



CLYDESIDER

OUR COMMUNITY'S POSITIVE PRESS
ISSUE 22 WINTER 2022

FREE



GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Inside: Reds Return... Festive Family Pullout... Warm Spaces WD

ISSUE 22 POETRY COMPETITION WINNER

A SLICE

Not yet 7 in the morning
and the queue outside Greggs,
the one next to George Square
numbers 13 at least.
The sun is hatching its yolky
Glow, and the air smells like last night.
And so the queue grows.
Through the steamed windows
the ladies from Greggs work away, pink as sausages,
oblivious to the noses pressed to the glass.
in their suits, and overalls, in their hi-viz bibs,
all crowding the door.
The dark flakes away. The sun warms and rises.
At 7 on the button
they open the doors and the queue
threads in, sniffing and blinking.
This ritual slice of morning, as reliable and necessary
as that still climbing sun.

BY ALAN GILLESPIE

WELCOME

With so much negative news bombarding our ears and eyes, we want Clydesider to continue to provide an oasis of hope and creativity.

So, in this issue you will find a festive pull-out zine, packed with fun activities for all the family and beautifully compiled and illustrated by the wonderful Susan Laws Artwork.

The magazine is, as always, packed with inspirational stories about individuals and organisations going the extra mile – quite literally in the case of Vicky Lenaghan who climbed 5,895 metres up Mount Kilimanjaro in memory of her daughter Regane.

However, we also want to offer news which is of service to our community.

This year we launched our first Clydesider campaign – Claim What's Yours.

We hope the information about benefits and support services has encouraged readers to investigate their entitlements and make a claim. Better in your pocket than sitting in a government bank account!

Also in this issue is a list of local community groups, charities, pubs, and churches opening their doors to create welcoming 'Warm Spaces' for people struggling with the ever-spiralling cost of living.

With energy companies making record profits, it is shocking this type of support is needed but as we went to press there were 18 community places on our list.

This is an amazing response and shows the strength of community spirit in West Dunbartonshire.

Wishing all our readers a peaceful and relaxing festive season.

Amanda Eleftheriades-Sherry
Clydesider Editor

ABOUT CLYDESIDER

Clydesider Creative Ltd is a not-for-profit social enterprise based in West Dunbartonshire. The Clydesider community magazine and website promote the positives our area has to offer in terms of people, place, scenery, and history and showcases the creative talents, ideas, and experiences of local people. We are also busy online and in 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, supporting subscribers 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.





The Robin In My Garden

Sitting alone in the garden a
tear in my eye
Thinking of you and how fifty
years have went by
Memories to cherish of my
best friend,
my husband, father & grandad
our family now incomplete

The foliage in the autumn is
turning golds and brown
you told me you would visit
and a Robin came to say 'hi'
He appeared one morning
and has never left my side,
Singing in the evening as the
sun begins to set
Wake up in the morning and
he's sitting on our gate

When I feel lonely he's sure to
make me smile
He comes to take the crumbs
from out of my hand
With his red breast and beady
eye,
he chirps away to tell me
everything will be fine
I will never leave you or will
ever fly away
Don't be sad and lonely I'm
here in the garden
Loving and protecting you,
until we meet again.

By James C Duncan

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SPONSORED EDITORIAL

FESTIVE FUN AT OKFP

From Santa Walks to Christmas Movie Nights to a Xmas Grotto, it's all happening at OKFP Community Hub this month.

With the cost of living crisis affecting more and more households we're pushing out all the Christmas bells and whistles to bring some festive cheer to the area.

Throughout December the Hub will be transformed into Santa's Grotto and the big man himself will be here Monday to Friday from 3pm – 6pm.

Under-10s can come along, have a chat and get their photo taken with Santa. This is a free event but slots need to be booked via Eventbrite.

Then on Saturday December 17 we're heading to Dalmuir for our Family Santa Walk.

Grab your Santa hat and meet us for a 12 noon start as we walk from Dalmuir Square along the Saltings to the Hub for a Xmas Market. This is a free event but please reserve your spot on Eventbrite.

The Christmas countdown continues with our 'Love Actually' Christmas Movie Night from 7pm on December 23. BYOB and tuck into our tasty Christmas buffet for just £5pp.

And finally on Christmas Eve, Santa and his little helpers will be out and about delivering gifts to under 10s nominated for a Christmas visit.

If you would like Santa to surprise your little one on Christmas Eve please get in touch.

We're looking for volunteer drivers to help Santa and the elves, so please contact us if you can spare a couple of hours on Christmas Eve.



The Chatty Café and Community Pantry will be open as normal from 12noon - 4pm up to December 23. We'll be serving up some festive delights so pop in for a bit of heat, a blether and mince pie.

From December 23 – January 3 our staff and volunteers are taking a well-deserved break, but emergency food parcels will be available 12 – 1pm every week day apart from Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

The past year has seen us supporting more people than at the height of the pandemic. In January we helped 61 households, by September we were providing emergency food parcels to over 500 households every month!

We expect this demand to continue to increase.

You can help our community with donations of food, toiletries, and cleaning items. Or why not organise a festive fundraiser for OKFP?

Find out how you can make a difference at www.okfp.org.uk or drop donations into the Hub at Unit 5 Station Road Industrial Estate, Old Kilpatrick G60 5LP or call 01389 717792.

COMMUNITY NEWS ROUNDUP

CAMPAIGN GROUP CELEBRATIONS



A local charity set up to fight for the rights of asbestos sufferers recently celebrated their 30th anniversary.

Clydebank Asbestos Group (CAG) was established in 1992 by local volunteers and has worked tirelessly to seek justice for the victims of asbestos-related illnesses and their families.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, CAG commissioned an animated video which tells the story of Clydebank Asbestos Group from its origins to the present day, this can be viewed on their Facebook page.

Their newly published book 'Asbestos and Clydebank' which shares first-hand accounts of the impact asbestos had on people working in the Clyde shipyards and industries, was also launched at the 30th anniversary event.

Copies of the book are available from their office at 24 Kilbowie Road, Clydebank or call 0141 951 1008 or email enquiries@clydebankasbestos.org

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

A talking newspaper service needs more volunteers to help keep visually impaired people up to date with what is happening in the community.

Bankie Talks, a volunteer-run group, has been sharing audio news for 30 years. They are looking for volunteers to help with recordings.

