotary Clubs, and the answer to “why” is actually quite simple.

The Rotary Club of Linlithgow & Bo'ness (aka “L&B”) was established in 1955 and currently consists of about 25 members from all age groups and vocations. It was established as a “lunchtime Club” and still meets at the Inchyra Grange Hotel every Tuesday lunchtime. The current Club President is **Sue Vizard**.

By the late 1980's, as the L&B membership continued to grow, it was felt that a “sister Club” should be started – one that met in the evenings. It was hoped that this alternative would appeal to people with less time on their hands during the working week but who still wanted to get involved. And so

The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange came into being in 1991 and it has proven to be a remarkably successful arrangement. Linlithgow Grange membership currently sits at about 40, similarly from all age groups and vocations. It meets at Linlithgow Golf Club on Monday evenings. The current Club President is **Allan Robertson**.

The rest they say is history! Both Clubs have gone from strength to strength independently of each other, although there are still strong bonds between the two, and regular liaison meetings to discuss joint working on certain initiatives and avoid duplicating effort. For the most part they plough their own furrow.

So what of the activities of the Linlithgow Rotary Clubs?

Both Clubs are active locally, nationally, and internationally with a range of initiatives including community work, youth projects in conjunction with the local primary and secondary schools, fundraising, and, of course, a number of social events. The emphasis is always on doing good but having lots of fun at the same time.

Linlithgow and Bo'ness Rotary Club (L&B) meetings are Tuesday lunchtimes; however it is the evening Committee meetings where the planning gets done for the action to happen!

This past year has seen L&B's Committees working with local contacts and charities to provide incredible support to the people of Ukraine. For example, last summer an L&B International Committee fundraising event raised enough money to purchase an ambulance which was donated to Sunflower Scotland. The ambulance has since been taken to the war zone of Kherson where it is now helping to save lives.



When the Club received an appeal from **John McKenna**, who is recognised in Kyiv as a legitimate visitor and

supporter, L&B club members contacted those they knew to collect warm, clean clothes. The timescales were very tight, with only a couple of weeks to gather the garments, suitable for all ages, for John to transport on his November trip. Working together with other Rotary clubs and organisations, including Linlithgow Rugby Club and Springfield Primary School, more than 300 black bags of clothes were collected.

As well as one-off initiatives, L&B Rotary Club organise and support annual events, some of which are for schoolchildren in both Linlithgow and Bo'ness. One such example is the Rotary Young Technologists competition which is hosted by Bo'ness Academy and backed by the Institution of Structural Engineers. Local senior schools send teams to take part in a fun technology challenge. The teams are judged on their planning and logo design, as well as on how successfully they met the challenge. This competition requires the young people to work together to find solutions. This is a useful life skill for everyone, Rotary Club member or no.

Linlithgow Grange meets on a Monday evening at Linlithgow Golf Club and is probably best known for its work in and around the town, including the annual Linlithgow's Tree of Light community event in December, and its support of local charities and community groups throughout the year.

In May each year they hold a **Beer and Gin Festival**. In 2025, the festival took place in the Burgh Halls, Linlithgow on a lovely sunny day, which helped create a great atmosphere and encouraged strong attendance throughout the day. A large number of people from Linlithgow and the surrounding area attended, all keen to sample the wide range of refreshments on offer - a carefully selected range of 16 local beers and 6 gins, showcasing excellent local producers and providing something for everyone to enjoy. Feedback from attendees is always extremely positive. Equally importantly, the festival is always a great financial success too. The 2025 event generated a profit of about £8,000 on the day, all of which went to local good causes. **This years' event will be held on Saturday 9 May in the Burgh Halls** and they are hoping it will do just as well.

In August each year they hold their fundraising **AM/AM Charity Golf Tournament** at Linlithgow Golf Club. Teams of four compete for The Magdalene Cup and Medals and many other attractive prizes. In 2025, the event celebrated its 20th anniversary and since its inception has raised about £90,000 for local, national, and international charities. In 2025, two

charities, one local (West Lothian Riding for the Disabled), and one international (Aquabox), benefited from the generosity of the many golfers who turned out in glorious sunny weather to do a good turn, by doing the thing they enjoy most – playing golf! They managed to raise £5,000 on the day thanks to everyone’s generosity. **This year’s event will be held on Monday 31 August at Linlithgow Golf Club. A date for your diary.**



So what is Rotary all about?

The other question that often gets asked is “So what is Rotary all about?” To answer that question we need to go back in time to its origins.

The world’s first Rotary Club, the Rotary Club of Chicago, was formed on 23 February 1905 by Paul Harris, a US attorney who wanted to capture in a club the same friendly spirit he had felt in the small towns of his youth. The Rotary name derived from the early practice of rotating meetings among members’ offices.

Scotland has important ties to the history of Rotary too. The British Association of Rotary Clubs, which today is known as Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland, set up its original headquarters in Edinburgh in 1914. In 1921, Edinburgh became the first city outside the United States of America to host a Rotary Convention. The city was also the birthplace of Jean Thomson Harris, the wife of Rotary founder Paul Harris. Jean is buried in Newington Cemetery.

From those modest beginnings, Rotary today is a global network of 1.2 million members in over 200 countries, and 45,000 clubs. They are neighbours, friends, leaders, problem-solvers, and people of action, who see a world where people unite and act to create lasting change.

What would it take to change the world? Rotary members believe it starts with a commitment to Service Above Self. For more than 120 years, Rotary’s members have used their passion, intelligence, energy, and a feeling of shared responsibility to help tackle some of

our world’s most persistent issues.

Today, Rotary not only works tirelessly in local communities, but is also dedicated to global causes that promote peace; fight diseases; provide clean water, sanitation, and hygiene; support education; improve maternal and child health; help grow local economies; and protect the environment.

One of Rotary’s most prominent global initiatives has been working with partners – including the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, and the Gates Foundation - to eradicate polio, and their goal of ridding the earth of this disease is in sight. They started in 1979 with vaccinations for 6 million children in the Philippines. Today, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only countries where the wild polio virus remains endemic.

Why do people join Rotary?

