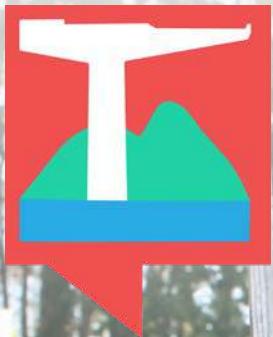


FREE



CLYDESIDER

OUR COMMUNITY'S POSITIVE PRESS

ISSUE 19 SPRING 2022



PASSION FOR
CHANGE

INSIDE: CLYDESIDER CAMPAIGN... COMMUNITY SOUP... MEN DO MATTER

POETRY COMPETITION WINNER

Change

By Niroz Yousif,
on behalf of the Moments of Freedom group

My pen, gather all the words
my pen, decorate all the paintings
Scatter your letters in all languages
Spread the best melodies and ringtones
Love and light at all times
Close the book of the past and memories
Forget the sadness of all the years
Stop the clockwise for a moment
Do not tell the pain and the stories
Do not accept sympathy and sympathy
Say sorry to your heart a hundred times
Don't make it stations for humans
Nothing equals life
Let's break the ice of distances
And steal happiness and laughter
To meet at all beginnings
And put an end to all disputes
And light the universe with love and prayers
Let's drink doses of hope
Pulse and love like butterflies
Let's draw with love and looks
And we put all the signs on it
To overcome all obstacles
And we live in the kingdom of princes and princesses
To be the imprint of history
Imprint of civilizations
Love is the most sacred of sacred things
And love is the most beautiful sacrifice
My pen collects the most beautiful words

WELCOME

We have all been pushed out of our usual routines and habits over these past two years, as we tried to find ways to cope with the ever-changing face of the Coronavirus pandemic.

So, at Clydesider we want to use 2022 to focus on change in its many shapes and sizes.

That could be change in ourselves, our families or communities; it could be change in mindsets or behaviour and we'll also look at how to cope with change.

And as part of our Focus on Change year, we are making a few changes ourselves.

We are launching our first Clydesider campaign – Claim What's Yours.

Our aim, to challenge and change the stigma and stereotypes often associated with benefits. Have a read and let us know what you think.

We are also developing our work with our volunteers and local community groups and running community media and creative storytelling workshops.

We hope this will encourage more people whose voices are rarely represented in mainstream media to share their stories and experiences.

Somethings won't be changing. As always, the magazine is packed with features about inspiring individuals. Discover the positive changes they make and how these actions help them and their community.

Enjoy!
Amanda Eleftheriades-Sherry

Clydesider Editor



ABOUT CLYDESIDER

Clydesider Creative Ltd is a not-for-profit community media social enterprise based in West Dunbartonshire.

The Clydesider community magazine, website and social media promote the positives our area has to offer in terms of people, place, scenery, and history and showcase the creative talents, ideas, and experiences of local people.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Instagram. If you would like to get involved and contribute to Clydesider please email theclydesider@gmail.com

Clydesider Creative Mission Statement

Inspiring change by sharing positive stories and solutions, creating opportunities for individuals and organisations to build connections so together we can challenge the negativity and stigma too often associated with our community.

CLYDESIDER CREDITS

A big thank you to our fantastic team of volunteer contributors you are all a true joy to work with. We would also like to thank our advertisers, members and funders. Your support helps us shine a light on the inspirational stories and creative talents in our communities. An additional vote of thanks goes out to all the community groups and organisations helping with the distribution, making sure the magazine reaches those least likely to read our stories online.



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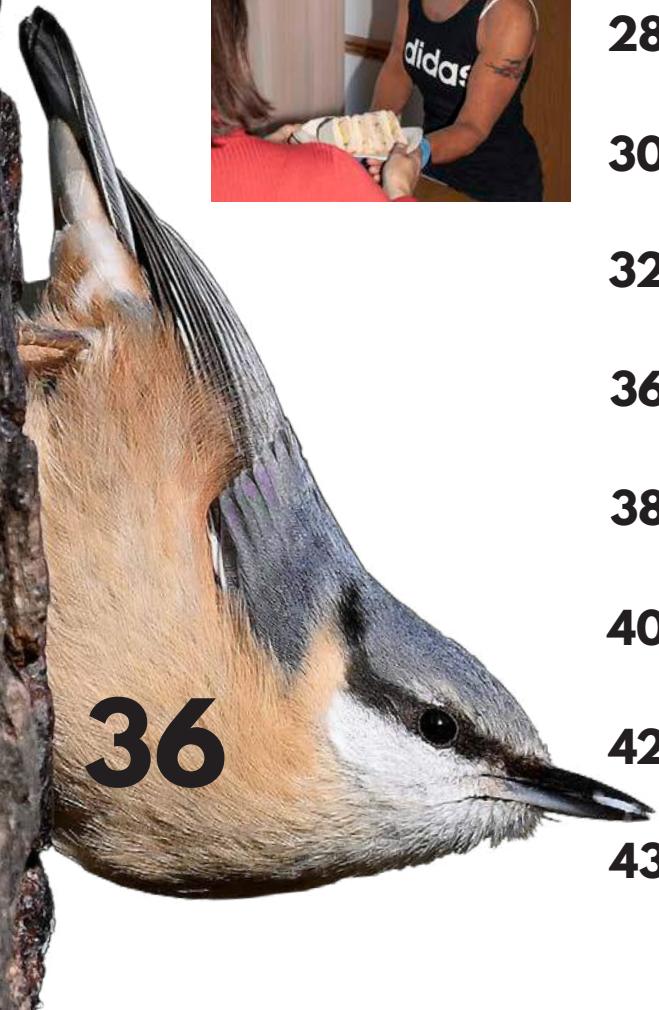
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Cover Photo by Katie Kennedy

SPONSORED EDITORIAL

Y SORT IT EASTER HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES



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Register



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COMMUNITY NEWS ROUND UP

MUD KITCHEN FUNDRAISING

by Angela Clark
Photos by Lindsay Allan

A young boy who never wants to experience going hungry decided to use his creative skills to build mud kitchens to raise funds for the local food bank, Old Kilpatrick Food Parcels.

Daniel Allan, 12, came up with the idea after visiting the premises to donate money he raised from his first Kilt Walk.

It was here he learned the struggles many families face to provide basic necessities to feed their children and how they battle to survive on the little money they have.

He was assured his fundraising would help feed several families.

Daniel said: "I wouldn't like to not have food to eat. I wanted to help more families.

"I like to build things and my dad had loads of materials lying around that were going to the dump, so I started making mud kitchens."

Recycling old pallets and other materials Daniel made and sold six mud kitchens. He has raised £200 to date which he donated to OKFP.



He intends to keep building the kitchens until he has used and recycled all the materials and raised as much money as he can.

And in April this year, with his family by his side, he will lace up his walking boots and do the Kilt Walk for the second time to raise more funds.

Mum Lyndsay Allan, said: "It's really good he's doing something with his time to help others. He's got a lot of support from people including myself who are so proud of him,"

To purchase a mud kitchen or donate to Daniel's fundraiser contact www.okfp.org.uk or message them via Facebook.



COMMUNITY SOUP

Do you have an idea to help people and the Dumbarton West community which needs funding to get started?

If the answer is yes, the Your Community team at West Dunbartonshire Council want to hear from you.

Community Soup is a crowdfunding event to bring people together to fund great community ideas.

Local people are invited to attend an evening of entertainment and soup. There is a £3 or what you can afford entry fee to support the Community Soup.

Everyone listens to ideas about how Dumbarton West could be improved as a place to live, enjoys a bowl of soup and then votes for the idea they want funded. The individual or group with the most votes receive £500 to put their idea into action.

To find out more and secure your chance to pitch your idea contact:
Sean on 07585 883057
or Chris on 07551 257138
or email YourCommunity@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

FREE TRAVEL

If you are struggling to attend GP or hospital appointments help is available.

The West Dunbartonshire Community Transport Action Group offer a free door-to-door service for anyone needing assistance to attend a health appointment.

To book the service call 0141 8819998 or email transport@southwestct.org.uk



BONNIE BANK RUN

A new 5K Loch Lomond Road Race is coming to West Dunbartonshire this year.

The event, organised by West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust, takes place on Saturday June 18 starting at the Moss O'Balloch in the centre of the village.

It will continue through Balloch Castle Country Park, providing stunning views of both Loch Lomond and the National Park.

Places are limited to 500 and the event is expected to sell out, so early booking is advised.

Along with the new 5K race, the Trust will also host the popular Loch Lomond 10k Road Race and a fun run for children in Primary 7 and under.

A range of other popular outdoor events will be returning to West Dunbartonshire throughout 2022/23 including the Scottish Pipe Band Championships and Loch Lomond Highland Games.

For further information visit www.runlochlomond.com and to reserve your place in the 5k or 10k race please visit www.entrycentral.com/loch-lomond-10k-and-5k Loch Lomond 10K and 5K - EntryCentral.com



BUTTERFLY ID



With Spring in the air, it won't be long before butterflies are as well.

So, if you've ever wondered how to identify the delicate, brightly coloured insects which help pollinate the flowers in your garden, now is your chance to learn more.

Butterfly Conservation is hosting five online workshops throughout March to help distinguish the species which are commonly found in Scotland. There will also be follow-up outdoor events.

To find out more or to book a space visit <https://butterfly-conservation.org/events/scotland>



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Time for Change

By Charlie Sherry
Photos by Katie Kennedy

There are not many modern railway waiting rooms that folk would find fascinating, however the one at Renton station is a bit out of the ordinary.

For the past few years, the waiting room has housed the King Robert De Bruce Centre run by Strathleven Artizans and once you step through the door you would be forgiven for thinking you had travelled back in time to medieval Scotland.

On entering this shrine to the man accredited with making Scotland a free and independent nation, you are surround by shields, swords, ancient seals, costumes worn by medieval knights and even a replica of Bruce's throne.

In the centre of all this heraldry we find Duncan Thomson, the driving force behind the centre.

A giant of a man, with his height and long beard he would not have looked out of place fighting alongside Bruce in his many battles for Scotland's cause.

Like his royal hero, Duncan has faced many challenges in his life, both physical and mental.