Volunteers just need to offer 3 – 4 hours per week or fortnight.

To get involved call 0141 9412414 (office is open Friday) or email bankietalk@btconnect.com.

COMMUNITY PLANS ACTION

Groups and residents in Dumbarton West are working together to develop a Community Action Plan for the area.

Dumbarton West Community Action Group hosted an evening of reflection and discussion to help generate ideas about what the area around Castlehill, Brucehill and Westcliff might look like in 20 years time.

They focused on the area's environment, economy, education, heritage and also discussed how to generate a sense of hope in the community.

WINTER WARMER DAYS

Hairdressing students at West College Scotland are offering free shampoo, cut and style for local community groups.

Their Winter Warmer Days are available every Tuesday and Wednesday up to December 14.

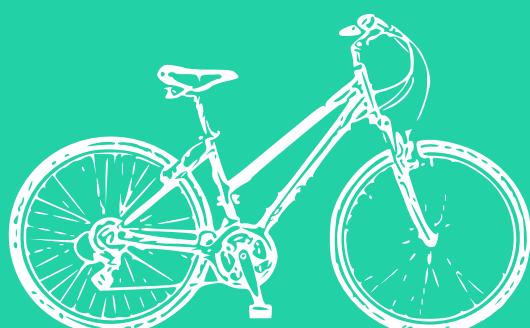
To find out more and to book call 0141 9517651 or email Ann.dunlop@wcs.ac.uk or Stephanie.McKinlay@wcs.ac.uk

FREE BIKE REPAIR

A local bike shop is offering free bike repair.

Magic Cycles in Arch 4 at Bowling Harbour is part of the Scotland Cycle Repair Scheme. This provides up to £50 free bike repair and maintenance per person.

All cycles are welcome. Limited availability, call 01389 298100 to book your slot.



RAMBLING ANNIVERSARY

The Bay Inn Ramblers are celebrating 20 years of rambling this year.

The group welcomes people from Bowling and the surrounding areas to join their walks.

Over the years as well as local walks they have rambled on Scottish islands such as Tiree, Benbecula, Bute and Barra.

They plan to return to the islands next year for a four island ramble over three days.

Their regular rambles are usually short two mile walks suitable for all abilities and designed to encourage people to come along and give it try.

They also put on social events such as the Necropolis tour, Glasgow Central tour, Glasgow Mural Trail, Play, Pie and a Pint days and Xmas Quiz teams at the Bay Inn Pub in Bowling.

Visit the Bay Inn Ramblers Facebook page for details of future walks and activities.



Clydebank Co-operative Grocery Stores



Sylvania Way Non Food / Express Grocery

2 Sylvania Way South
Clydebank, G81 1EA
0141 952 2000

Kilbowie Road Grocery

393 Kilbowie Road
Clydebank, G81 2TX
0141 435 7700

Faifley Road Grocery

258 Faifley Road
Clydebank, G81 5EH
0141 435 7711

GWR Grocery

2141 - 2143 Gt Western Road
Glasgow, G13 2XX
0141 435 7708

Dalmuir Grocery

8 Dunn Street
Clydebank, G81 4BQ
0141 435 7705

Hardgate Grocery

580 Kilbowie Road
Clydebank, G81 6QU
0141 435 7727

Parkhall Grocery

138 Duntocher Road
Clydebank, G81 3NQ
0141 435 7706





A Mother's Journey

Climbing the highest mountain in Africa helped a grieving Clydebank mother put her life back together following the sudden loss of her daughter.

And in the process of scaling the 5,895 metres (19,341 ft) dormant volcano, she raised £6,000 for a Scottish charity supporting bereaved parents.

Vicki Lenaghan struggled to cope with her grief after her 17-year-old daughter Regane MacColl died after a night out with friends in the Arches nightclub in Glasgow in 2014.

Vicki said: "A few months after Regane died I was really struggling.

"I went back and forth to the doctor but they were just giving me tablets to sleep at night and tablets to function during the day.

"I remember thinking I couldn't get through this. I was in such a dark place."

A relative told her about the Brightest Star Charity, which helps and supports parents of bereaved children.

This began her own journey of coming to terms with life without her daughter.

"I got in touch with the charity and just went straight to a meeting. When I walked in the first time the bereaved parents in that room just understood what I was going through, no-one else really did.

"I did group meetings and intensive group therapy. Then I had a lot of intensive counselling."

The Brightest Star charity gave Vicki and her two boys much needed help and support getting them through their darkest days.

"Arlene, the founder of Brightest Star, puts memory boxes in all the different hospitals so parents can take a handprint or a lock of their child's hair, wee things like that make a big difference," Vicki added.

"It was horrible when Regane died, I walked out of that hospital without a thing."

As she started to recover from her loss she wanted to do something to help other families just starting to come to terms with the death of a child.



And it was memories of Regane's adventures which gave her inspiration.

Regane was a bright caring pupil who attended St Peter the Apostle High School in Clydebank. In 2013 she travelled to Tanzania with the school to volunteer with a local charity.

Vicki said: "She absolutely loved it. They were staying in the foothills of Kilimanjaro and she was planning on going back the following year. On her return she said to me "*mum I'm going to climb Kilimanjaro*", we just kind of laughed about it at the time.

Although Regane never got the opportunity to take that return trip, the conversation planted the seed for Vicki to make the journey instead.

She said: "After a few years of Regane passing, and the stronger I got I just felt this urge to go to the last place she visited.

"I wanted to climb it for her, as she never got to do it. I also wanted to challenge myself and give myself something to focus on.

"I have been very like that throughout my grieving process I've always needed a goal, something to work towards, otherwise I just go down mentally."

The whole trip took a year of planning. Her mum was most worried about her going on her own. However, when she received that phone call from Vicki to let her know she had reached the summit, there was a real sense of relief.



Vicki said: "After I summited and returned further down to a lower camp I managed to get a signal on my phone and got through to my mum and I told her, I did it.

"She was crying and I was crying. I just couldn't believe it when I reached the top. I never thought I was going to do it."

Her family is a tremendous support and even organised a surprise welcome home party. It was an emotional evening with Regane at the heart of everyone's conversations.

Vicki said: "It was a great night. I couldn't have done it without them. I want to make sure that she is still getting spoken about. I still feel her love, it has been really good for me.