The heart of Rotary is the dedicated members, who share the ideals of service, friendship, diversity, integrity, and leadership to create lasting change. Rotary Clubs bring these people together from across the generations – and Rotary International is the glue that binds it all together on a worldwide basis.

People join Rotary for many different reasons; from wanting to help people in the local community to joining because

their friend is a member. Having joined, why do people stay?

Sue joined Rotary 5 years ago and says “It wasn’t until I joined Rotary that I realised what an amazing organisation it is. I’m a member of an international club of people who share the same ideals as me. People who want to help and make a difference. And I’m welcome, wherever I am in the world, to pop along to a Rotary meeting there and say “hi”!”

Mark, who has been a member of Rotary for a couple of years, explained his motivation for joining and staying. “I thought that Rotary was for old, retired folk and that it had a regimented structure. I was worried that I might not be accepted. Turns out Rotary isn’t like that. People are interested and accepting, and I enjoy the social aspect of the Club. I like raising money, and want to raise more, because it’s good to be giving.”

Serena has been in Rotary for 5 years and enjoys spending time with her fellow members. “The club members are funny and wise, they don’t take themselves too seriously and look out for each other. I really enjoy being in their company and it’s astounding what gets done.!”



Want to get involved?

If you are passionate about wanting to make a difference, would relish the opportunity to develop new skills, meet interesting people, and have some fun on the journey, then either of the two Linlithgow Clubs would be delighted to hear from you.

Both Clubs in Linlithgow are very active, and meet locally, face to face, on a weekly basis when they plan, organise and implement service projects and fundraising initiatives and socialise.

Contact either based on your preferences (location, meeting times, interests) and you will be invited to attend a few Club meetings, social events, or a service project. This allows you to meet current members, understand the Club’s activities and commitment levels, and determine if it is the right fit for you. This informal period often involves a “sponsor” who acts as a mentor.

Once both you and the Club agree it is a good match, you will receive a formal invitation to join and can get involved in projects right away.

The contacts at each Club are as follows –

Linlithgow & Bo’ness

Tuesday lunchtimes at 12.50pm prompt at Inchyra Grange Hotel, Grangemouth

Club Secretary Tony Edwards – E: tony.nbc@gmail.com



Linlithgow Grange

Monday evenings at 6.45pm prompt at Linlithgow Golf Club

Club Secretary Kate Keter – E: rotary@keterthomson.co.uk

TOMORROW IS ALMOST HERE GET YOUR TICKETS FOR ANNIE NOW!



FROM
31
MAR



SHOW DETAILS:

Dates: March 31st - 4th April 2026

Times: Nightly at 7:30 pm,
except Friday 3rd April, with a
Saturday matinee at 2:30 pm

Venue: Linlithgow Academy Theatre

Show rating: PG

Tickets: Book via the website;
<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/linlithgowamateurmusicalproductions>
boxoffice or using the QR Code below.



Get ready, Linlithgow! Linlithgow Amateur Musical Production's (LAMP) children's theatre is thrilled to announce its up and coming production of Annie - and you don't want to miss out. Filled with toe-tapping favourites and extremely talented youths, this family-friendly musical promises fun, energy and plenty of heart.

Annie tells the story of a spirited young girl living in a dreary orphanage run by the mean Miss Hannigan. Her luck changes when she is invited to stay with the wealthy and kind-hearted Oliver Warbucks. Along the way, Annie makes friends, faces challenges and learns family can be found in the most unexpected places.

Playing the optimistic red-haired orphan is **Grace McIntyre**, whose charm and energy bring Annie to life. Charismatic billionaire Oliver Warbucks is played with heartfelt conviction by **Euan Emery**, joined by **Freya Jones** as his private secretary Grace Farrell. **Freya Duncan** takes on the hilariously over-the-top Miss Hannigan, alongside the dastardly Rooster, played by **Charlie Fleming**, and his partner Lily St. Regis played by **Nico**

Young. Annie's fellow orphans - Duffy, July, Kate, Molly, Pepper and Tessie - are vividly portrayed by **Carina MacGregor**, **Kyla Aileana Howie**, **Jessica Scott**, **Joy Neal**, **Imogen Howison**, and **Isabella Wilson**. Other unforgettable characters include **Max Greene** as Roosevelt, **Callie McPhail** as Drake and **Harry Fleming** as Bundles, all contributing to the magic that makes Annie a timeless favourite.

Of course, no production of Annie would be complete without her ever-loyal dog companion, Sandy. In this production, Sandy is played by a real-life dog - **Hamish Holmes** - who is sure to win hearts both on and off the stage.

Rehearsals have been jam-packed, as the cast balances tricky choreography whilst bringing beloved songs such as "*Hard Knock Life*" and "*Tomorrow*" to life. With auditions being held, even more members have joined the stage this year, making this production bigger and brighter than ever. Harry Newman, one of LAMP's newest cast members said "*I'm having so much fun making new friends at rehearsals each week and being part of a show with people who love musical theatre as much as I do. Getting to start my LAMP journey with Annie makes it even better!*".

Craig Lowe returns as director for his second year in a row and is excited to bring this much-loved show to the Linlithgow Academy stage. Craig commented, "*The kids are such a talented bunch, it's a privilege to work with them. They're all putting their hearts and souls into this production, making sure that this will truly be a show you can't miss*". **Eddie MacLennan**, as musical director, ensures Annie's unforgettable score bursts with vibrancy and energy, while **Hayley Fleming's** choreography adds creativity, movement and flow to the production. The production team hopes the audience leave the theatre humming along and reminded that "*tomorrow is always a day away*".

Tickets for Annie are now available through the LAMP website, via QR codes around town or by calling the box office directly to avoid booking fees. Don't miss your chance to see this uplifting, heartwarming production for the whole family!

Join us at the Linlithgow Academy Theatre from March 31 - April 4, 2026.

Team LAMP

FOCUS ON FARMING WITH JAMIE SMART.