Throughout his school years Duncan suffered terribly at the hands of bullies as he explained: "I wanted to be educated but I hated school. I had a bad turn in my eye and was quite badly bullied, that kind of shaped me for the first 16 or 17 years of my life, I had very low self-esteem."

Duncan thought he had found the answer to his lack of confidence when he discovered alcohol. "Initially I hated alcohol, I'd seen what it did to families, I wanted nothing to do with it. I used to go to the pub and drink soda water and lime."



However, even in his young adult life Duncan was still haunted by those who had bullied him at school, only now they were in the pub and drunk.

On his 18th birthday Duncan had 'a couple of pints'. They opened up a new outlook for him.

"It was the first time in my life I wasn't frightened, it was like the last piece of the jigsaw being put into place in my head."

However, Duncan's new alcohol-induced confidence had its price as it manifested itself in violence.

That night and almost every other night of his drinking career would inevitably end in a fight, he was out of control.

Describing himself as "John Wayne at night and a big wean in the morning," Duncan added: "I would challenge the world when I was drunk and wake up in the morning thinking; oh my God what have I done."

At the age of 27 with a partner and four kids, Duncan was still trapped in the vicious circle of alcohol and violence, however he was now coming to the realisation that it had to end.

"I could not carry on like this, I was at a stage with drinking where I couldn't just have one or two drinks, I had to drink to oblivion and it was making me ill."

On his 30th birthday, after another violent night in one of the local bars, Duncan woke feeling totally depressed.

"I thought, is this the best it is going to get, an endless trail of drink and violence followed by fear, regret and depression each morning, there must be a better life than this."

It was at this point, with the support of friends, he took his first giant step on his road to recovery by contacting Alcoholics Anonymous



and admitting to himself and others that his life was "in tatters" and was unmanageable with alcohol.

Thirty-one years later, Duncan has never looked back. On that fateful 30th birthday morning the big fellow took that life-changing decision and has never touched a drop of alcohol since.

Instead, he decided to find a useful outlet for his energies and looked to the heroes of his youth.

Like many Scots, Duncan learned of Scotland's historical champions from books and folk stories. Reading the novels of Nigel Tranter, he was fascinated by the struggles and adventures of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce.

So, when he learned Bruce had lived and died in his home village, Duncan was determined to get the story out.

Duncan and a group of like-minded folk got together to form the Strathleven Artizans. With support of the community, they put together an impressive collection of Bruce-related artifacts. They also visited local schools to share their knowledge of Scotland's heroes.

Eventually they found a base for their artifacts and knowledge, setting up the Robert the Bruce Centre in the disused Renton station.

Most days if you pop into the centre, you will be greeted with the warmest of welcomes and captivated with amazing tales of Bruce and his determination to free Scotland.

You can even purchase a wooden heart or cross, carved from a 700-year-old oak tree from Bruce's estate.

As the big fellow so eloquently puts it, "all are welcome here, the kettle is never off the boil, whether you want to hear tales of Bruce or just need a wee chat, the door's always open".

CLYDESIDER MEMBERSHIP



ko-fi.com/clydesider/

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- » Invite to all our events
- » A Clydesider Vote

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LET'S GROW WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

by Rose Harvie

With COP26 just behind us, and Spring ahead, what better time to help our environment, grow some fruit, herbs, and veggies, make new friends, and help our community?

Our first Growing West Dunbartonshire seasonal column is for those who have never tried to grow anything edible; for those who have tried and failed to produce their chosen crops, and for the experts willing to learn something new, and those who are willing to help others.

There are now 17 community gardens in West Dunbartonshire; to find one near you contact The Leamy Foundation info@theleamyfoundation.com

There are several WDC allotment sites, with plans for at least two more. If you would like a plot contact WDC Greenspace to get your name on the waiting list wdc.greenspace@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

There are lots of open green spaces just begging to be cultivated – try a bit of 'guerrilla gardening'.

Many residents already have gardens and may be ready and willing to share their knowledge, and possibly some space with other residents. Ask your neighbours if they can spare a bit of ground.

Knowetop Community Farm site in Castlehill is also now being converted to a community garden by Alternatives. If you would like to volunteer contact Claire.travis@alternativeswd.org

Spring Gardening Tips

- » It is not too late to order or buy your seeds, potatoes, and onion sets. Put your seed potatoes in eggs boxes to start them 'chitting'. Share seeds and spuds with your neighbours if you have too many
- » Don't throw away useful plastic containers, such as yoghurt pots, margarine, and other plastic tubs – with a few holes in the bottom they make great seed trays
- » Start a composting system; pallets make great compost containers. For advice contact: rharvie17@gmail.com
- » Prepare your growing area by removing weeds and adding peat-free compost, organic fertiliser, or farm-yard manure if you can get it, to your soil
- » Come on West Dunbartonshire, let's get growing!



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MEN DO MATTER

WORDS BY JENNY WATSON
PHOTOS BY CHRIS McCAUGHEY

On a quiet, nondescript lane there is a plain, unexceptional door.

What is behind the door, however, is a sanctuary, solace and supporting community for men.

In 2019 three men came together in the Chest, Heart & Stroke unit to provide help and support to one another.

Just over two years later and over 1,200 men have joined Fraser, Gregor and Peter.

Every single one of these men matter, as founding member Fraser Devine explains.

"We would meet up just to have a chat, talk about what we were going through and try to help one another.

"As time went on and the more people we spoke to about our meetups, we realised there were loads more men like us but there wasn't much help for them."

Fraser is now the organisation's Team Leader at Men Matter Scotland, with co-founder Gregor Ritchie taking on the role of General Manager.

However, it is more than just a job for them, it's a family.

"If someone phones us up or texts us to let us know such-and-such hasn't been seen in a few hours, we get the jackets on and go look for them, no matter the time of day or night.

"When we tell our guys we are there for them, we mean it. We know how hard life can be, we still have our bad days," Fraser adds.



As the group grew, more space was needed to meet the demand but also to allow room to offer the men a multitude of activities to help improve their wellbeing and prevent suicide.

That's when Oliver's Restaurant kindly stepped in and offered them part of their building that wasn't in use.

Based in Drumchapel, men from all over Scotland visit the hub daily.

Fraser explains: "Our members are aged from 16 to 94 and 30-40 guys can walk through that door in a day.

"We get an average of seven referrals every day.

"There are no waiting times, no boxes to tick. Everyone who comes through that door is welcomed as a brother."

That welcome is most certainly felt. As I am given a tour of the hub, every person I pass says hello or gives me the obligatory west of Scotland 'how ye doin?'.

Walking from room to room, having a nosey behind each door, I find something different to cater to various likes and needs.

Co-founder Gregor explains the group has cherry-picked projects, principles and activities which have proved successful around the globe.

One day members can try out the music room, the next have a workout in the gym. If you need a quiet safe space to have a one-to-one, there are rooms for that too.

There's a therapy room for the guys to have a reiki or mindfulness session and a soundproofed one for making their podcasts.

During the summer they run 'Go Wild on Fridays' which involves getting back to nature. Every few weeks they head somewhere rural for natural living, cooking underground, and sleeping under the stars.

Gregor explains: "We want to provide a safe place for men

to go. I know boys who aren't here any more and they were looking for somewhere to belong and couldn't find it.

"There are brotherhoods in Scotland based on religion and politics, but not any based on love.

"It's a word many guys are uncomfortable with, they think it's about sex or relationships but we see it as those positive connections we can all make with each other."

Ian Wallace needed love and support after his wife died.

"When I lost my wife I hit the drink. Coming in here has really helped me. Sometimes I come in and I'm a bit down and I start talking to the guys, someone will give me a hug and I'm back up again. I feel part of something here."

In the art room eight guys are spread out over two large tables, heads bowed concentrating on their individual pieces of work.



“When I came here I wasn’t afraid of dying, I was afraid of living.”



They each introduce themselves and share what the weekly art class, run by Salvino Volpe from Clydebank, means to them:

“I feel more relaxed in here, more content in myself,” says one member.

Another adds: “I’m more confident in myself, I used to be shy.”

“I had bad social anxiety – would worry about what people thought of me. Coming to the art group helped me change that,” says a voice quietly from the corner.

This statement causes a pause in conversation, as most of the men reflect on it while

continuing to put pencils and paintbrushes to paper.

Willie breaks the silence: “Most of my life I have been let down by services. When I came here, I wasn’t afraid of dying, I was afraid of living.”

He continues to talk about his life but always comes back to his gratefulness and appreciation of the organisation, “there’s no limitations or timelines on access to these services. Every one of the guys here are great, we all help each other, good days and bad days.”

The nodding heads confirm they all feel the same way, including art teacher Salvino, “we have art class once or

twice a week, but I come here to help the guys and sometimes they help me too,” he adds.

The art group has had field trips and artists workshops to try different styles. Their long-term plans include a more structured course, exhibitions, and trips further afield.

Future plans for Men Matter Scotland include suicide prevention training for their 20 volunteers, a movie premiere, raising awareness of the organisation and its suicide prevention work, and hopefully more staff.

All this while fundraising to ensure the organisation’s survival.



"We've had a couple of small grants which have been great but most of our money comes from donations from the community, in particular families who have lost someone to suicide."

"We want to give back more to the men and the families that need our help and support," Fraser adds.

The organisation is also aiming to encourage more men to get involved before they need help.

Gregor explains: "This is just the start, we're only officially two years old. We want people to realise this isn't just a place for men who are struggling, we're somewhere you can come at any time."

"There are just three criteria – you're a man, you live in Scotland and you're ready for positive change in your life."



To find out more visit the Men Matter website: <https://www.menmatterscotland.org> or call 0141 944 7900 or email contact@menmatterscotland.org

They also have active social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Listen to the Men Matter podcasts on Apple, Spotify and Soundcloud.



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Streetlight Talk

By Stephen Watt

I've been reading lampposts.

Initials, names, threats, romance,
the played-out jibes
of Dinky ya bas.
And socialism or extinction –
the sharpie tips of the working class
scrawl Eat The Rich
then Smash The Fash
in the town closest to Faslane.

The metal rebels use stickers.
Green ideologies and ecotopia
cling to steel skin
picked by indignant fingers.
These are replaced
with political perspectives
of union sentiment
and Thatcher contraceptives.