"I just don't want people to forget her. As time goes on you feel she's kind of drifting away, doing this brought her closer to me again."

Vicki intends to take a few months out to spend time with her family and let the realisation of what she did sink in. When she is ready she intends to do more fundraising events in aid of the Brightest Star Charity and keep her daughter's memory alive.

Find out more about the Brightest Star charity at www.brighteststar.org.uk

Value in Volunteering



Maid of Memories

Words & Photos by Jenny Watson

Built not once, but twice before her launch in 1953, the Maid of the Loch was the last paddle steamer made in the UK.

Carrying up to 1,000 passengers per sail, she was the largest steamer to voyage the waters of Loch Lomond and spent 28 glorious years being a vessel of memories until decommissioned in 1981.

Since then, the Maid's story has been one of endurance and determination.

The volunteer-led Loch Lomond Steamship Company rescued her in 1996 and has been working to bring the steamer back to sailing standards ever since.

Anne Urquhart, volunteer Director, explained: "The ship is on the slipway and is likely to be there for at least another year while we repair all the steel which degraded over the past 70 years.

"The carriage she sits on was built during Covid by three of our guys: Jim Logan, George Gerc and Ross Bremner.

"They formed a bubble and worked away. It was put together within about five months

which meant we were able to bring the ship out of the water successfully and repairs could continue safely."

George said: "We formed a bubble of three and progressed the ship from there.

"It wasn't easy. It was hard work. All the parts were made in Glasgow, they were delivered to us, and we built it on the slip.



"There were 90 tonnes of steel we had to manhandle.

"If there were more people helping, it would've been quicker but that wasn't possible at the time and we didn't want progress to stop completely.

"I love volunteering here. It has been a fantastic experience and I would recommend it to anyone that wants to get involved."

'It is often said the value of volunteers is priceless and in the Maid's situation she wouldn't be where she is now without their dedication and motivation.

It is testament to their love and belief that she should and will sail again.

"We have 40 active volunteers helping with practical work and 12 volunteer guides in public-facing roles," Anne said.

The skills and talents the volunteers provide range from I.T expertise to divers.

Everyone pitches in where and when they can; from painting, to greeting visitors, to keeping social media updated.

Charles, their longest-serving volunteer has been part of the team for 22 years. "I really enjoy being here. I come along about five days a week. When I first started we would be doing tasks to keep us going and get her ready. Now we are in the crucial stage.

"There's something about the Maid that grabs you and keeps you going. I am nearly 80 and I'm hoping I live to see her sail again."

And the team would love more volunteers join them.

Charli Summers, the only paid member of staff, said: "We'd like to get more volunteers and get younger people involved as well.



"The volunteers are so brilliant. It's obviously a community thing, but it's not just about restoring the ship, it's also about social elements.

"I like to take them on day trips and do things together. We go to industrial and shipbuilding places of interest."

Charli joined the team as Activities Coordinator to oversee an events programme to work alongside the commercial operations onboard.

She said: "They wanted a presence at the weekends to ensure there was still a bit of commercial stuff going on, but mainly to develop a programme for visitors to still feel engaged.

"We've been running the one-hour hard hat tours at the weekend, the winch house is open for visitors.

"We have the museum in our converted shipping container. Also this year we've had Lachie Stewart's exhibition which has been popular.

"I've also been working with Balloch Primary P6 pupils to prepare a new social history display in the forward saloon. We're hoping it will be on display next year.

"We have lots of plans, all of which are dependent on funding and the work going on in the ship."

On my visit I learned a lot about the mechanics and parts being repaired, replaced and renovated.

The work being carried out is intricate and immense.

I was in awe of this beautiful piece of history but my favourite part of the day was talking to the dedicated community of volunteers and learning about their role in bringing the Maid back to life.

To keep updated on what is happening at the Maid of the Loch during the winter months, visit: www.maidoftheloch.org. To volunteer email: mail@maidoftheloch.org or phone 01389 711865 or 07484 918659.

RELIABLE RESOURCES

Local helpline numbers and information sources

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

West Dunbartonshire Community Foodshare
01389 764135 - Freephone 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

Dumbarton Joint Hospital - 01389 812018

**Glasgow & Clyde Rape Crisis -
Support line** - 08088 000014

Mobile - 07743807844

WD Housing & Homeless -
01389 738282

or Freephone 0800 197 1004 (option 5)
Overdose Response Team - Dumbarton
Joint Hospital 7 days a week 10am - 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



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HOME ENERGY SCOTLAND IS HERE TO HELP



We're Home Energy Scotland, the Scottish Government's free energy advice service.

The cost of living crisis and the increase in energy prices are worrying for us all. We can help with free, impartial advice on saving energy, keeping warm at home, renewable energy, cutting water waste and more.

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- We can check your eligibility for special discounts from energy suppliers
- We can also help you get a benefits and tax credit check so you're not missing out on additional income

GET IN TOUCH

 adviceteam@sc.homeenergyscotland.org

 **Freephone 0808 808 2282**

Phone lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am – 8pm & Saturday 9am – 5pm.
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Competition closes **Sunday 26 March 2023**



CLAIM WHAT'S YOURS - CLYDESIDER CAMPAIGN

PENSIONER'S RIGHTS

By Amanda Eleftheriades

"It's very difficult to ask for help."

Sarah,* a retired teacher in her late seventies, is one of millions of pensioners who have never investigated the social security support available.

She explained: "I was brought up to believe if you can't afford something, you just go without. It would never cross my mind to claim for it.

"I remember my grandmother saying she didn't want to go '*on the parish*' because of the shame of it.

"That was in the days before there was a Welfare State and I think a lot of people my age are of a similar mindset."

Although 1.4 million pensioners do receive pension credits, DWP statistics show Sarah is not alone in being reluctant to apply for thousands of pounds they are legally entitled to.

An estimated 1 million pensioner households could be £65 a week better off if they received the pension credits they are due.

Like Sarah many older people don't like to ask for help. Many more also think they won't qualify if they have savings or own their home.

Sarah added: "I'm fortunate I know my way around a computer but there are a lot of people my age who don't know anything about pension credits and wouldn't have a clue how to apply, even if they did."

Pension credits are known as 'passport benefits'.

This means if you are eligible it opens the door to a wide range of additional support, including help with rent, Council Tax,

Winter Heating payment and a free TV license for those over 75.