Back in October, we launched what we planned to be a regular feature to highlight the farming industry in the local area. At that time, I spoke to Jamie Smart, who farms two hundred and fifty acres at Balderston on the road to Bo'ness, where he grows spring and winter barley, wheat, oil seed rape, and grass to make hay as a cash crop. His current farm overlooks Loch House farm, where he grew up and first started working alongside his dad, Sandy.

a poor year last year, because of the weather and other factors, so the returns weren't great. This year, input prices have gone up yet again. Our output prices are at best static, if you can get a contract. Contracts aren't even available this year, so it's not looking clever"

"Another thing is that the two big bio-ethanol plants down south which bought up a lot of stuff for making biofuels have shut down. Because of a deal done with the

weeks, depending on the weather, the spring work will be starting. Fertiliser going on. People will see a lot of the bigger machines coming out, all the seeders and so on. We will be working the fields, preparing the seed beds, and just basically getting things moving. Hopefully in March or early April we will start seeding. Then a few weeks after that, the seeds will pop their heads up and, hopefully, we have a good growing season and everything goes as it should"

Image : Martine Stead



Jamie has had a long involvement with the National Farmers' Union Scotland (NFUS) and has served on numerous committees. I caught up with him on his return from the recent annual conference in Glasgow. I asked Jamie how he saw the situation facing farmers.

"We are facing severe challenges", he told me. "As often, it's going to be difficult years ahead, particularly for the arable sector. A lot of barley is grown for malting, but the whisky industry has really cut back. It was

Americans, it's cheaper to import bioethanol from them than it is to produce it here. Again, it's just another market which has gone".

Despite the challenges, Jamie is upbeat and declared:

"We shall carry on. The fields are getting ploughed. Things will be planted. We will be planting some winter barley, some oil seed rape, spring barley and grass. No wheat this year, because of the way things have gone. We'll just need to make the best of it. In the coming

In forthcoming issues of the magazine, we hope to draw on Jamie's decades of experience and discuss various issues concerning the local farming community, such as:

- > **Sustainability & climate:** how farmers are adapting to reduce emissions, boost biodiversity, and improve soil health.
- > **Local food:** the role of Scottish farms in producing quality, traceable food and supporting local supply chains.
- > **Rural economy:** farming's impact on jobs, services, and keeping rural communities alive.
- > **Sector challenges:** rising costs, policy uncertainty, labour shortages, and the pressure to stay viable.
- > **Next generation:** Young people into farming & inheritance tax succession.
- > **Diversification:** Any movements to diversify their farms.

We look forward to working closely with Jamie on what we hope will be an interesting and informative addition to the magazine.

Murdoch Kennedy



THE ROSE GO MARCHING ON!

ROSE FIXTURES:

The whole community will have the chance to rally round the Rose in the forthcoming fixtures, as the club continues the push for the Lowland League title.

SAT. MARCH 7th
Caledonian Braves (Home) 3pm

SAT. MARCH 14th
Gretna (Home) 3pm

SAT. MARCH 21st -
Berwick Rangers (Home) 3pm

SAT. MARCH 28th
East Stirlingshire (Home)

SAT. APRIL 4th
Tranent (Away) 3pm

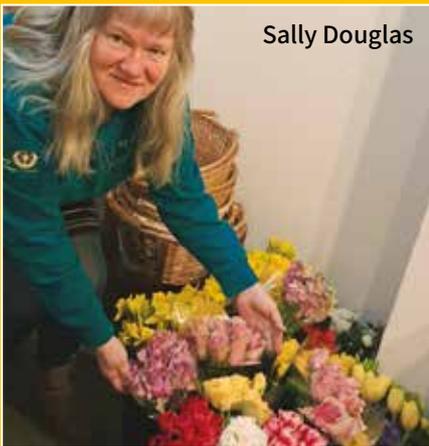
SAT. APRIL 11th
Clydebank (Home) 3pm

SAT. APRIL 18th
Bonnyrigg (Away) 3pm



LINLITHGOW FOOD REVOLUTION **SALLY DOUGLAS**

You may have noticed a queue in The Kirkgate on Monday and Saturday mornings. Our hardy eco warriors are waiting in all weathers with great anticipation for Linlithgow Food Revolution to open.



Sally Douglas

COMMUNITY SHOP - Cross House

Our community shop in the heart of Linlithgow was established by volunteers from 1st Step (a charity that offers many different types of recovery-orientated activities and community services across West Lothian and Falkirk) and is located in Cross House to redistribute excess food and flowers to the Linlithgow community. Our volunteers come from all walks of life, both in recovery and the wider community. 1st Step creates meaningful volunteering opportunities within our community, promoting interaction and connection. Linlithgow Food Revolution has achieved this goal.

MARKS & SPENCER - A fresh opportunity

1st Step was in an excellent position in January 2024 to take on a new challenge following the opening of Marks & Spencer in Linlithgow. With pantries already in place in Falkirk and Bridgend we understood the opportunity this new store offered. Initially three collections a week, increasing to four, five then six, the challenge grew. We needed premises in Linlithgow and fast! Fortunately Rev Dr Liam Fraser and his team at St Michael's Parish Church were on the look out for new partners within Cross House and generously offered us the use of The Kirkgate room.

THE FOOD PANTRY IS FOR EVERYONE

We opened on 13th April 2024 and have not looked back. Our vision was to use the excess food from the supermarket by redistributing it to everybody within the community concerned about the environment and the climate challenge and who loves good food and hates waste. Our beautifully presented fruit and vegetables and bread are free, customers take what they can use. We have a small charge for frozen items and ambient produce which can vary from meat to pizzas, noodles, yorkshire puddings, trout, ready meals, calamari, eggs, chocolates, crisps and just about anything you could imagine. This stock however is completely random and you never know what you will find. Money raised supports project expenses and supplements 1st Step's core funding.

DONT BE LEFT IN A JAM - COME AND MAKE CONNECTIONS

Both within the shop and in the queue lively conversations take place and new

friendships have formed. For some it's the first human connection in a few days. Sometimes we have weird and wonderful fruit and vegetables, which create lengthy discussions as to their usage. Over the summer we had a glut of strawberries, one of our customers offered to make jam which she then donated back and we distributed from the shop. Another had jam jars in her garage to help our jam maker out. Customers often return their egg boxes and donate reusable bags.