Celtic, Rangers, Ran/tic, Cel/gers,
Dumbarton Bhoys, Union Bears –
the streets could never truly be free.
No bombs.
End animal farming.
I love Mark, by Ashley C
but will she still in 2023?

When the sky fades, words dance
on the orange starlit rust
and the crude scribbles or genitals
rot in pigments of sodium dust.
We no longer notice them,
ghosts among us
shouting their dead languages
into car headlights, wrong audiences.

The new months
will clamber after new mouths
with pens for tongues
and stickers for voices.

CLAIM WHAT'S YOURS – CLYDESIDER CAMPAIGN

BY AMANDA ELEFTHERIADES, EDITOR

Every year billions of pounds of benefits which should be helping people on the lowest incomes, goes unclaimed.

In 2020 the online benefits calculator service, entitled to, estimated a staggering +£15 billion a year was not being claimed.

This included nearly £2.5 million of child tax credits, over £2.5 million of working tax credits, £2.6 million council tax support and £2.8 million housing benefit.

These statistics were all taken from pre-pandemic data. With less face-to-face support and confusion over pandemic financial aid, these numbers could now be higher.

In March 2020 Clydesider set up a Community Response

Network for local support organisations, charities and community groups to stay connected throughout lockdowns.

Through this network we heard how more people – both employed and unemployed – were accessing foodbanks because they couldn't afford the spiralling costs of living.

We also heard how WD Citizens Advice Bureau and other welfare support services were inundated with calls for help.

So, we are launching our first Clydesider campaign – Claim What's Yours.

Throughout 2022 we will use the magazine and our social

media to challenge the negative stereotypes and stigma associated with benefits by some traditional media outlets.

We will share information and advice from local community organisations and, with our readers' help, we hope to encourage more people from West Dunbartonshire to claim every penny they are entitled to.

We are doing this because we believe, in the third decade of the 21st century there should not be a child in our community going to bed hungry; there shouldn't be a pensioner keeping warm with hot water bottles or a parent choosing their child's clothes from a school uniform bank.

PLEASE JOIN US IN OUR CAMPAIGN FOR CHANGE

- **Approximately 35,000 (37%) people in WD have first-hand experience of deprivation**

- **Full-time workers in WD earn £200 per month less, on average, than the rest of Scotland**

- **23% of households in WD are in receipt of out-of-work benefits**

- **West Dunbartonshire's Information and Advice Partnership supported 8,193 people to claim £20 million of financial aid in 2019/20**

- **In 2019 31% of children in WD lived in poverty after housing costs were included**

- **2,526 families in WD received support to maximise income and manage debts in 2019/20**

LIFE CHANGER

BY AMANDA ELEFTHERIADES

Climbing four flights of stairs used to be all in a day's work for Cath, a paramedic with the Scottish Ambulance Service.

But 18 months after falling ill with Covid-19 she can barely manage one flight without becoming breathless.

Both Cath* and husband Mick*, also a paramedic, caught the virus in October 2020.

At first they both experienced flu-like symptoms – aching joints, high temperature and tiredness – but nothing as severe as many of the people they had blue-lighted to hospital.

"Initially we were just a bit tired," Cath said. "But by the end of the second week I didn't feel as if I was ready to go back to work, I was just constantly tired."

Her doctor gave her a sick line for a further two weeks but by the end of the fortnight she was struggling to breathe, and Mick was experiencing similar symptoms.

"Just going to the shops took it out of me, I had to lie down when I came back, but it wasn't like when I saw my patients – they were at their worst – so I wasn't too concerned."

But the following week Mick started to get pains in his back and chest. The couple knew the signs were not good and called an ambulance. At hospital Mick learned he had suffered a heart attack.

He was one of the lucky ones. Following treatment and medication Mick was able to return home and is now back at work.

Cath's recovery was not as straightforward.

Still struggling to catch her breath whenever she climbed

stairs or a slight hill, Cath knew she couldn't do the lifting and carrying required every day in her job.

In March 2021 she tried going back to work on a phased return, initially doing alternative duties and then being a third crew member in the ambulance.

She eventually returned to regular duties, but after an emergency call which required her to climb 88 steps left her unable to breathe or speak to the patient, she knew she was still not fit to do her job.

"This happened on another four occasions, anything more than one flight of stairs and I just couldn't breathe.

"At home when I was changing the bed or standing ironing I would get pains across my back – that was a whole new symptom."

She was referred to her Occupational Health and after various tests was again signed off her work.

As an NHS employee Cath's salary and job were protected.

"If I hadn't been working for the NHS and had to go down to half pay, I would have been struggling and wouldn't have a clue where to go for help. I would probably have taken early retirement."

Many Long Covid sufferers are unaware they are entitled to financial support if they are unable to work or face additional difficulties at home.

Joe McCormack, manager of West Dunbartonshire Citizens Advice Bureau, explained: "The illness was recognised by the DWP back in March 2021.

"People who are unable to return to work or lose their jobs because they have Long Covid maybe entitled to claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which is up to £608 a month."

An estimated 1.3 million people in the UK have contracted Long Covid.

Latest data from the Office of National Statistics shows 506,000 have been struggling with the symptoms for over a year. Yet just 480 Covid-related PIP claims have been made to the DWP.

Joe added: "When people have been fit, healthy and worked all their life, it comes as a shock to suddenly find they can't do even simple everyday tasks, let alone work.

"Many have no idea how to claim the benefits they are entitled to, or they feel uncomfortable asking for help.

"But that is what our Welfare State is meant to be for, it's what our parents and grandparents campaigned for, and it's what we all pay for through our taxes.

"I would urge anyone who is unable to work and is unsure what help is available to contact us. One of our advisors will help them through the process and make sure they get every penny they are entitled to."

West Dunbartonshire CAB are now offering telephone and video call appointments, so it is no longer necessary to visit an office for support. Just call Freephone 0800 4840136 or visit www.wdcab.co.uk/contact-us

*Names in this article have been changed at the request of the interviewee

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<https://www.chss.org.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-information-and-support/long-covid/>

LONG COVID SCOTLAND -

<https://www.longcovid.scot/>
(Peer support}

POST COVID HUB -

<https://www.post-covid.org.uk/>

**ALLIANCE SCOTLAND - share experience
of Long Covid with researchers aiming to
improve care for people with Long Covid
in Scotland:**

<https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/call-for-participants-accessing-social-support-for-long-covid/>



BENEFITS SUPPORT

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE CITIZENS
ADVICE BUREAU -**

Freephone 0800 484 0136 (Mon-Thu
8:30am - 4:30pm, Fri 8:30am-3pm)
<https://www.wdcab.co.uk/>

**HOME ENERGY SCOTLAND - help, advice
and financial support to reduce heating
bills 0808 8082282**

www.homeenergyscotland.org

**CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP -
information about benefits in Scotland:
<https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/welfare-rights/scottish-benefits>**

**ENTITLED TO - free online benefits
calculator blog:**

<https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>
&
[https://www.entitledto.co.uk/help/coronavirus_help_\(benefits_and_coronavirus\)](https://www.entitledto.co.uk/help/coronavirus_help_(benefits_and_coronavirus))

Help With Your Energy Bills

BY AMANDA ELEFTHERIADES
PHOTO BY CHRIS McCaughey

A quarter of Scottish households were living in fuel poverty long before the pandemic started.

Now with energy bills set to rocket, people living on low incomes will have one more financial headache to add to the rising cost of living.

According to West Dunbartonshire Citizens Advice Bureau thousands of households are already turning their heating off so they can afford food and other daily essentials.

But help is available.

The Home Heating Support Fund helps domestic consumers reduce their bills, including paying off energy arrears.

There is also assistance with energy vouchers, and in some circumstances, there are additional funds available to help people in need.

West Dunbartonshire Citizens Advice Bureau can help people in Dumbarton, Clydebank and the Vale access this support.

Anyone concerned about their energy bills can contact WD Citizens Advice Bureau on 0800 484 0136 or contact via their website www.wdcab.uk for free, confidential and impartial advice.

Home Energy Scotland also provides support and advice on government-funded heating and insulation improvements and support with energy bills. Call 0808 808 2282 or visit www.homeenergyscotland.org to request a call back

Several local community groups also offer support, their advice is don't be afraid to ask if you need help.



BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

BY AMANDA ELEFTHERIADES

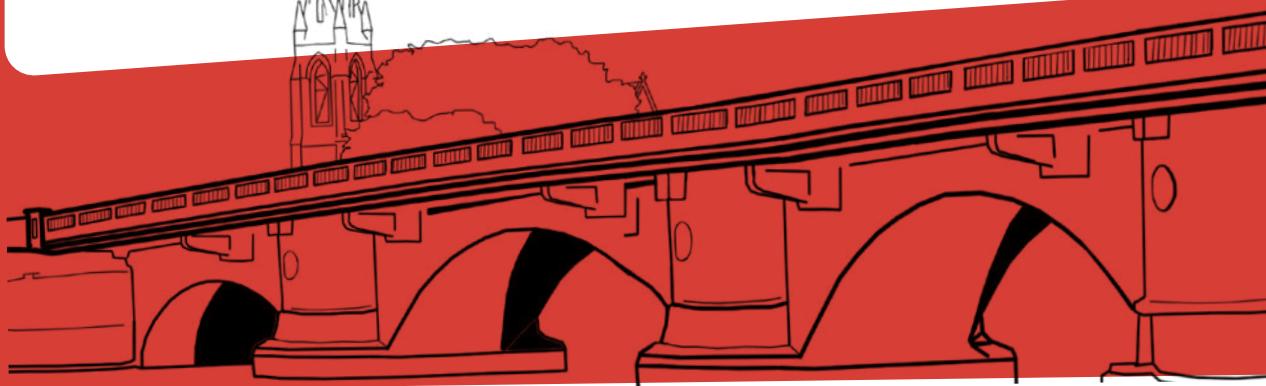


Who is it for?

People over 16 who have a long-term physical or mental illness or disability which is likely to last more than 12 months. The five most common conditions are psychiatric conditions, musculoskeletal diseases, neurological disease and respiratory diseases.

How much is it?

People with a wide range of conditions are entitled to up to £608 a month. It is a supplement benefit (rather than a live-on one). It is available to people who are in work, have savings/pension and/or are in receipt of other benefits.



What does it cover?