And those making a successful claim before December 19 this year will also receive the second cost of living payment of £324.

While millions of pounds of taxpayers' money is going unclaimed, many older people are struggling with rising energy costs and food bills.

To encourage more people to claim pension credits the DWP has set up a pension credit claim line. The freephone number is 0800 991234.

There is also an online pension credit calculator where you can find out if your claim is likely to be successful and how much you could be entitled to.

Find out more and Claim What's Yours by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit-calculator>

Check out the local support services able to help you claim social security benefits on page 16.

*Name changed at the request of the interviewee

Are You Pension Wise?

Anyone 50+ with a Defined Contribution Pension can book an appointment with a Pension Wise specialist.

In Scotland this is provided via local Citizens Advice Bureaux.

The Pension Wise guidance specialists are impartial – they won't recommend any products or companies or tell you how to invest your money.

For more information or to book an appointment visit the Pension Wise website

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/pensions-and-retirement/pension-wise/book-a-free-pension-wise-appointment> or phone Pension Wise on 0800 138 3944.

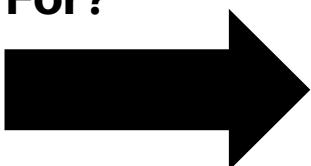
BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT

Pension Credit

By Amanda Eleftheriades



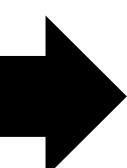
Who Is It For?



For people over state pension age who are on a low income. Take up is extremely low with an estimated 123,000 households in Scotland not claiming their entitlement.

The aim is to top up your weekly income to a weekly guaranteed minimum. It is separate from your State Pension and you may be entitled to it even if you have savings, own your home or have additional income. When you apply for Pension Credit your income will be calculated and if you have a partner their income will be included.

How Much Is It?



There are two parts to Pension Credit – Guaranteed Credit & Savings Credit

Guaranteed Credit – tops up weekly income to £182.60 for single people or £278.70 for a couple. If you have a severe disability or caring responsibilities this could be higher.

Savings Credit - If you reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016 you could be entitled to a Savings Credit if your income is higher. A single person could be entitled to £14.48 or £16.20 if you're a couple.

Income includes – State Pension, other pensions, earnings from employment/self-employment and some social security benefits eg Carer's Allowance.

Not included as income – Not all benefits (Adult Disability Allowance; Attendance Allowance; Christmas Bonus; Personal Independence Payment; social fund payments such as Winter Fuel Allowance; Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction); £10,000 or less of savings.

Anything else I should know?



Anything else I should know?

If you're entitled to a personal or workplace pension or have deferred your State Pension this will be counted as income.

If you have more than £10,000 savings, every £500 above £10,000 counts as £1 of income a week.

Receiving Pension Credit also entitles you to additional financial support to help with housing, energy and health.



How Do I Claim?



How do I make a claim?

You can start your application up to four months before reaching State Pension age or any time after but your application will only be backdated by three months.

You will need the following information:

- National Insurance number
- Details of your income, savings & investments and that of your partner
- Your housing costs
- Your bank details

To apply:

- Call 0800 991234
- Online - <https://apply-for-pension-credit.service.gov.uk/start>
- Applications can also be made by post by calling the claim line number to request a form

For support with your application contact WD Citizens Advice Bureau on 0800 484 0136

SUPPORT HUB SERVICES

By John Donnelly

The Big Disability Hub in Dalmuir has a range of external service providers offering support with benefit applications.

Cunningham Solicitors

A small firm of Glasgow-based solicitors their work mainly involves legal advice and representation in relation to disability benefit applications, appeals, power of attorney and guardianship applications. They provide advice regarding self-directed support packages.

Many disabled people are unaware they can get legal advice and support from a solicitor which will help maximise their benefits.

Most clients accessing support from Cunningham Solicitors will qualify for legal aid. Appointments available in the Big Disability Hub every Monday, call to book.

Voice-ability – Advocacy Service

If you are disabled and want support to access benefits from Social Security Scotland, Voice-ability can make sure you're heard. Voice-ability advocacy provides free support to access benefits available from Social Security Scotland and is entirely independent from Social Security Scotland. Telephone or pop into the Big Disability Hub to book an appointment, advisors available Mon & Wed.

Your advocate will:

- listen to you
- plan with you what you want to do
- represent you if you are not able to represent yourself
- be fully involved in decisions about your benefits
- complete the process from the point of application, including reviews and any appeals you want to make

Your advocate will not:

- offer counselling or be your friend
- offer legal advice
- make decisions for you
- provide advice or tell you what to do
- make any decisions about what benefits you get

Citizens Advice Bureau

Appointments with a WDCAB advisor in the Big Disability Hub available Thurs 10am - 4pm. Call 0141 237 4560 to make an appointment with any of the Hub advisors.

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

WORKING4U MONEY - West Dunbartonshire Council's money advice service providing support with benefits, debt and money issues. Call 01389 776929 or email wrmas@westdunbarton.gov.uk

ENTITLEDTO - free online benefits calculator blog: <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/> & https://www.entitledto.co.uk/help/coronavirus_help (benefits and coronavirus)

MONEY & DEBT ADVICE

ADVICE DIRECT SCOTLAND - provide free, independent advice via phone, SMS, web chat, email, online and through social media www.advisedirect.scot

CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY - provide free debt help. Locally work in partnership with West Dunbartonshire Debt Centre to offer a home visiting service for people experiencing unmanageable debt.

The service is free and available to people of any faith or none. Call their Helpline on 0800 328 000 (Mon-Thu 9.30am-5pm, Fri 9.30am-3.30pm) or visit www.capuk.org

NATIONAL DEBT LINE - charity giving free and independent debt advice over the phone and online. Call free on 0808 808 4000, Monday to Friday 9am - 8pm and Saturday 9.30 am - 1pm or to Webchat with an advisor visit www.nationaldebtline.org

STEPCHANGE - a debt charity providing free, confidential and expert debt advice and money guidance. They also campaign to reduce the risk of problem debt. To find out more visit www.stepchange.org



**Your MP, working for
West Dunbartonshire**

Here to help...

Across Clydebank, Dumbarton and the Vale, I have provided advice & support to more than 1,000 residents in the past year.