A local farm to fork market garden donates fruit and vegetables, notably an excess of pumpkins. One keen local gardener provides delicious produce from his allotment and shops on the High Street have donated their excess. We love how this circular economy has evolved.

REDUCING FOOD WASTE THROUGH REDISTRIBUTION

We collect about one ton of food every ten days, the total to date saved is now in excess of sixty tonnes. Our food and flowers are not only redistributed through the shop but also make their way to toddler groups within Cross House, care and retirement homes, local primary schools, 1st Step's cafe and their customers, St. Michael's congregation, zumba classes, Xcite Linlithgow, Edinburgh carevan, Porty Pride and Falkirk Food Revolution.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP?

To make this project the success it is, many volunteering hours are required. We have a pool of around fifty volunteers, combined working an average of 250 hours per month. Collections are after store close when most people prefer to be sitting in front of the TV with a hot drink. We are indebted to our eco warrior collectors. **If anyone is interested in helping out please don't hesitate to contact us :-**

Email:
linlithgowfoodrevolution@gmail.com



Website: firststeprecovery.co.uk

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/1stStepcafeandbikes>

Sally Douglas

**1st Step Linlithgow Food Revolution
Volunteer Coordinator**

1st Step Development Ventures

Come along on : Monday and Saturday mornings 10am - 12:30pm for your vegetables, fruit, flowers, bread, cakes and a variety of frozen and ambient produce.

(Small charge for certain items. Bread, fruit & vegetables free).

**Mondays & Saturdays 10:00am - 12:30pm
Kirkgate Room, Cross House**



WELL DONE SALLY

As a footnote to this article, the Black Bitch Magazine would like to recognise the fantastic work which Sally has done to create the Linlithgow Food Revolution. In the words of regular customer **Karen Crook** - *'With the backing and support of 1st Step, Sally set this up from scratch - she had the idea, approached the stores to arrange the collections, found the premises, fitted the room out with fridge/freezers and set up the volunteer network for the collections and to run the 'shop'.*

The Food Revolution is a win-win in so many ways - M&S save costs on waste disposal, end-of-date food is saved from going to landfill, the volunteers have regular, meaningful jobs and dozens of people each week get food.

Sally is passionate about the purpose of the Food Revolution - it is for the whole community and is about reducing waste. There is always a good vibe in the 'shop' and I love the way she presents the fruit and veg, like a colourful market stall so that people can take only what they need'.

Rev Dr Liam Fraser also added - *'We are delighted to partner with 1st Step to make Linlithgow Food Revolution possible. By feeding the hungry, reducing waste, and nurturing community, Sally and her team are helping us fulfil our mission of blessing Linlithgow and the wider region'.*



**LINLITHGOW
41 CLUB**

The February meeting of Linlithgow & District 41 club was another talent ridden Burns Supper. Burns Suppers run throughout the year across the globe and though typically held in January 41 Club postpone, for the sake o' dry Janwar.

This year a full Linlithgow Golf Club Lounge was treated to poetry and singing, Burns and Ayrshire Scots, by weel kent frien's.

They included: **Neil Edwards** (Selkirk Grace); **Finlay Erskine** (Address to a Haggis and To a Louse); Community singing led by the guitars of **Andrew Blake and Alan Gibson**; a posse of Scots songs by members of **Linlithgow Rugby Club Male Voice Choir**; Immortal Memory delivered by **Dr James McCallum** using poetry compositions of his childhood GP and Rector (both successful in the Scottish National Open Poetry Competition); the riotous "Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut" sung by **Martin Burns**; a hilarious parody of Tam o' Shanter from **George Wilson**; and the poignant "Absent friends" composed by **Norrie Melrose** and delivered touchingly by **Martin Burns**.

There were no tickets. The fee was to be present and enjoy guid company. The food and service were impeccable. This was community as Robert Burns might have envisioned such a celebration if he allowed himself that pride in his philosophy.

James McCallum

LITHGAE FILM FANS FLOCK TO THE HIPPODROME!!



It has been described as “Linlithgow’s best kept secret” – and it’s in Bo’ness!

The Hippodrome in Hope Street is believed to be Scotland’s oldest purpose-built cinema. Opened in 1912, it was designed by the renowned local architect, Matthew Steele. Now designated as a Category A listed building, it was saved from almost inevitable demolition and restored to its former glory almost twenty years ago.

The cinema is a real mecca for fans of the silver screen living in Linlithgow and it is widely believed that it has more patrons from the south side of the Flints than from the north side. The much-loved facility is affectionately known as “The Hippo” and it offers a diverse all-year programme of blockbuster and independent cinema. The Hippodrome was named ‘Best Cinema Experience in Scotland’ in the 2019 Scottish Hospitality Awards and shortlisted for ‘Cinema of the Year’ at the 2019 Screen Awards.

Devotees of the Hippodrome are excited about the annual festival of silent film and live music – known as **Hippfest** – which takes place from March 18th to March 22nd in



Images : Hippfest

the cinema and other venues. Hippfest will showcase a sensational line-up of film screenings, live music, workshops and more. The programme is bigger and better than ever and it even has events taking place in Linlithgow.

Festival director Alison Strauss said;

“This year’s programme contains a wealth of musical talent, both Scottish and international, with a spectacular selection of silent films

“Whoever you are and wherever you’re from, we invite you to join the festival community.

“You’ll discover not only great films and live music, but also our local region, where each day is packed with screenings and opportunities to get involved.”

Further information about the Hippodrome cinema and Hippfest can be found at:



<http://www.hippodromecinema.co.uk> and <http://www.hippfest.co.uk/>

Murdoch Kennedy



The Willow Tree
LINLITHGOW

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Marilyn Childs Duncan - 14th March
Banksy - 21st March
Gerry's Karaoke - 28th March
Lynne Size - 4th April
Sammie Lee Wild - 11th April

Sunday 5-8pm
TBC - 5th April

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ALLOTMENT IN MARCH

LINLITHGOW AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

STOP PRESS

We are having our seed potato sale in the Hub in Linlithgow on 7 March.



Spring is on the way!