It covers costs incurred with a long-term health condition. There are two parts to PIP to pay for Daily Living costs and Mobility. The Daily Living element helps cover costs to:-

- prepare and eat food
- wash/bath or use the toilet
- get dressed
- read and communicate
- manage medicines or treatments
- deal with money and financial decisions
- socialise with other people

The Mobility component helps:

- planning and following a route
- physically moving around
- leaving home

Anything else I should know?

This is one of the benefits being transferred from the DWP to the Scottish Government and will become the Adult Disability Payment this year. People already in receipt of PIP will be transferred over to the new system from August 2022. New claims from West Dunbartonshire will be made directly to the Scottish Social Security system from August 29 2022.

How do I make a claim?

You can call the PIP helpline on 0800 917 2222 Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm. For advice or help to claim PIP or 0800 484 0136 or visit www.wdcab.co.uk/contact-us



SPONSORED EDITORIAL

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR ENERGY BILLS? HOME ENERGY SCOTLAND CAN HELP

In February, Ofgem announced an increase to the energy price cap meaning that many Scottish households will see increases in energy bills from 1 April 2022. While you might find this news worrying, we want to assure you that we're here to help.

Read on to find out how we can help you with reducing the energy you use, ways to make your home warmer, and how you can access our free, impartial advice.

MAKE SIMPLE CHANGES

You might be surprised by how much money you can save by making simple changes to cut your energy use at home. For example, switching your appliances off at the wall instead of leaving them on standby could save you £55 a year and won't cost you a penny. Even reducing your shower time to four minutes a day could save you £65 a year.

WARMER HOMES SCOTLAND

Warmer Homes Scotland is a Scottish Government programme that provides free heating, insulation and more to eligible households that are struggling to stay warm and keep up with energy costs. More than 24,000 households in Scotland have benefitted from the programme since its launch, each saving an average of around £300 on their bills over a year. See if you're eligible and find out how to apply at <https://www.homeenergyscotland.org/find-funding-grants-and-loans/warmer-homes-scotland/>

HOME ENERGY SCOTLAND

GET ADVICE YOU CAN TRUST

If you're struggling to keep warm at home and keep up with your energy costs, we're here to help you. As well as tips on how to save energy and advice on making your home warmer, we can check if you're eligible for special discounts from energy suppliers and other funding. We can also help you get a benefits and tax credit check so you're not missing out on additional income.

You can email us at adviceteam@sc.homeenergyscotland.org or give us a call on 0808 808 2282. Our lines are open Monday - Friday, 8am - 8pm, and Saturday 9am - 5pm.

Please note our phone lines are often quite busy in the evenings and at weekends.



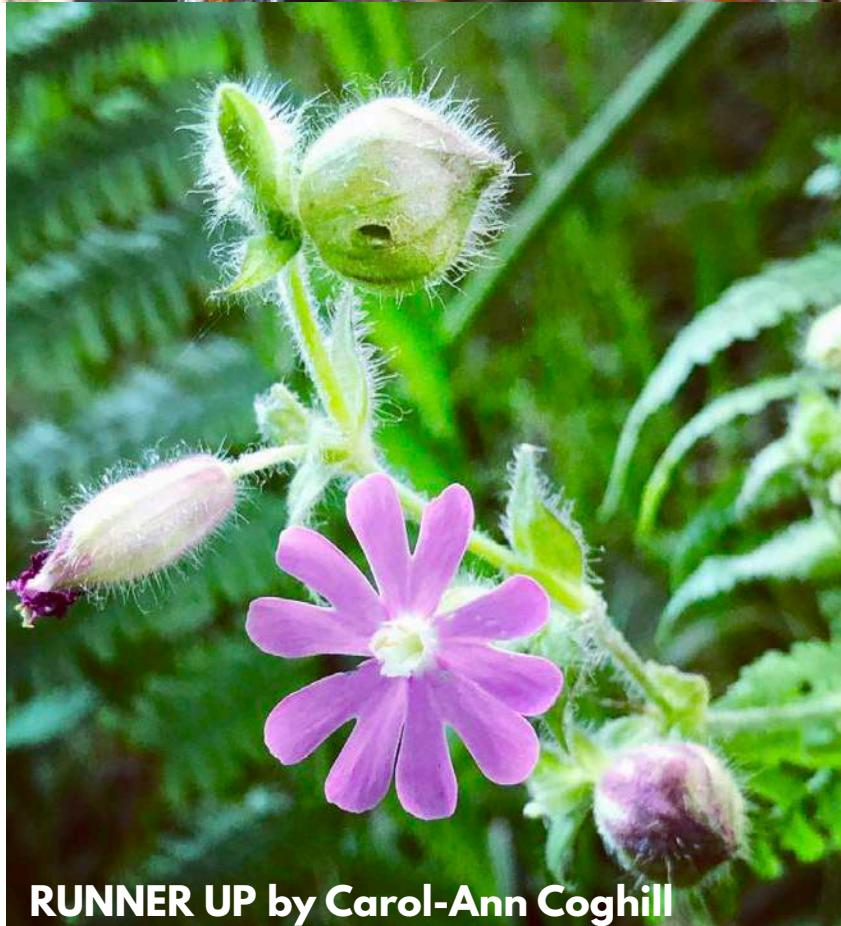
Photo Competition - New Growth

WINNING ENTRY
by Iain McLaren



**Thank you to everyone
who entered the
competition.**

**Keep an eye on our
social media for a
slideshow of all entries.**



RUNNER UP by Carol-Ann Coghill



RUNNER UP by Peter Jarvis

PIXBYPEDRO



ENTRY by Scott Walker

SHARING THE WELLNESS

Words & photos by Emily Fraser



A Vale therapist has launched a social enterprise to promote well-being as a right for all and not a luxury just for those who can afford to pay.

Joanne Dick, a complementary therapist and medical herbalist with 20 years experience, decided it was time for her business, Green Tree Remedies, to grow into Green Tree Community CIC.

And now she's inviting everybody to reclaim their wellness.

Maybe you never had any health wobbles pre-pandemic, or maybe you were already struggling. Either way, Jo could help.

Since relocating from Strathleven House to 89A Bank Street in Alexandria, Jo has been offering some Pay-What-You-Can appointments which start at £1.

Her new structure enables her to plough profits back into the local area, provide fairer access to her treatments, apply for funding, and promote the principle that wellness is a necessity for all, not a luxury for a few.

Jo wants to give us confidence to look within for those feel-good answers.

She wants us to learn basic, low-cost health habits, and she wants us to remember that it's not selfish to prioritise yourself, sometimes - it's essential.

No client at Green Tree is means-tested or asked

to prove their status, Jo operates on a basis of trust.

This was an important part of her CIC idea, because she wants locals to seize the opportunity without worrying about whether they 'tick all the boxes'.

Whether you book a Pay-What-You-Can session or a Pay-It-Forward (regular price) session, you have the added motivation that, in the words of Green Tree Community, "every treatment does good".

In looking after yourself, you are looking after others.

Jo's day-to-day work involves meeting clients with various health concerns at her two-room treatment centre, which feels comfortable and cosy. She also offers home visits if mobility is an issue.

She provides massage therapies, reiki (energy work) and reflexology, practical ways of managing stress and tension, breathing work and muscle relaxation, energy flow techniques, plus herbal remedies to support healing.

Jo also has a talent for asking the right questions and listening intently.

"A lot of what I practise is nothing new. Quite the reverse - it's rooted in the simple, age-old wisdom that our ancestors swore by," Jo humbly assures me.

Most people leave Green Tree relaxed, and with a sense of relief and hope. They have more understanding of where they are with their wellbeing, and some ideas they can use to continue self-care.

Jo works on the ethos that mental, emotional and physical health are interlinked, and she uses hands-on treatments as a gateway to calm your mind, helping you feel present, and hopefully, make it easier to cope with any health challenges.

And plenty of people from the Vale and beyond will vouch for her healing abilities.

On Jo's Facebook page Emma McQueen comments: "I absolutely love going to Jo for Reiki and relaxation classes and can't speak highly enough of Greentree Remedies."

And Mel West adds her recommendation: "I had the most amazing Indian head massage and floated for at least 24 hours, also had the best sleep I've had for weeks."

But Jo insists she still has to work on her wellbeing, just like everybody else.

She has empathy for people who struggle to incorporate new habits or find it hard to manage pain. Rather than tell clients what to do, she prefers to support while they figure out for themselves what they need most. As Jo says, "you are the expert in your wellbeing."

And everything she has learned, she needed for herself first.

A deep thinker and highly sensitive woman, Jo says, "I've been fairly broken at certain points in time and had to know how to mend myself and that's probably been my main motivator."

From her Beauty Therapy HND at Clydebank College in the 1990s, "for the well-rounded health content, I never filed another nail after that," to studying for a Herbal Medicine Degree in London, to recently completing a prestigious course in Foraging & Wild Foods; her career has been shaped by years of reading, research and practical experience as well as self-healing and intuition.

Now Green Tree Community CIC's Pay-What-You-Can or Pay-It-Forward system should create even more opportunity to 'share the wellness' we all have a right to, and get more folk reclaiming self-healing and natural wisdom.



For more information contact Jo at
www.greentreeremedies.co.uk
Email - greentreeremedies@outlook.com
Telephone - 07562 333 731
Facebook Page - Green Tree Community CIC

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SERVED WITH LOVE

by Angela Clark

Photos by Caroline Finn

An Alexandria mother is using her life experiences of surviving domestic abuse and caring for children struggling with addiction, to help support some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Ghislaine Kennedy started helping homeless people over 20 years ago in Dumbarton's St Augustine's Church. Together with her husband the couple helped provide Christmas dinner and food parcels, also delivering essentials to people who couldn't get to the church.

She said: "People would come over to the church and we would buy them a fish supper and provide sleeping bags and other stuff.

"West Dunbartonshire Foodshare had just been set up and they needed a distribution centre. They used the church at first and then we realised they were only providing food one day a week and we worried what people would do the rest of the week. So Food for Thought was kind of born out of that.

"Then later I decided we should have a soup kitchen as well. So we started Community Soup which is part of Food for Thought.

"We provide a free lunch every Wednesday from 12 till 2pm in the church hall and have done so for the past seven years."

Community Soup serves food to a wide mix of people including regular visitors from the Alzheimer's group, people in recovery, those still struggling with addiction, as well as people who are homeless.