If you'd like an appointment at my next in-person or weekly virtual advice surgery, please get in touch. I can be contacted by email to martin.docherty.mp@parliament.uk, or call my local constituency office on 0141 952 2988.

Thanks, Martin



**Martin Docherty-Hughes
MP for West Dunbartonshire**

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**WEST COLLEGE
SCOTLAND**



WARM SPACES WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

Many people are struggling this winter due to rocketing energy prices and food bills. Fortunately there are many fantastic organisations and individuals across WD who are helping to fill these gaps. We've put together a list of 'Warm Spaces' where you can go for a hot cuppa, biscuit and a blether and it won't cost you a penny.

Clydebank

- St Andrew's Church, Kilbowie Road - Wed 10am - 2pm. Free food/hot drinks
- Awestruck Art Gallery, Clydebank Shopping Centre. Thurs 12 - 2pm soup, sandwiches and a Reiki session
- The Cave Barbers, Dumbarton Road free hair cuts every Mon & Tues between 9am - 6pm

Whitecrook

- Centre 81, Whitecrook - Fridays 12 - 3pm till Dec 16 - tea, coffee, soup and warm space

Dalmuir

- Dalmuir Barclay Church - every Wed & Fri 11am - 2pm Drop-in cafe and community pantry
- The Big Disability Group Hub - Mon - Fri any time, pop along for a chat, free tea/coffee/warm place

Old Kilpatrick

- OKFP Chatty Cafe will be serving food 12 - 4pm Mon - Fri until Dec 23
- OKFP Community Food Pantry is open for emergency food Mon to Fri up to Dec 23 then every week day 12 - 1pm

Dumbarton

- The Big Scran at Ben View Resource Centre is a free hot meal open to anyone in the community, every Thurs 5pm - 7pm
- Warm & Toastie sessions - breakfast, hot drink, wifi, toys for toddlers Mondays 9.15am - 11.15am, Ben View Resource Centre
- Food for Thought - free lunch in St Augustine's Church Hall Wed 11am - 2pm
- Soup Club, St Augustine's Church Hall - Fridays 11am - 2pm
- St Patrick's Church Hall, warm hub every Mon/Tue/Wed 11am - 4pm
- Phoenix Community Cafe - Tues - Fri free lunches 12 - 2pm
- Soup Spot, Lennox Evangelical Church 12 - 1.30pm every Tuesday

Alexandria

- Dalmonach Community Centre - every Wed 12-4pm a cuppa, biscuit and heat
- Renton Football Club - Every Thursday Tontine Pavilion 12 - 4pm tea/coffee wifi & chat

Balloch

- St Kessog's Church Hall - Mon - Wed 12 - 5pm. Refreshments available. All welcome
- Doghouse Pub - free tea, coffee and biscuits for locals
- Glenroy Pub - soup and free hot drinks for local residents

A Visit To The Pantry

I had to use the foodbank
Just the other day
As an unexpected cost came
Just before payday

Yes I am a worker
But it was time to ask for help
It was either that or I allowed it
To affect my mental health

I share to raise awareness
Not for pity or attention
That it's ok to reach out
And break down the fences

No questions asked
No judgement at all
Just a friendly smile
That helps you stand tall

Things are getting tougher
Don't struggle alone
These places are here to help
So why not pop along

Greeted with acceptance
Compassion and love
A safe place to come to
Where you will never be judged

Michaela Burns
04/11/2022

SPONSORED EDITORIAL

ADVICE IN YOUR COMMUNITY



In the period from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, WDCAB helped 4,278 clients with 10,351 enquiries. Advice and assistance was given on 27,260 different issues.

How so? If a client with a young family approaches the CAB after losing their job, then we could be dealing with a number of benefits issues (e.g Universal Credit from DWP, Social Security Scotland payments), employment issues (unfair dismissal, redundancy, money owed) and possibly debt issues (including utilities, housing costs, credit cards, loans).

So a single telephone call can sometimes lead to a case running for months.

Despite this high volume of enquiries, we still have people asking, “*when will the CAB be open again?*” But we never closed.

In March 2020 we were forced to change the way we deliver the service. We switched to digital and telephone services. Now more than 90% of our enquiries are either via telephone or online.

Despite this success with our telephone and digital services, we remained concerned about the challenges faced by those people who need face-to-face advice.

We made a fundamental change this summer when we embarked upon our Advice in the Community initiative which involves working with local community groups such as the Big Disability Group, Y-sort-it, John Connolly Centre, the Carers Centre, Centre 81.

We now have seven confirmed outreach points across West Dunbartonshire (with others pending).

This is the right time to move away from town centre offices and to take our services out into the community for there are still fears around Covid and its mutations and the cost of travel can be prohibitive.

In the coming months WDCAB will do all that we can to help people cope with the cost of living crisis through direct access to quality advice and information.

We want to ensure everyone receives the financial support they are entitled to – their statutory rights - during this crisis.

Our Safe and Warm Advisers will help with advice and assistance on rising fuel costs and energy efficiency.

We will do all that we can to help people to keep their own homes warm and to put money in peoples' pockets so they are able to make choices as to where they spend that money.

For more information: 0800 484 0136 or www.wdcab.co.uk

REDS RETURN



Words and photos by James C Duncan

In Scotland one of our most iconic mammals has returned to its former site in Balloch Castle Country Park after an absence of more than 50 years!

Red Squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*) were once a common sight in the park. After the great storm hurricane of 1968 that swept the area, the introduced non-native North American Grey squirrels started to take over and pushed the Reds out as they were larger and immune to a virus they carried, now known as squirrelpox.

As a naturalist my last encounter in Balloch Park with the Red squirrels was in the late 1960s early 1970s when they reminded me of our early childhood days in school with the 'Tufty Club'.

Set up by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), the Tufty Club saw Tufty the red squirrel character communicate simple safety messages to children across the UK.

It's fantastic to see our native reds back in our local park. They are a joy to watch and photograph, a red squirrel is a captivating sight, though you do need a lot of patience and a lot of luck.

Grey squirrels can still be found in the park.

Sightings of both reds and greys can be reported to the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

Red squirrels make a rough nest called a 'drey' out of twigs, leaves and strips of bark high up in the tree canopy.

Males can be seen chasing females through the trees, leaping across branches and spiralling up and down tree trunks.

Locals and visitors to the area often see multiple individuals at one time, including young - called kittens - as they forage for acorns on the ground.