We are looking forward to lengthening days so that we can spend more time at the allotment. By now plots should be ready for planting. It is important to keep on top of weeds that appear in the growing beds. Weeds can be beneficial. They provide habitats for beneficial insects and pollinators and some provide nectar for bees. Weeds can bring nutrients from deeper soil levels to the surface. Annual weeds, hoed off and left on the surface decompose and add organic matter back into the soil. Whilst weeds have benefits, they can compete with crops for resources. Effective management is key. Techniques include mulching, using cardboard, and regular weeding to keep them in check. Perennial weeds should be dug out. Using organic material as mulch e.g. compost enriched with kelp, provides plants with some feed giving them a really good start. Some of us, who have planted green manure to overwinter, will be cutting down and digging in to enrich the soil.

Jobs for March:

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

> Start chitting potatoes in week 1



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

> **Sow brassicas (dependent on variety):** summer cabbages, cauliflowers, broccoli, calabrese, brussel sprouts; and lettuce indoors in week 1.

> **Sow Broad Beans** in pots or root trainers inside in week 1 for planting out later. Sutton Dwarf, only growing to 45 cm, is ideal for small gardens or windy sites like ours.

> **Sow early types of Peas** such as 'Meteor' or 'Douce Provence' outside under cloches in week 1. Or again these can be started in root trainers or gutters. (Fill a length of square guttering with compost and push the peas in about every 3-5 cm, water, keep in a greenhouse or cold frame until they germinate, making sure they don't dry out. Plant out when large enough (about 15 cm high).

> **You may still need to cloche to protect them from the weather.** On our allotment mice and voles will eat pea seeds which is why we tend to grow on and then plant out.

> **In week 2 sow broad beans** outside under a cloche but note what I have said about sowing peas outside as mice and voles will give beans the same treatment.

> **In week 2 prepare the soil in your plot/garden for courgettes, pumpkins and squashes.** To do this, dig a planting pocket for each plant about a spade's depth and about 30cm square. Fill the hole with well-rotted manure or compost ready for receiving your plants in June.

> **Spinach and perpetual spinach** can be sown towards the end of the month.

> **Sow herbs – parsley, dill and basil** in pots indoors for planting out later.



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



SNIPPET

BELLA BRIDAL (9 High Street)

We will be saying goodbye to Bella Bridal who announced on 12th January that they will be closing later in the year :-

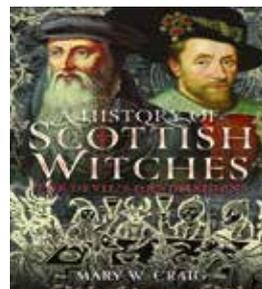
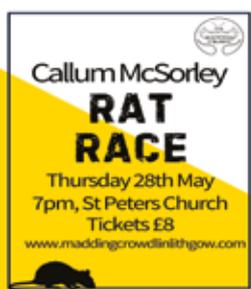
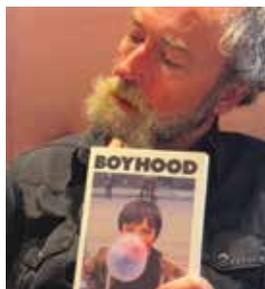
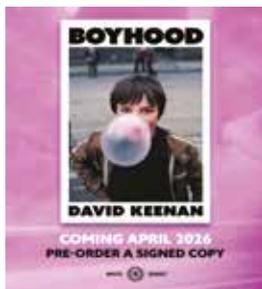
After 7 incredible years of helping beautiful brides-to-be find the one their soul loves, we have made the decision to close Bella Bridal to allow us, as a family, to explore a new and exciting opportunity.

I started Bella Bridal back in July of 2019 in Stirling before making the big move to Linlithgow - mid pandemic!! - in September 2020!

To every bride that has stepped through our door - thank you! Thank you for trusting us with such a special part of your journey. It has been the biggest privilege to help you find the dress that your soul loves.

Erin x

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD BOOKSHOP: EVENTS



Far From the Madding Crowd Bookshop's spring season of events is shaping up nicely! On Thursday 9th April, critically acclaimed writer **David Keenan** will be returning to Linlithgow for the first time since his talk on This Is Memorial Device back in 2015.

His latest novel, *Boyhood*, is a literary trip – starting with the kidnap of a boy outside a football ground in 1970s Glasgow and spanning decades as his family deal with the aftermath. Airdrie native David is a prolific writer of both

fiction and non-fiction, ideal for fans of Irvine Welsh and Chris Brookmyre; and his events are not to be missed!

On 20th May, **Mary W Craig** is heading to Linlithgow to discuss her latest book, *A History of Scottish Witches*. Dozens of women in West Lothian were put to death after being found guilty of 'witchcraft' and this is going to be a fascinating talk. And on 28th May, bestselling Scottish crime-writer **Callum McSorley** will be in town to launch his latest in the Detective Alison 'Ally'

McCoist series, *Rat Run*. His two previous novels, *Squeaky Clean* and *Paper Boy* were award winners, and his darkly comic crime writing is a huge hit with readers.

All of these events are taking place in St Peter's Church on Linlithgow High Street, and tickets are on sale now online or in-store. And finally, keep an eye out for future events as more are being added to the programme all the time:
www.maddingcrowdlinlithgow.com

THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET SANDRA CISNEROS

The House on Mango Street is a lively coming-of-age novella that centres on the main character, Esperanza Cordero, a young Chicana girl who is growing up with her parents and three siblings in the Hispanic quarter of Chicago, in a neighbourhood that is "neither pretty nor easy".

The novella is composed of a series of vignettes, all focused on different aspects across one year of Esperanza's life. As the vignettes progress, Esperanza grows in maturity. This is reflected in the way her perspective of the people around her, and their actions, strengthen and deepen. The novel deals with many challenging and sensitive subject matters through the writing. Esperanza observes the people around her, especially other females, to strengthen her own sense of self and to hone her identity as she moves from childhood into adolescence.

"They are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here but are here. Four raggedy excuses planted by the city. From our room we can hear them, but Nenny just keeps sleeping and doesn't appreciate these things."