Everyone who comes to the cafe is shown kindness, love and respect regardless of their background.

Ghislaine said: "They are human beings, they are somebody's son, somebody's daughter. And behind every one of them is a broken-hearted mother and family. Some people don't realise that.

"We forget that Jesus had

nothing and his message was love to all. That's what we're supposed to do. You're not just supposed to sit in the church on a Sunday and say I'll pray for you when the person says they are hungry. These doors need to be open, people need a safe place to come."

She knows firsthand the devastating effects addiction can bring to families and the wider community.

She has lost people she tirelessly tried to help. She has lost a nephew to drugs, her son and daughter both use drugs and she struggles daily, feeling she is somehow responsible for their addiction.

Ghislaine said: "It's hard not to blame yourself. I worry it's because of the abusive relationships I was in. At some point you feel it's your fault. I live with that guilt every single day."

Ghislaine says she is still mentally scarred by her previous relationships and thanks God she is still alive but she believes her past experiences are now an asset enabling her to help people facing tough times.

She knows not everyone will understand what it is like to live with an alcoholic or drug addict in a domestic abuse relationship. She also knows the desperation and struggles people have to endure.

She added: "I've been in two abusive relationships. And I know what it's like living with someone who is an alcoholic, who steals everything from you, who leaves you without food for yourself and your bairns.

"One time he broke into the meter, we had no money, I had to use some of it to feed the kids. I took the blame and got fined. I couldn't pay the fine because he took all the money again and I was picked up by the police at the bus stop and taken to Cornton Vale.

others.

As well as helping feed people in need, she started a choir which to date has raised over £40,000 for local charities including St Margaret's Hospice, Erskine Hospital and RNLI.



The Allsorts Choir started after she did a fundraiser in the Denny Civic Theatre. Ghislaine explained: "I decided to do something like Sister Act as a fundraiser. It was such a success everyone had a great time."

"Afterwards I thought it's a shame to let this go, so a number of churches got involved and we started to raise money for charity and right now the wee choir is sponsoring Community Soup."

Everyone who needs this service can go along and receive a warm homemade meal or if you wish to donate food or any other items to help contact Ghislaine on 07776 796037 or Food For Thought on 01389 743908.

Support Services:

Scottish Women's Aid -
0800 027 1234

Scottish Families Affected by
Alcohol and Drugs -
08080 10 10 11

Dumbarton District Women's Aid -
01389 751036

Clydebank Women's Aid -
0141 9528118

Whatever You're Happiest Doing!

By the Armchair Philosopher

"Whatever you're happiest doing!" is a phrase many of my friends have cheerily used in the strange new times and strange new world we are forced to embrace.

My friends, relatives and acquaintances are well-intentioned: Whatever YOU are happiest doing. They are handing the responsibility for my happiness back to me and giving me the widest choice possible.

However, that's just it. I just don't know the answer. I just don't know what to do with myself, as the late, great Dusty Springfield so eloquently sings.

And that sums me up to a tee.

I just DO NOT know! This indecisiveness must be very frustrating for those who knew me before. I must appear so different from my former self.

Friends ask me if I am happier meeting up online and I hear myself replying that yes, I AM happier meeting online. But that's not strictly true...

In pre-Covid times, I was a "people person". Hearing other folks' stories used to keep my world turning. I used to thrive on that. How I used to love a blether ...

Now I actively avoid other people.

It is NOT that I'm happier meeting up online, it's just I am no longer happy meeting up in person.

Like many other folks, I have felt like a recluse since this pandemic started. No hairdresser, no supermarket since March 2020, nor cafés or restaurants.

My hairdresser has been very understanding. I am not alone in this non-attendance. Many of her clients have not yet returned to



have their hair cut and styled.

Time and time again, I ask myself: Am I being reasonable? Or am I moving too slowly? But is it reasonable to have a timescale anyway? And whose timescale should it be?

Then doubt creeps in: Is it possible to maintain friendships on a virtual level only? How can you maintain the closeness you have with another person if you're only pinging a text back and forwards and you don't meet up in real life?

Then I convince myself surely some contact is better than nothing and this virtual online existence is very similar to families whose children emigrated in the 60s and had to keep in touch via landline or letters.

Or the modern family who have travelled globally and are scattered widely. Surely the quality of their relationship is still maintained despite the miles dividing them? Through the power of technology, family ties remain strong.

One of my new virtual pals from Clydesider, Emily, suggested I should write my personal feelings all down in this article as it would maybe resonate with how others are feeling.

Steven, another online pal, kindly suggested looking at a very special app, "Action for Happiness", where you have a calendar with positive suggestions for each day based on the theme of that month. FriendlyFebruary urged you to reach out to others, tell them you care, offer to help and make a difference.

Action for Happiness is a movement of people (281,299 from 190 countries) committed to building a happier, more caring society. Hear! Hear!

It's a brilliant website with positive tips stories and a podcast, not to mention free courses on happiness and hopefulness. What a game changer, thank you Steven!

Amanda, our editor, told us about a blog entitled "My Sweet Dumb Brain" by a young widow, Katie Hawkins-Gaar, which speak of her grief, depression, hope, sadness and joy.

I read a few posts and one in particular, struck a chord. She suggests listening to the seasons, not ask too much of yourself and indeed, seek to do less, especially over the winter months. We should stop pushing ourselves so hard and having unrealistic expectations of ourselves.

My online friends and I might not be able to hug in person, but I could feel the strength of their embrace in these caring suggestions.

I have to look inwardly and accept I have changed.



But it's not just me.

Everyone has been affected by this pandemic, tragically, some much more than others. No one has remained unscathed, old and young alike. I guess it's what you do with yourself and your family and how you come out the other end that matters.

But the realisation that everyone is different and so are their needs, wants and attitudes, goes a long way.

I don't expect folk to march to the beat of my drum so neither should anyone force me to get in step with theirs.

Never has that famous saying: "Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins," been more fitting.

So, go ahead, walk in those moccasins, keep moving forwards, get up, get on and try your best to keep going. Who knows, you might even start sprinting, skipping or even dancing along the way.



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NURTURING YOUNG TALENT

WORDS BY JENNY WATSON,
PHOTOS COURTESY OF CLIFFTOP PROJECTS

There's no shortage of creative talent in West Dunbartonshire - it just doesn't get the chance to shine too often.

In 2021 local creative social enterprise Clifftop Projects decided to change this with their Nurturing Talent programme.

Funded by Creative Scotland, the initiative offered grants up to £1,000 for young people from West Dunbartonshire to follow their creative dreams.

With an application process designed and managed by Clifftop's Youth Advisory Board, they funded a diverse mix of young creative talents with 39 of the 60 applicants receiving awards.

Clifftop Projects Director, Lottie Barker, explained: "Talents of all kind were included in the application forms from art supplies to desks for creating on at home, to dance classes, attending music competitions, instruments, recording an album, digital drawing tools and software, classes at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and so much more."

And at the end of the project I had the pleasure of attending the 'Nurturing Talent Fund Showcase,' not quite knowing what to expect.

After Lottie's warm and fun welcome speech, the lights were dimmed, then 15-year-old Sophie Ramsey took to the stage.

With a mic in hand, she proceeded to astound the captivated audience with her stunning version of Adele's 'To Be Loved'.

Sophie is using her funds for singing and recording sessions. "I was surprised and happy to find out my application was successful. I have only been singing for four years and didn't think I would get it," she told me.

Sophie wasn't the only one with the WOW factor in the room that night.

Thomas Lawrence, 21, learned of the fund through his neighbour and hoped his take on 'Cinderella' would intrigue the judging panel.

"I was thrilled to find out I had been successful two months before my project was due to start. I used the funding to buy props for my show."

Also performing on the evening was 20-year-old Tabby Weir.

She read an excerpt from her short film script based on a case of two missing boys in the Glasgow

Gorbals in the 1950s and the mass hysteria that ensued.

Tabby heard about the fund while attending Clifftop's weekly Art Hub in Castlehill. "It's great to have been able to do something creative thanks to the funding," she said.

Tabby's brother Ezlan, 17, also successfully applied. After his performance of his horror-based podcast – with live sound effects – it's clear to see why the Youth Advisory board granted his application.

Nicola McFall received funding to create 'Time 2 Move,' a movement-based creative stimulus, while Freya Smith used her award to purchase a gimble for her videographer work.

And as a result of their successful applications the pair are now collaborating on a new film project.

It was inspiring and hopeful to meet and hear about all the young people involved with the Nurturing Talent fund.

West Dunbartonshire is often underestimated and overlooked for the talent within its bounds, these exceptionally artistic and innovative souls prove what we all know – WD is bursting at the seams with creativity!



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FITNESS FOR MIND & BODY

by Angela Clark

Photos by Caroline Finn

The right kind of exercise can improve your mental health, as well as your physical well-being.

When asked to try out a Yoga class for this feature on inner change I didn't quite know what to expect.

I discovered there are many types of yoga practices, so it is important to try various classes to find the one that suits you.

Julie's Yoga, based in the Beardmore Hotel in Dalmuir, provides classes throughout the week which are suitable for all abilities.

She also offers meditation Yoga classes, these provide time to relax, unwind and slow your breathing, which is especially useful and effective during stressful moments in life.

This was the perfect place for me to start as I'm always keen to learn new coping skills for these types of situations.

The Nidra meditation class began with Julie asking us to lie down on the mats provided. I also received a clean cosy blanket to cover myself with.

The lights were dimmed and soft music started to play as she started a guided meditation.

It wasn't long before I started to relax and savour this time for me.

It was a peaceful experience and my mind took me beyond the daily stresses of life and instead focused on places where nature thrives.

It was beautiful and I didn't want it to end.

But all good things do come to an end, even just temporarily. The next class was another perfect session for me as it wasn't too intense or strenuous.

This suited me as I wasn't ready for anything more as I have been out of exercise routine for awhile.

Julie was really helpful, ensuring I was in the correct positions throughout the class to get the maximum benefit from the stretches.

The session ended with 15 minutes of guided meditation that nearly put me to sleep.

Falling asleep in a more advanced class was more difficult as this practice is a little more demanding. I discovered muscles I never knew I had and found some of the poses difficult.