With their distinctive russet fur, tufted ears, and twitching tail, (though during moulting, particularly at the end of the summer, they may lose the ear tufts, they do grow back though) they are comical-looking characters.

Autumn is a great time to watch them gather food to cache for the long winter months.

Red squirrels do not hibernate, but they do keep stores of food to see them through difficult times when fresh food is not available.



If you're out and about in the park please help by sending any sightings of Red or Grey online to the Scottish Wildlife Trust here; <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/>

Jackie Baillie

MSP for Dumbarton constituency

Constituent Advice Surgeries:

Third Friday of every month:

Alexandria Library, Gilmour Street, Alexandria

2.45pm-3.45pm

Helensburgh Parish Church, Colquhoun St, Helensburgh

4.45pm-5.45pm

Dumbarton Constituency Office, Church Street, Dumbarton

6.30pm-7.30pm

Constituents can also contact me at any time by email at jackie.baillie.msp@parliament.scot or call 01389 734214.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Contact Jackie

Office: 5 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.

A CHRISTMAS STORY

BY MARY IRVINE

I was living on the Greek island of Spetses, my first Christmas alone, following the death of my partner. Many islanders had invited me to join their celebrations but respected my refusals.

My closest neighbours were a family of five. Swiss born Esther, Greek husband, Christos and three daughters, Irene, Sylvia and Constantina.

They were to go to their house in Epidavros on Christmas Eve but a storm had blown up and the port was closed. They set about preparing their festive meal, according to Esther's custom, on Xmas Eve.

They invited me to join them. I was more than willing. The three girls were all my students and Esther was fast becoming a close friend.

Various salads and vegetables accompanied lamb chops cooked over an open fire. Homemade sweets and biscuits followed. Then came the present exchange.

Each of the girls received her chosen gift. Irene a wristwatch, Sylvia the latest Harry Potter, Constantina a novelty bedroom wall clock.

The children's gifts to us were all handmade. Dad's was a pipe stand made from stiff card, painted to resemble wood, Mum's a round mirror rescued from the tip, cleaned and resplendent in a colourful frame of homemade paper flowers.

Mine? A picture frame of corrugated paper with decorative surround of broken mosaics in pinks and mauves. From its centre three young faces smiled out at me. The actual frame has not survived my travels. The picture and contact with the three girls has. And I still remember a gift made and given with love.

FESTIVE FUN PULLOUT INSTRUCTIONS

So if you've had a quick flick through the magazine and come across the upside down content on the next four pages you may well think some of the Clydesider team had started sampling the Christmas eggnog a little early!

Rest assured we are waiting until we hang up the stockings - wouldn't want to be getting on the wrong side of Santa now - the pages are the right way up.

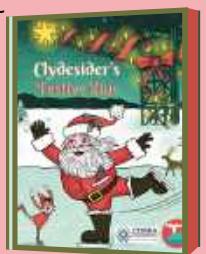
You see, we've asked our very talented creative friend Susan Laws Artwork to design us a festive zine pullout.

We hope you love her beautiful illustrations as much as we do. Those dark chocolate swirls had me searching my cupboards for something sweet and her little sock snowman looks so cheery, I might have a go at making one myself.

I am probably the least spatially aware person on the team so I hope this step-by-step guide makes sense, I have to admit it took me awhile to work out where the folds need to be but when I got it I was surprised at how simple it is.

1. Gently pull the double centre pages out of the magazine.
2. Put the pullout on a flat surface with the colour-in letter to Santa open and facing you.
3. Fold the pages horizontally from top to bottom. You should then have the Sock Snowman on your left and the Peppermint Creams on your right.
4. Fold that in half along the natural crease in the page.
5. One last fold in half again so you end up with this as your front cover, then you're good to go. Enjoy!

Amanda
Editor



Sock Snowman

Here's how to turn your unwanted old socks into a fun, festive cheer with our sock snowman craft idea!

- Large white sock
- Patterned or colour sock
- Stuffing material
- Rubber bands or string
- Scissors, needle & thread
- Felt tip/marker pens
- Ribbon or material for scarf
- Large white sock
- Patterned or colour sock
- Stuffing material
- Rubber bands or string
- Scissors, needle & thread
- Felt tip/marker pens
- Ribbon or material for scarf

You Will Need:

1. Cut the white sock just under the heel and turn inside out (you don't need the top half).
2. Fill the sock with your choice of stuffing - rice helps it stand up but you might not want to use this if there are small children or animals in the house.
3. Use a rubber band to close the top of the sock and secure with another band or some string.
4. Take another elastic band and pull it further down the sock to divide it in two and make a head and body.

You can even use some blusher or a pink marker to give him rosy cheeks.

5. Take your coloured sock and cut it across at the toe. This makes a perfect hat for your snowman. Sew a couple of stitches round the base of the hat to hold in place.
6. Cut another section of the colour sock to make a matching sweater and sew a couple of stitches along top and bottom to hold in place.
7. Now have some fun making your snowman's face.
8. And for a final touch add some ribbon or use another piece of material to make him a scarf - you could even knit him one!