Esperanza is an endearing, articulate and open protagonist, whose self-reflections and observations of her family, friends and neighbours drive the narrative forward. Creative and resourceful, Esperanza knows that she does not want to be defined by the chaos and desolation that surrounds her on Mango Street. There is often a bitter-sweet quality to Esperanza's observations and, as the reader is seeing through Esperanza's perspective, we can make our own connections between the pieces of information that Esperanza shares, often with additional insight into actions and reactions.

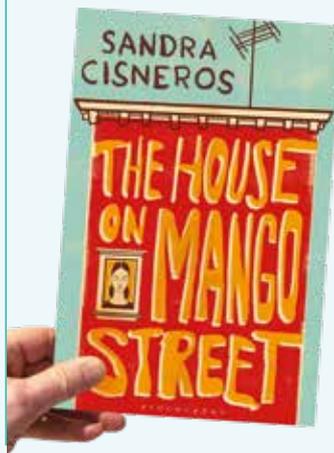
Prior to moving to Mango Street, Esperanza's family moved frequently, always dreaming of having a house of their own. Their house on Mango Street is a small, run-down building

with crumbling red bricks and while, it provides the family with a stable base for this period of their lives, it is not the paradise that they imagined it would become for them. The house mirrors Esperanza's own personal journey – she too is in transition and has not yet become the more complete version of her adult self.

Cisneros has detailed that she is writing semi-autobiographically through the character of Esperanza, although there are some key differences between their lives. We learn much of Esperanza's ambitions and wishes for her future through the first-person focus of the narrative. We can feel the strength of her desire to create new possibilities for herself, free from oppression, and not yet mapped by the people she has been observing around her on Mango Street.

This is a carefully crafted, entertainingly written novel of hope that encourages its readers to respect the traditions of the past, and the struggles of the people who lived these experiences, while daring the reader to dream of possibilities and new horizons in a future not yet defined.

"You must remember to come back. For the ones who cannot leave as easily as you. You will remember? She asked as if she was telling me. Yes, yes I said a little confused."



Lisa Nettleton

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



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SAY GOODBYE TO UNLOVED TATTOOS, FROM BROWS TO BODY.

Tattoos are deeply personal, but what once felt right doesn't always stand the test of time. Whether it's an outdated body tattoo or eyebrow work that no longer suits your style, laser tattoo removal offers a safe, effective way to start fresh.

Laser tattoo removal technology has advanced significantly since its early beginnings in the 1960s and is now considered one of the most efficient, non-invasive methods available. With no surgery required and minimal downtime, it has become an increasingly popular solution for removing or fading unwanted tattoos.

How Does Laser Tattoo Removal Work?

> Medical-grade laser technology delivers focused light energy through the skin, where it is absorbed by tattoo pigment. This energy causes rapid thermal expansion, creating a shock wave that breaks the ink into tiny particles without damaging the surrounding skin.

Your body's natural immune system then gradually removes these fragments over time, resulting in the tattoo fading across a series of treatments.

Cosmetic Brow Tattoos vs Body Tattoos

> Cosmetic eyebrow tattoos differ from traditional body tattoos in both technique and pigment. Because cosmetic brow ink is placed more superficially in the skin, they are generally easier and quicker to lift than body tattoos which are placed into the dermal layer of the skin.

Eyebrow tattooing has surged in popularity, but with that growth comes inevitable regret uneven shapes, colour changes, or styles that no longer suit the face. Before brows can be reshaped or refreshed, a good cosmetic brow tattoo artist (such as Lisa Ritchie - Bespoke Permanent Makeup) will advise you that your existing pigment must be removed first.

What to Expect from Brow and Body Tattoo Removal

> Treatment sessions are quick. Eyebrow treatments are often just 1-2 minutes per brow. Body Tattoos can typically last 5-20 minutes, depending on the size of the tattoo.

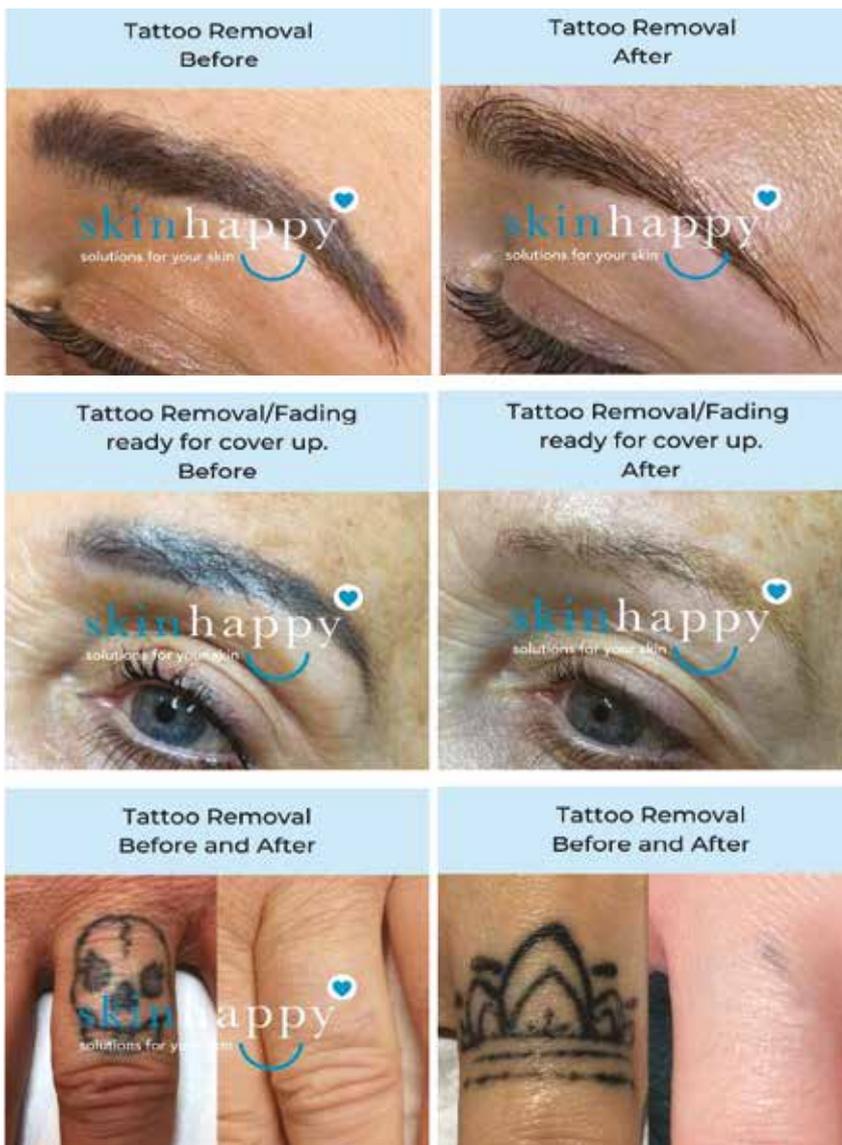
Discomfort is usually described as a hot flick of an elastic band, and most clients tolerate it well. Handheld fans (for brows) and Cooling air devices blowing out cold air down to -20 °C (for body) help increase tolerability, reduce sensation and downtime.