But with practice, I quickly

learned to do what my body allowed me. Like most things you try you have to keep at it to experience the benefits.

Anne Murray is a client who has seen great health improvements after attending Julie's classes regularly for the past six months.

She said: "I was told about Julie's Yoga a couple of years ago. I've tried quite a few yoga classes but definitely she's the best I've been to.

"It helps me with flexibility and stops me being so tight after exercising.

"The meditation at the end helps my mental well-being as it allows me to relax and focus on breathing techniques that help get my body into the parasympathetic state of healing."

Julie herself loved the way Yoga made her feel, so she decided to train and has been teaching clients for the past four years.

She said: "I loved Yoga and wanted to take it further as I knew there were different aspects to it and it's probably the best thing I've ever done.

"What you practise on the mat you take into everyday life. You



get stillness of the mind rather than your head going everywhere; it brings your focus back to the present moment in time.”

Many of her clients have experienced improvements with their mental health and become more body aware of their physical and emotional needs.

Julie said: “It’s absolutely fantastic for mental health.

“We do a breathing practice that slows down everything. If you are concentrating on the breath you are not concentrating on anything outside.

“You might find the mind wanders but you bring it back slowly and through practice you can maintain concentration for longer each time.”

To find out more about looking after your mental and physical health visit Julie’s Yoga on Facebook for a list of classes or contact the Beardmore Hotel on 0141 951 5151.



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Dumbarton Constituency

Constituent Advice Surgeries:

Third Friday of every month:

Helensburgh Parish Church, Colquhoun St, Helensburgh

4.45pm-5.45pm

Dumbarton Constituency Office, Church Street, Dumbarton

6.30pm-7.30pm

Alexandria Library is currently closed however constituents can still arrange a telephone appointment by email to jackie.baillie.msp@parliament.scot or call 01389 734214.



Contact Jackie:

Office: 6 Church Street, Dumbarton, G82 1QL Email: jackie.baillie.msp@parliament.scot Telephone: 01389 734214

The costs of this publication have been met from parliamentary resources



Stepping Stones Distress Service

This is a new pilot service, based in Clydebank, for people aged 16 years or older, who reside in West Dunbartonshire and who may be experiencing distress but do not require medical assistance or specialist support. The new pilot starts on the 21 March 2022 for 5 months.

The new service aims to provide a compassionate response, one to one support, brief interventions, walk in referrals, assessment of needs and follow up support.

Walk in referrals will be received on Thursdays 2pm - 6pm by prior appointment. It is important that people telephone before attending as this is the only way we can guarantee access to the service.

The service can be accessed by contacting 01419412929, or 07848436866 within our normal hours. For less urgent enquiries you can contact us on admin@stepstones.org.uk, or at the address below.

Stepping Stones
Unit A10,
Whitecrook Business Centre,
78 Whitecrook Street,
Clydebank.
G811QF

RELIABLE RESOURCES

Local helpline numbers and information sources

Food For Thought - 01389 743908
emergency food aid referral line.

West Dunbartonshire Community Foodshare 01389 764135 - free phone 08003457050 emergency food aid delivery
Old Kilpatrick Food Parcels - 07368496836

Dumbarton District Women's Aid - 01389 751036

WDC 'No Homes for Domestic Abuse' - 01389 738510

Clydebank Women's Aid - 0141 952 8118
Dumbarton Area Council on Alcohol (DACA) - 01389 731456 or 0141 952 0881

WD Citizens Advice Bureau - information on benefits, welfare rights, employment rights and general well-being
Freephone - 0800 4840136

Clydebank Community Addiction Team - 0141 562 2311

WD Housing & Homeless - 01389 738282

or Freephone 0800 197 1004 (option 5)

Dumbarton Joint Hospital - 01389 812018

Overdose Response Team - Dumbarton Joint Hospital 7 days a week – 10am to 10pm. Anyone can make a referral on FREEPHONE 08088 00811

Stepping Stones - 0141 941 2929 - mental health charity providing telephone support

Big Disability Group - 0141 237 4560 thebigdisabilitygroup@gmail.com and on Facebook - support and information to people living with disabilities

WDC Additional Support - text 'help' to 07800 002582 or visit www.westdunbarton.gov.uk/coronavirus/additional-support

CLYDESIDER POETRY COMPETITION

THEME: HOPE

PRIZE: £25

CLOSING DATE: MAY 9

EMAIL ENTRIES TO:

CLYDESIDERCOMP@GMAIL.COM

CLYDESIDER PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

THEME: LIFE

PRIZE: £25

CLOSING DATE: MAY 9

EMAIL ENTRIES TO:

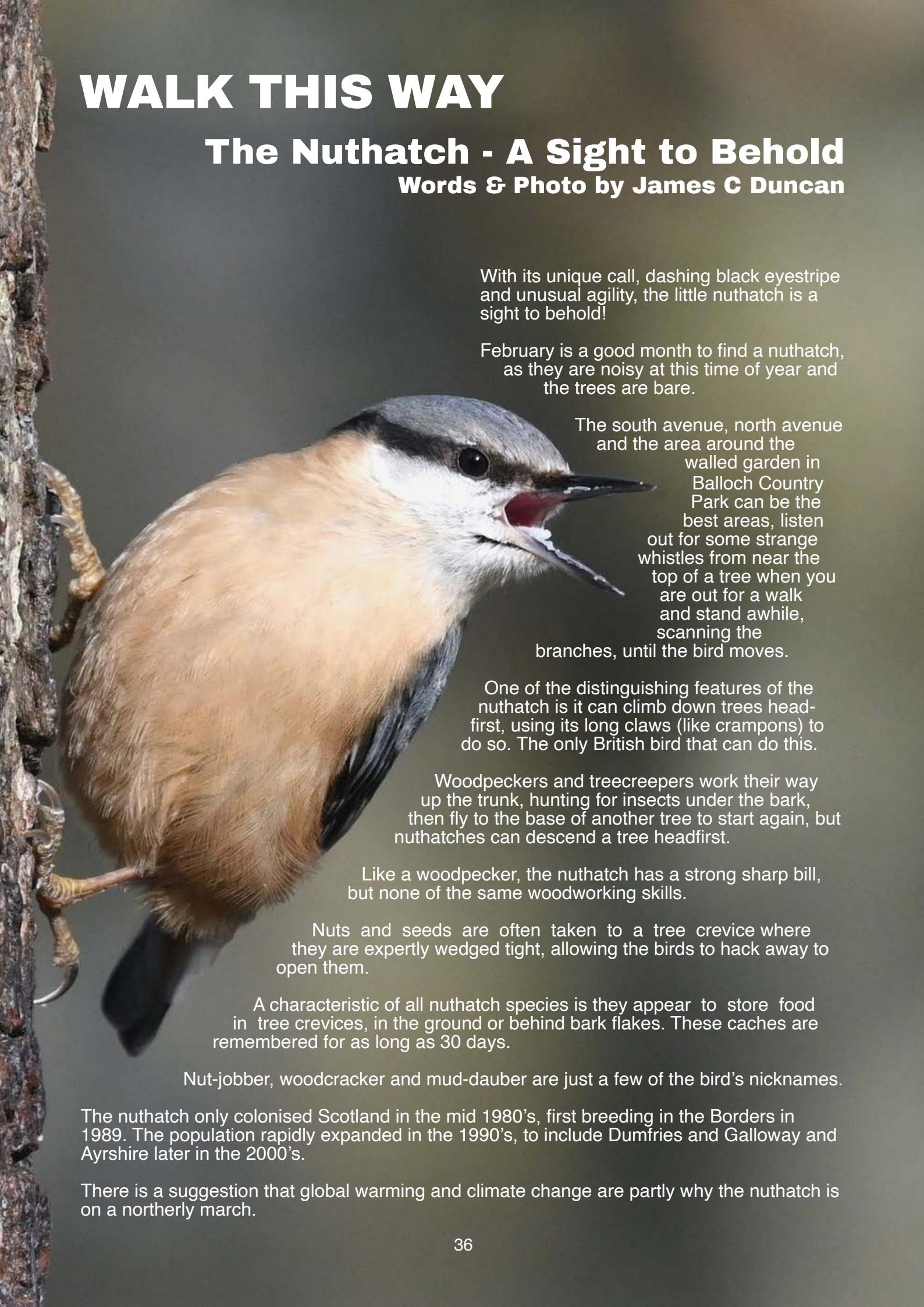
CLYDESIDERCOMP@GMAIL.COM

Rules: One entry per person for each competition, entrants must live, work or be part of a group in West Dunbartonshire; all entries must be your own, by entering you give Clydesider permission to publish your work in print or online - this in no way infringes your copyright.

WALK THIS WAY

The Nuthatch - A Sight to Behold

Words & Photo by James C Duncan



With its unique call, dashing black eyestripe and unusual agility, the little nuthatch is a sight to behold!

February is a good month to find a nuthatch, as they are noisy at this time of year and the trees are bare.

The south avenue, north avenue and the area around the walled garden in Balloch Country Park can be the best areas, listen out for some strange whistles from near the top of a tree when you are out for a walk and stand awhile, scanning the branches, until the bird moves.

One of the distinguishing features of the nuthatch is it can climb down trees headfirst, using its long claws (like crampons) to do so. The only British bird that can do this.

Woodpeckers and treecreepers work their way up the trunk, hunting for insects under the bark, then fly to the base of another tree to start again, but nuthatches can descend a tree headfirst.

Like a woodpecker, the nuthatch has a strong sharp bill, but none of the same woodworking skills.

Nuts and seeds are often taken to a tree crevice where they are expertly wedged tight, allowing the birds to hack away to open them.

A characteristic of all nuthatch species is they appear to store food in tree crevices, in the ground or behind bark flakes. These caches are remembered for as long as 30 days.

Nut-jobber, woodcracker and mud-dauber are just a few of the bird's nicknames.

The nuthatch only colonised Scotland in the mid 1980's, first breeding in the Borders in 1989. The population rapidly expanded in the 1990's, to include Dumfries and Galloway and Ayrshire later in the 2000's.

There is a suggestion that global warming and climate change are partly why the nuthatch is on a northerly march.

Value in Volunteering



Words and photo by Angela Clark

A well known quote by Saint Francis of Assisi says “for it is in giving that we receive.”