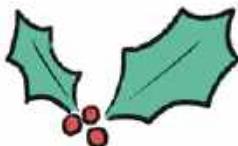
Dear Santa,



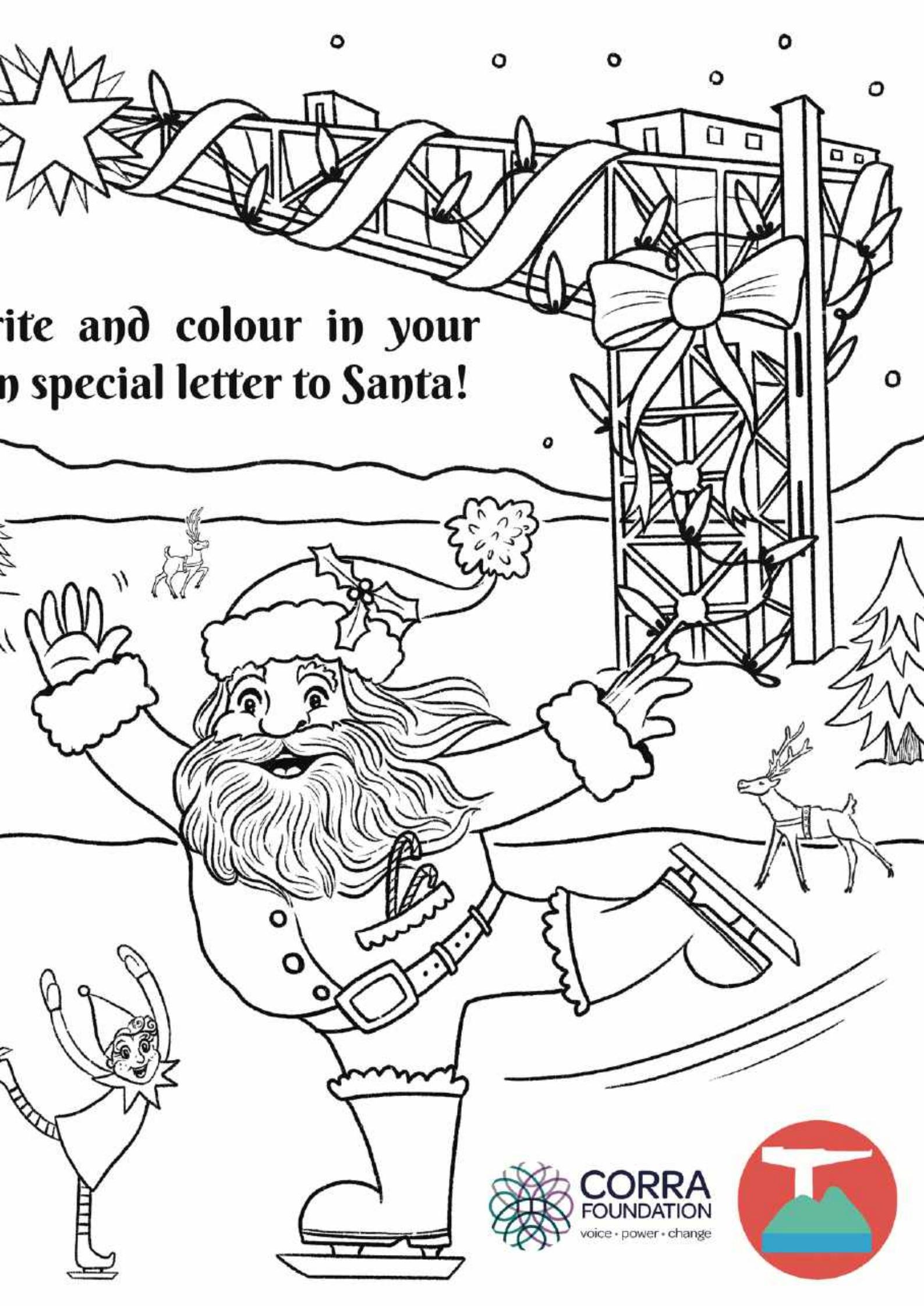
Love from,



xxxxxx



W
ow



Write and colour in your
own special letter to Santa!



4. Once melted, leave the chocolate to cool for 5-10 mins baking parchment to set for 3-4 hours or overnight. Then carefully dip the peppermint creams in the melted chocolate until they are half coated. Lay them back on the baking parchment to set.

3. Place baking parchment on a large board or tray and space out the discs. Meanwhile, tip the chocolate into a microwaveable bowl and heat in 30 second intervals, stirring after each blast. You can also melt the chocolate by bowing a saucer of water and putting a bowl over the top, break up the chocolate and stir gently over the heat until melted.

2. Divide the mixture into 20 small balls, then flatten them gently with your fingers tips into discs.

1. Sieve the icing sugar into a large bowl. Add a little egg white and a few drops of peppermint essence, mix really well. The mixture should come together as a soft dough, so keep adding a little egg white until this starts to happen (you might not need all of it). Taste the mixture and add more peppermint essence if desired.

Dark chocolate (optional)
Few drops of peppermint essence
250g icing sugar
1 egg white

Ingredients

Peppermint Recipe

Bird Feeders

The winter can be a hard time for our feathered friends. Here's a DIY bird feeder you could make to support your local wildlife!

You will need:

- Tub for mixing
- String
- Block of lard or suet
- Wild bird seeds
- Mix of: Unsalted peanuts, sultanas, mealworms & cheese
- Pine cones or small container (eg. yogurt pot)

1. Tie string on your pine cones or put a small hole in your yoghurt pot, feed your string through and make a knot at the end.

2. Leave the lard out of the fridge so it's soft but not melted then chop it into small pieces and put in the tub with the bird seed.

3. Crush up your peanuts and mealworm, chop your sultanas and add to the mix.

4. Mix everything together, squidge your ingredients into the lard until they're all well mixed in.

5. If using pine cones, push the mix around the cone until it is covered. For pots just push the mix inside.

6. Leave in the fridge to harden then hang up for your birds to enjoy!

Information and Sources

This festive family fun zine is funded by the Corra Foundation and designed and illustrated by Susan Laws Artwork for Clydesider Magazine.

We would love to see your festive creations, please tag our social media:

Twitter @ClydesiderMag
Facebook @Clydesidermagazine
Instagram @ClydesiderMag

Bird feed balls – RSPB
Sock Snowman – Make Life Lovely
Peppermint Creams – BBC Good Food guide

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Photo Competition Autumn

Thank you to everyone who entered the competition. Keep an eye on our social media for a slideshow of all entries.