Temporary redness, mild swelling, or slight bruising can occur but usually settles well within 24 hours for brows and 24-72 hours for the body.

How Many Treatments Are Needed?

> This is really hard to predict. The number of treatments vary depending on ink type, depth, density, age of the tattoo and location. Cosmetic brow tattoos often require 2-5 sessions for fading or 5-8+ for full removal, while body tattoos may take 8-15+ treatments, spaced at least eight weeks apart.

With modern laser technology, unwanted tattoos — whether on the brows or body no longer need to be permanent. Sometimes, the best decision is simply the freedom to change.



BOOK NOW

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Linlithgow and Bo'ness Probus Club Golden Jubilee, 1976–2026

The Linlithgow and Bo'ness Probus Club celebrates its Golden Jubilee in 2026, marking fifty years of friendship, fellowship, and community involvement.

The Early Years

The Club was founded in 1976. The original signatories to the constitution met at the Redcroft Hotel, the forerunner of today's Richmond Park Hotel. Some years later, we relocated to Bo'ness Bowling Club and became well known for fostering the wellbeing and camaraderie of members from both towns. Originally, Presidents were appointed alternately from Linlithgow and Bo'ness, reinforcing the strong links with both communities.

The aim of Probud Clubs is to provide retired professionals and business people with opportunities to enjoy fun, friendship, and fellowship in retirement.

Challenges and Continuity

Like many organisations, the Club has experienced periods of significant change. At one particularly challenging time, a shortage of volunteers willing to take on official roles, threatened its future. During this uncertain period, a small number of dedicated

members ensured its continuation.

Special recognition is due to **Michael Baker**, the current Treasurer, whose commitment was instrumental in sustaining the organisation.

Past President **Bill Duthie** reflected on Michael's contribution:

"I would suggest that no other member has ever served the Club with such professionalism or for as long a period of time."

Michael is now the longest serving member.

When Bo'ness Bowling Club closed, Probud moved to the Linlithgow Rose Social Club, now regarded as our safe haven. We are deeply indebted to the Committee and staff, and in particular to the manager, **David McDougall**, for their continued support.

The Covid Pandemic

During the Covid pandemic, we adapted, by holding online meetings, using Zoom. For two years, members enjoyed illustrated talks by engaging speakers. Recordings of these talks remain available on YouTube by searching Linlithgow and Bo'ness Probud Club.

The Club Today

Now one of the most established Probud Clubs in the area, we offer a varied and

engaging programme that includes informative guest speakers, musical events, enjoyable quizzes, and an annual outing that is always a highlight in the calendar.

The obligatory biscuits served with tea or coffee adds to the warm welcome that awaits everyone at each meeting.

To enhance members' experience, there has been significant investment in modern technology, including a high-quality public address system and a large-screen television, ensuring that presentations can be both clearly heard and easily seen.

Community Involvement and Communication

Probus actively supports local communities through charitable donations. Beneficiaries have included Linlithgow Academy, Bo'ness Academy, Linlithgow Bridge Primary School, and local food banks. Members also serve as judges at Linlithgow Gala Day arch-building competitions and participate in the local Festival of Christmas Trees.

Communication with members, is maintained through regular emails and a user-friendly website, where photographs are updated to preserve valued memories. We currently have around sixty members and continue to grow from strength to strength.

Looking Forward

The Club proudly displays its chain of office, as shown in the photograph, captured by local photographer Rebecca Holmes. The chain records the names of every Past President and their years of service.

While the term "**President**" is now used, the original title at the inception of Probud was "**Chairman**" – how and why this change occurred has been lost in the annals of time.

Although the chain is literally worth its weight in gold, what matters far more, are the names engraved upon it – individuals who merit our sincere thanks as we move confidently into the future.

An Open Invitation

We extend a warm invitation to all interested readers to join us at one of our meetings, where you can be assured of a friendly welcome.

Please visit our website at www.bolinprobus.org, where you can enter your contact details via the "Get in Touch" section.

We look forward to welcoming you very soon.

**George Bird, President
Linlithgow and Bo'ness
Probus Club**



SNIPPETS

M & CO (5 The Vennel) On 9th January, West Lothian Council advised that - A national charity is set to expand operations with a new letting at The Vennel, Linlithgow. Following a closing date for offers, Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland were successful in their bid to lease the former M & Co property for a 10 year term from West Lothian Council.

The retail unit is one of the largest in Linlithgow town centre. A report will be presented to Council Executive seeking approval. Currently, Linlithgow town centre shop occupancy rate is **94.6%** (vacant **5.4%**). On average last year, Linlithgow's town centre shop occupancy rate average in 2025 was very good with shop occupancy at 93.4% (6.8% vacant). However, across West Lothian traditional town centres the average is consistently below 10% vacancy.

This continues to remain favourable in comparison with UK and Scottish national averages highlighting West Lothian's local shops are doing well in comparison to the majority of areas in Scotland. Thank you for supporting the local shops in West Lothian's traditional towns.

CROSS BARBERS (15 The Cross)

On 15th December 2025 **Linzi Byrne** confirmed "Just to let everyone know today is the last day of me having Cross Barbers. I've had an absolute blast over the last years getting to know everyone, all the happy and sad times and I'm so grateful to everyone for keeping me going. Thank you."