That has certainly been the philosophy of Brendan Ashton from Dalmuir who has been volunteering his time for the past 47 years.

His thoughts of others began as a small child back in the early 1960's.

His parents brought him and his siblings up to help others whenever they could, especially when times were tough. They were encouraged to help neighbours with shopping or odd jobs that would make life easier.

Brendan said: “Helping is just a natural thing for me to do. It gives me a great deal of satisfaction.

“The first organisation I volunteered with was the Royal Air Force reserves. I was helping teenagers make choices in their lives.

“It's great when I bump into these young people I helped 30 or 40 years ago, who still recognise me and they stop to chat. And they have turned into very good citizens.”

Since then Brendan continues his life journey of helping others as a volunteer in St Stephen's Chapel in Dalmuir, a role he has held for 26 years.

He has helped run youth groups in the Church Hall and volunteered with youth trips to Canada and Germany. He is always fundraising to keep the hall in good condition and helps Father Martin with preparations for mass each week.

He added: “Volunteering fills me with happiness and contentment. It also keeps me busy, especially during these difficult times.”



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

“Feeling part of something really useful. Helping me and fellow citizens find a sense of connection and maybe inspiring some to take part in more local events and activities.”

Our volunteers come from all walks of life and lend a hand in many ways.

They write articles, take photos, design cartoons, make films, share our social media posts and help distribute the magazine. Some help with admin or DIY, others provide delicious home-baking for our community events and we have a supportive volunteer Board of Directors.

The one thing they have in common is a passion for our community and together they help make Clydesider a wee bit different from most media organisations.

We help increase skills by running training in community journalism, photography and film-making. We now also have Media Mentors able to provide 1-1 specialist support.

At our fortnightly Community Catch-ups volunteers can meet (currently in-person and online), get some 1-1 support with an article or photo feature and help us plan each issue of the magazine.

“Clydesider encouraged me to try get back outside to take some local photographs as I can't travel far and I've had 3 featured already in the magazine which was great for my mental health and anxiety problems.”

“I have improved my writing and my confidence. Been a super experience.”

“I love the ethos of the magazine, to promote and showcase the positive stories and talents within our community. An ethos which is missed by local media which is all doom and gloom.”

Interested in volunteering with Clydesider? Email Jenny on jenny@clydesider.org to find out more.

Frequently Asked Questions – The Big Disability Group



Q. Who can you offer support to?

A. We support anyone with a disability or long-term health condition. We work predominantly in West Dunbartonshire and surrounding areas but do deal with enquiries from anywhere in Scotland.

Q. My son has autism and would like to find out what is available locally, how can you help?

A. We will have a conversation with your son, find out what he is interested in, what his goals are, if there is anything he needs, and we will create a person-centred support plan for him. It must be what he wants though.

Q. Do you provide support/advice for family members?

A. Definitely. We know how exhausting it can be for family members who are caring for a loved one and we can create a package of support for the whole family. It's not just about taking someone out of a difficult situation for a few hours, we will support the family to get advice and information that helps them all thrive.

Q. How long will The Big Disability Group help me?

A. We're here for as long as you want us to be. Some people just want to find out about disable-friendly activities while others turn to us when they are in crisis and don't know where else to go. We start with a conversation, and they tell us what they need. As needs and goals change over time, we're here to follow each individual on their journey, linking them into different organisations and support services as circumstances change.

Q. My wife is disabled, we're struggling financially what support is available?

A. It all depends on what you and your wife want to do. We can link you into the local Citizens Advice Bureau, or depending on your wife's disability, we might be able to access some specialist support to help with finances. If she wants some support to cope with her condition or wants to learn something new, we'll put together the right package of support to meet her needs. We can also provide you and any other family members with information on support that is available to you.

Q. After an injury at work I've had trouble walking. I don't like to leave the house on my own, but no-one wants to help. What can you do?

A. We work with a lot of people who have been passed from pillar to post and left feeling very alone. This organisation was set up because we know what that anxiety, frustration and isolation feels like. Please give us a call so we can find out more about you – what you want to do and what barriers you face – and we'll make sure you are not alone again.

**Contact The Big Disability Group on
thebigdisabilitygroup@gmail.com
or call 0141 2374560**



SPRING INTO SUMMER WITH SKYLARK IX!

Tapestry weaving, memories of war and peacetime, boatbuilding, a summer event, community rowing club and new travelling exhibition, we've heaps to get involved with and enjoy this Spring and Summer!

At our Dumbarton-based Skylark IX Recovery Project, we care for the Dunkirk 'Little Ship' Skylark IX and use her wonderful story of hope and resilience to inspire and support people across West Dunbartonshire, those recovering from addictions and those simply needing to connect and spend meaningful time with others.

We're busier than ever. So, whether you want to join one of our exciting new projects, support us or just learn a little more, now's the time.

Read on for a taste of what's on. We hope to see you soon.

'SKYLARK IX VOICES'

Did you sail on Skylark on Loch Lomond for pleasure or during a Remembrance event?

Do you, your family or friends have stories of Dumbarton during World War Two?

Whether it's a brief memory or long tale, photos or memorabilia, we'd love to hear from you as we build Skylark's story and a slice of our collective Dumbarton history.

Contact Jade: jade.west@alternativeswd.org / 07939 664921.

'SKYLARK IN STITCHES'

Over 50 local folk picked up needles and thread to craft our fabulous Skylark Lockdown Patchwork Quilt. This year, we're bigging it up with a tapestry weaving together stories of Skylark's travels and West Dunbartonshire. *Follow our social media for more.*

'HOPE FLOATS' EXHIBITION

Our new exhibition opens at the Scottish Maritime Museum (Denny Tank) on April 9. Pop in, take a look and, whilst you're there, say hello to our team at the Skylark IX Boatbuilding Workshop based there.

SUMMER EVENT SATURDAY JUNE 4

Join us for lots of family fun at the Scottish Maritime Museum (Denny Tank) as we celebrate the Year of Stories with performances, creative writing, heritage talks and children's activities bringing to life stories of Skylark and life lived around her during war and peacetime.

DUMBARTON ROWING CLUB

As many as 20 Volunteer Trainees from Alternatives Community-based Recovery and Dumbarton Area Council on Alcohol (DACA) helped complete our fabulous 22ft St Ayles Skiff.

With another built by our friends at the Scottish Maritime Museum, we're hoping to revive Dumbarton's past rowing glory!

Interested in joining a new Dumbarton Rowing Club? Contact Jae: jae@archipelagofolkschool.org

FOLLOW THE SKYLARK IX STORY AND GET INVOLVED AT:

WWW.SKYLARKIX.CO.UK

FACEBOOK @SKYLARKIXRECOVERYTRUST

TWITTER @SKYLARKIX

READER RECOMMENDATIONS

A VALE LAD GOES SWIMMING

BOOK REVIEW BY
MARY IRVINE

Paul Murdoch, author of *Old Bloke Goes Running*, has extended his fitness programme and shares his journey in this latest publication, 'Old Bloke Goes Swimming'.

Following the format of the first, this frequently humorous and self-deprecating book, tells the story of Paul's journey to build up his fitness by swimming. In a jocular vein he shares his swimming experience from learning to swim as a nipper, with memories which will ring a bell for many readers, to the more sophisticated provisions of the present day. I think I'll draw a veil, no, rather a heavy curtain, over the chapter entitled 'Old Bloke goes Budgie Smuggling.'

The right gear

As with running the right gear is of great import, if not always absolutely essential, and the variety of aids, the pros and cons of each item are examined. That'll be his scientific background showing through.

Seriously

Again there is a more serious section which deals with the benefits of swimming, followed by a comparison – swimming versus running. There's also a brief history of swimming. Am not convinced the cave drawing show early swimmers, but judge for yourselves.

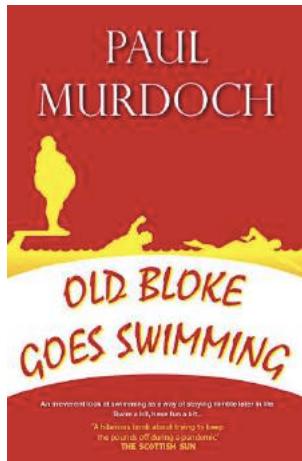
Through anecdotes Paul reveals the serious lessons learned and warns of potential dangers. One part of the book I must mention is Paul's analysis of the types of people using swimming pools – not always for swimming apparently.

We do get an update on his running regime, which didn't always go as smoothly as it could have done. Paul now combines walking, running and swimming in his keep fit routine but suggests everyone adopt a regime which works for him/her self.

The 'yummy' part

Finally, we have the advice on eating, plus some menus. Try the menus. They are easy to produce and enjoyable - I've tried some. An easy-to-read book, funny but serious. Well worth the buy.

**Old Bloke Goes Swimming is available from
www.neetahbooks.com**



GIE ME A WORD MARY IRVINE INTERVIEWS DEBUT AUTHOR EVELYN LAWRIE

Where were you born/brought up?

I was born and brought up in Bonhill in 1936. I went to Bonhill Primary and then the Vale of Leven Academy. I then attended the West of Scotland Commercial College in Glasgow. I married a local man and we had three children.

When did you start writing?

I did office work for 48 years. When I retired I decided I would like to take up creative writing as a hobby. I went to the Community Centre in Alexandria and joined Leven Litts writers. I was asked if I wrote prose or poetry. It was quite daunting as I hadn't written anything since my last college essay. I did sign up for an online creative writing course which covered all genres and had a few articles and short stories published during that time.

Have you always written poetry?

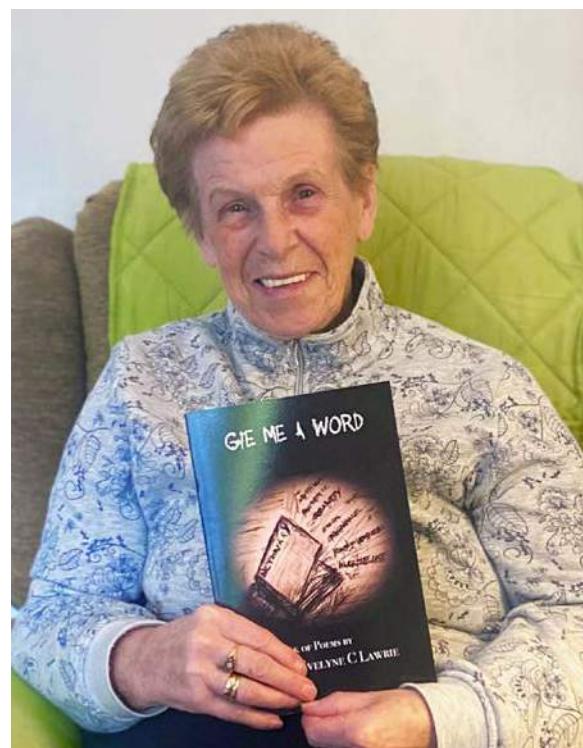
No, at first I wrote both prose and poetry. A few years ago I decided to concentrate on poetry, so I signed up for an online poetry course.

How did the title of the book emerge?

Every week, at the Leven Litts, a 'prompt' word was given. A piece of writing had to be produced for the next meeting. Hence the title: 'Gie me a Word.'

How do you feel having a book published in your more mature years?

Relief and it's something for the kids.



WHERE'S GOOD FOR FOOD?

WORDS & PHOTOS BY JENNY WATSON

GI ME A WORD

BOOK REVIEW
BY MARY IRVINE

This eclectic mix of poetry by Alexandria resident, Evelyn Lawrie, reflects the experience and observation of a lifetime. There is no single connecting theme, rather the author's thoughts and responses to the world at large.

Particularly poignant are the cathartic poems, 'Like a Thief in the Night' and 'If Only', poems which emerged from the experience of watching a husband slowly retreating into his own world of dementia, leaving behind a wife who no longer recognises the person he once was.

But the other side of the coin reveals the playful side of the author in poems such as 'Tick Tock' and 'The Common Cold'.

A love of nature shines through in 'Scoop for Spy Boulder' and 'Mother Nature', amongst others. Days of yore are not neglected either with 'Wash Day' evoking an age past but not yet forgotten. A particular favourite of mine is the villanelle 'Survivor', but a beautiful, well-crafted poem to which I keep returning is 'A Westward View at Sunrise'.

Gie Me A Word is available from www.neetahbooks.com.

Would you like to share your Reader Recommendations or write a review for Clydesider? If so we'd love to hear from you, please email theclydesider@gmail.com



One of my favourite local places for good food is the Pavilion Café in Levingrove Park, Dumbarton.

Enjoying wholesome, tasty treats in a vibrant setting helps me relax and be thankful for living in such a beautiful part of the world.

On my last visit I ordered a latte, ham & cheese toastie, and a slice of carrot cake.

- The coffee is their own blend, it is mellow enough for those new to the beverage but also bold enough for us aficionados.
- Cheese lover's dream is the best way I could describe the toastie - I did request the melty goodness be sandwiched between brown bread for the healthy balance of course!
- The dish of the day however was the doorstop-sized wedge of carrot cake delivered to my table.
- Light, spongey, fresh, and jam-packed full of those nutty spice flavours carrot cake is renowned for. Imagine my surprise when I found out it was also gluten-free.
- The menu is well balanced with options for various dietary requirements and staff are accommodating to requests.
- The Pavilion is more than just a café!
- Funded by Heritage Lottery Funding and managed by West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership and WDC's Greenspace, the café is used as a training facility for adults with learning disabilities, autism, and those in recovery from mental health issues and addictions.
- The aim is to help develop employability skills and gain work experience.
- Not only have they recently celebrated their third birthday but also their first successful client-to-employee transition in the café.



Colin has been with the service since 2016. He showed such great progress that when a role opened for a catering assistant, he felt confident enough to apply – and was successful.

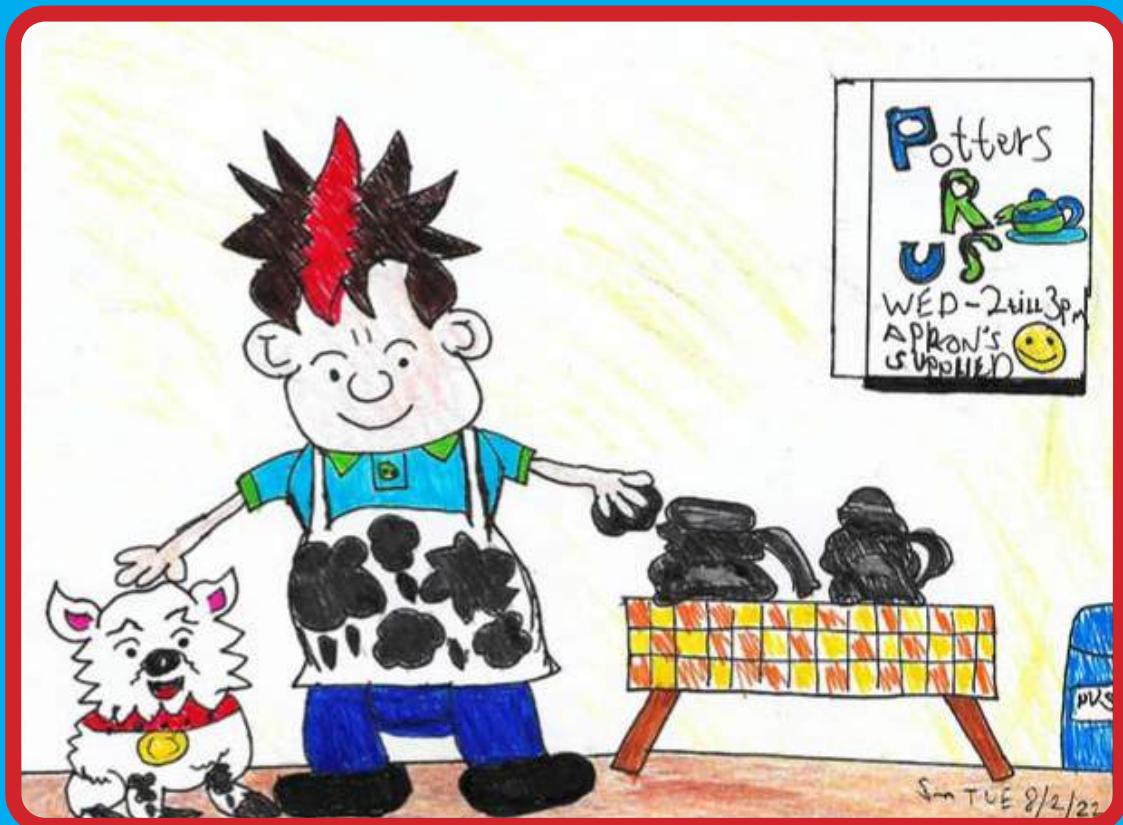
"It's been great learning. I'm looking forward to doing more as time goes on." Colin told me.

I personally am looking forward to trying more tasty treats from this little gem in the park.

Open 10-4 pm throughout the week.

CLYDE GOES POTTY

BY STEVEN HASTINGS



Clyde decided to try a pottery class at his local community centre. he's now gone potty for pottery but might need a bit more practice. The apron got splattered with clay and so did Clydes wee dog.

CLYDESIDER'S JUST FOR FUN QUIZ

Check out our new Just A Minute videos, posted on our social media platforms every Sunday.

They explore places of interest across West Dunbartonshire and you'll find some of the answers to our new Clydesider Just For Fun Quiz in the video shorts, the rest are in this magazine.*

- 1 When was the existing Balloch Castle built?**
- 2 What is the name of the Dumbarton-based social enterprise which funded young people to tap into their creative talents last year?**
- 3 Which famous battleship is engraved on the coat of arms above Clydebank Town Hall?**
- 4 What are names of the founders of Men Matter?**
- 5 Where is the Cochno Stone buried?**
- 6 Which famous Scottish king inspired our front cover Rentonian?**
- 7 How long is the former Torpedo Factory (now the Loch Lomond Factory outlets) in Alexandria?**
- 8 What is the name of the café in Levengrove Park?**

*Answers on opposite page

WHAT'S ON IN WD

VAN GASH ART CLASSES

Spring Break Kids Art School
Wk 1 April 4 - 8
Wk 2 April 11 - 15
£20 full single day
(Sibling discount £18pp)
www.facebook.com/artclassbyvangash

LITTLE LEARNERS EASTER FUN

Easter crafts, activities, messy play and an Easter treat for everyone.
Clydebank April 4 and
Bearsden April 6. Age 5 months to 7 years - £8
Book here, limited spaces available: <https://littlelearnersuk.com>

LOCH LOMOND SHORES RED SQUIRREL TRAIL

While the playpark is closed you can download their Red Squirrel Trail and spend family time in their promontory area having fun finding the trail signs in trees along our paths. **Download at <https://lochlomondshores.com/downloads/>**

COMMUNITY LINKS

Try your hand at a range of creative and community courses this Spring. Community Links and the Recycle Room are offering workshops from jewellery making to DIY, sewing to energy advice.

To find out more email Nichola@comlinks.org.uk or call 0141 9524382 or pop in for a chat at 63 Kilbowie Road, Clydebank G81 1BL.

FRIENDS OF LEVEN RIVER VALLEY

Join the group for a community litter pick at Overburn Avenue in Dumbarton on March 29 from 10.30 am – 12.30pm.
Meet at Dumbarton Golf Club entrance.

CLIFFTOP PROJECTS ART HUB

The Art Hub is a place on your local streets where you can pick up free art supplies and a challenge every week during term time. No need to sign up, just pop along and pick up your pack.

Wednesdays 3.30-4.30pm at The Phoenix in Castlehill

Thursdays 3-3.30pm at Christie Park in Alexandria and outside Aikenbar Primary School in Bellsmyre.

Creative Club For Adults

Enjoy an hour and a half of creative fun. Each week explore something different from clay to drawing to painting to macrame - all abilities welcome.

Fridays 11.30-1pm at The Phoenix in Castlehill

Youth Creative Nights

Young people aged 13-25 are invited to a monthly Friday night of creative fun with pizza and a soft drink included. **Email lesley@clifftopprojects.co.uk for dates.**

8. The Pavilion

7. 540ft

6. Robert the Bruce

5. Auchencrag Woods above Fairley

4. Fraser, Peter & Gregor

3. HMS Ramilles

2. Clifftop Projects

1. 1808

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CONTACT CLYDESIDER

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