Cross Barbers remains open under new management.

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**DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE
WITH FELLOW BLACK BITCH READERS?**

Whether as an individual or group is there something on a Linlithgow theme you'd like to comment on, or submit a short article on, or an event or activity you'd like to spread the word about, email us at: on.a.lead@gmail.com

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PROPERTY ASKING PRICES ON THE RISE

Rightmove property experts predict that asking prices will rise by 2% by the end of 2026.

House price growth will differ depending on region, with lower-priced Scotland, Wales and northern England markets expected to see stronger growth, whilst London house prices could lag behind.

It's a more positive year for first-time buyers, thanks to a good choice of available homes, improving affordability and lower mortgage rates than in 2025.

The UK housing market looks set to improve in 2026, with more people likely to make their move and house prices showing modest growth. Affordability is improving, and buyers and sellers after a period of hesitation are now starting to make new plans following the tax changes announced in the Budget.

Some first-time buyers could take advantage of 2026 market conditions due to a good choice of available homes for sale, average wage growth outpacing property prices and lower mortgage rates. Meanwhile, the introduction of a mansion tax coming into place in 2028 is likely to create a sluggish top-end of the market next year.

Buyer affordability should increase throughout 2026. Mortgage lenders have been looking at ways to loosen their lending criteria to help people responsibly borrow more. We predict that the increased spending power buyers have will boost property prices slightly. However, house price growth will remain behind average wage

growth and inflation, making homes more affordable in real terms.

Rightmove's survey of over 10,000 potential movers showed one in five were waiting to see the outcome of the Autumn Budget before resuming their moving plans.

The Bank of England's Base Rate decisions will continue to influence mortgage costs throughout 2026. Market expectations suggest we'll see further rate cuts next year, which should help mortgage rates edge lower.

Inflation affects everything from building materials to household running costs. As inflation continues to stabilise, this should support steady, sustainable growth in the housing market rather than the sharp price movements we've seen in recent years. With house price growth expected to remain below inflation, homes are becoming more affordable in real terms.

People's incomes are expected to grow faster than property prices in 2026, which will gradually improve the balance between earnings and housing costs. This is particularly beneficial for first-time buyers working to save their deposits.

The 2% increase in income tax on rental income for landlords comes into effect in 2027 – this could influence the rental market and potentially affect some would-be first-time buyers in the private rented sector.

Rightmove predicts the following movement in house prices by region in 2026.

UK as a whole	+2%
London	+1%
Scotland	+3%
Wales	+3%

The new mansion tax announced in November's Budget means that from April 2028, owners of homes valued at £2 million or more will pay an annual charge. Properties over £2 million will incur a £2,500 charge, rising to £7,500 for homes valued at £5 million or over.

Because the tax recurs annually, there are long-term implications for both existing owners and potential buyers. As people may adjust their plans to prepare for this change, we're likely to see some sluggishness at the very top end of the market next year, with new patterns emerging as buyers and sellers respond.

However, this affects only a small slice of the wider market. Around 1% of homes are priced above £2 million, with less than 0.5% of sales taking place in this price bracket. The tax will hit London and the south of England housing market the hardest. Property values run higher in these areas, and more homes sit in the affected price brackets.

Some industry experts expect to see at least one more round of base rate cuts early this year. Rightmove's mortgages expert, Matt Smith, says "Markets are anticipating one mortgage rate cut in 2026, with a 50/50 chance of a second later in the year. Lower-than-expected inflation figures suggest we could see further reductions, particularly for two-year fixed rates."



Melo is a three and a half year old British Shorthair cat.

Melo's owner says he's exactly as his name describes, Melo natured, very chilled, very loving, and nothing phases him.

Melo, and his sister, Keshi, were given their names as their owner says they're "her wee pearls". There are yellow golden pearls called Melo pearls, and his sister is silver, so was named after the Keshi silver pearl.

Melo loves to greet you in the morning by "making biscuits" on the duvet cover.

'Making biscuits' (or kneading) is a natural, instinctual behaviour where cats rhythmically push their paws in and out on soft surfaces, blankets - or people! It signifies comfort, happiness, and safety, often stemming from kittenhood when kittens knead their mother to stimulate milk.

Melo's character is full of fun and he just loves chasing his sister Keshi around the house.

He also loves to cuddle up to his owner on the bed when the electric blanket is on.

He makes her smile as he proceeds to watch wild life on the telly - especially the big cats!

The relationship between Melo and his owner is beautiful; they have such an amazing bond. His owner, Lynne, says he is the best natured cat she has ever known.

Melo recently had some dental treatment at Westport Vets Linlithgow. He was quite lethargic and quiet during recovery, however, has been making excellent progress now and is back doing his animated zoomies round the house.

Team Westport takes your pet's dental care just as seriously as our own.

Melo's dental treatment was carried out in our dedicated Dental Suite at the Linlithgow practice.

We regularly carry out Complete Oral Health Assessment and Treatment procedures on dogs and cats. This includes full mouth x-rays, extractions if necessary and a scale and polish. This procedure is carried out under a full general anaesthetic as it is the only way to properly assess and treat dental issues, it also minimises distress to animals.

As a practice we feel you cannot perform sufficient dental surgery without full mouth x-rays as teeth looking healthy on the outside can easily have significant disease under the gums which would be missed without x-rays. All dental treatments at Linlithgow, like Melo's, are done in our dedicated Dental Suite.

Dental care is vital to ensure your pets are in their best health. This can be easily managed and maintained at home.

Cats are experts at hiding pain and dogs can't tell us when they experience dental pain. Often signs of dental discomfort are so subtle they are easily missed. Routine dental check-ups with the vet can help to identify issues early.

Without proper care, 80% of dogs and 70% of cats show signs of oral disease by age three. Clinical studies have also found strong links between dental disease and disease of the kidneys or heart.



Hello
I'm Melo
McCubbin

You can book a dental check-up for your cats, dogs, rabbits and rodents, at any time - Team Westport can also help you with your dental care routine for home. Email: surgery@westportvets.com

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