Winning Entry
by Zoe Weir

FOLLOW CLYDESIDER



Runner up
by Ian Barr





**Runner up by
Jim Duncan**



**By Michael
Wilson**



**By Robert
H. King**

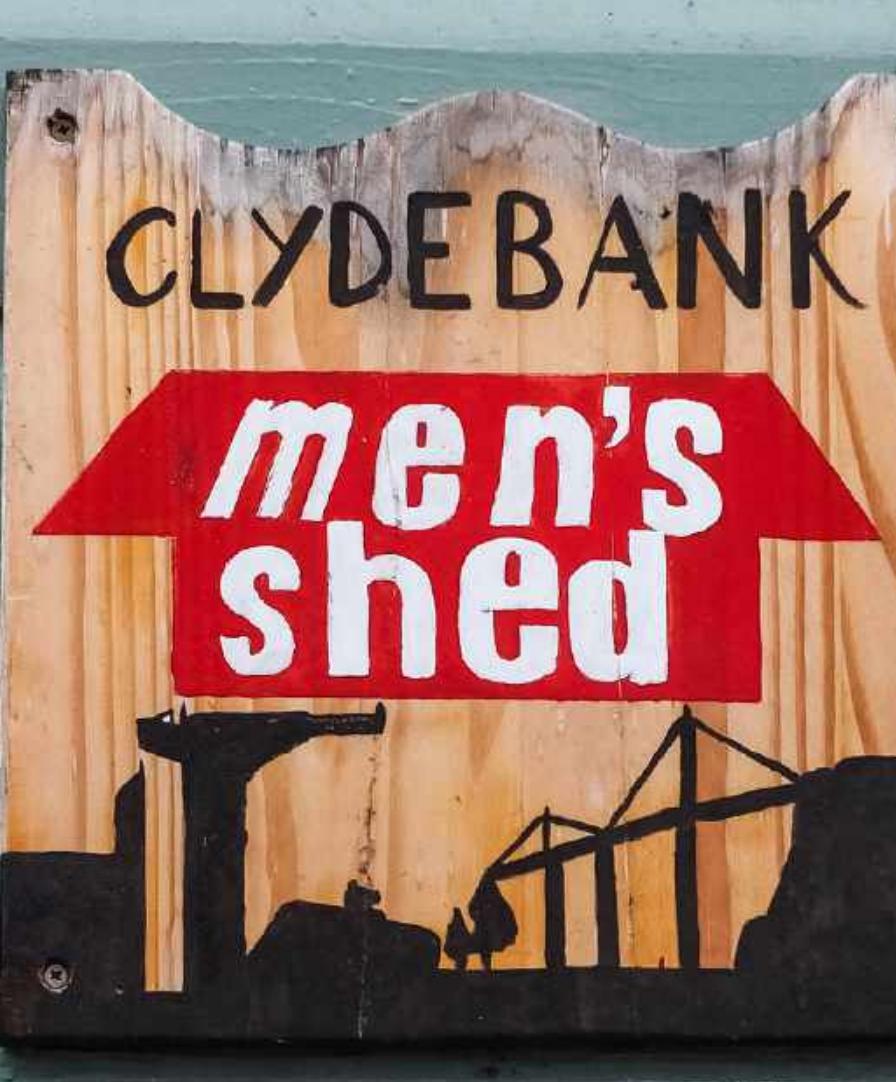


**By
Raymond
McGrath**



**By Paul
Watson**





WORDS BY ANNIE JORDAN & PHOTOS BY JIM STEVENS

Billy Connolly famously joked, “Where do all the old guys go? Where are all the welders, hole borers and riveters on the Clyde?”

Well, a lot of them are in Clydebank Men’s Shed, sharing their expertise, their advice and their banter.

But Joe Gherardi (pictured opposite), the new chair for Clydebank Men’s Shed, is trying to spread the word that the Shed is not just for the “old guys”.

“It’s not just for retired people to come down and ‘potter about,’ although if you want to, you can. We welcome all age groups.

“Our older members very much enrich the shed community in Clydebank giving freely of their time and knowledge to help more inexperienced woodworkers like me.

“There are many joiners and ex-joiners involved, furniture and cabinet makers, engineers - a wealth of talent.”

A chef to trade, Joe has learned so much since coming to the Men’s Shed.

To try and encourage a younger age group they recently extended their opening hours to include a Saturday

Joe explained: “One Saturday morning, I spotted a young guy in his car. He had sat outside for two years while his daughter attended a class next door. He thought the Shed was just for ‘old guys’.

“I showed him around and now he’s a member and loving it. The weekend opening means he can come on a Saturday.”

Ian Petrie, founder member of the Shed joins us.

Around 10 years ago, he chanced upon Oban’s Men’s Shed and it inspired him to set one up in Clydebank. Together with four others, he strove to get funding.

A group of eight would meet first in a room in Clydebank Town Hall, before moving to the Hub.

“We finally got these abandoned premises in Dalmuir, which were a bit of a state with loads of stuff to clear out, but we got there, and after a cheque for £150 from the Provost, Clydebank Men’s Shed was born in March 2016.





"Our aspiration was to have a place where men could meet for a blether and local tradespeople could pass on their knowledge to others."

Joe's son, Douglas, in his thirties, is testament to this intergenerational learning. He specialises in making planters, but no ordinary planters, he has templates of various dogs and his Heilan' Coo planters went down a storm at the Drymen Show.

"My Dad got me into it and I love coming along...I'm here most days!"

Joe shows me photos of the Men's Shed then and now. He is delighted with their new kitchen which gives members a proper space for making teas, coffees and lunches even.

As well as being a safe space for men to share their skills and ideas, the physical safety is something this Men's Shed take very seriously.

Joe explains: "There is a defibrillator on the wall outside, I have my First Aid certificate and some other members are signed up to do a First Aid course.

"Billy over there, gives everyone an induction in the use of machinery."

Billy, a.k.a. Santa, on account of his snowy white beard, adds, "we're dealing with potentially dangerous equipment. We have to be sure members can operate it safely.

"Even though they may have years of experience of using equipment, we still need to see it for ourselves."

Joe's main concern as new chairman is to ensure the longevity of the Shed, as well as future-proofing it.

"People don't really know who we are or where we are, we have to change that!

"We need new members to keep the place going. You don't have to be an experienced woodworker, you can learn from others.



"Come along and see us. We'll show you around.

"We're in the two green sheds next to Dalmuir Community Centre, at the Dalmuir end of Duntocher Road, near the station.

"The Shed gets community funding and also gets funds selling Christmas stuff, garden planters etc. Also sponsors cover our phone and Wi-Fi bill... we can't thank them enough."

A few years back, he was asked to come down to TG Allan's hardware shop in, Helensburgh. The owner was retiring and closing down the business.

He told Joe he wasn't to cherry pick, he was to take the whole lot, lock stock and barrel! So he did!

Founder Ian also donated some tools and widows often donate tools when their husbands pass away. They recently had to regift tools to charity because they had run out of space.

The Shed now has 125 members with around 20 regulars, including the 'Birdman of Cumbernauld' specialising in bird boxes.

"Men can come on a drop-in basis and get on with whatever they want to work on," Joe explains.

"There are helping hands if you want help....If you don't want help, that's fine too.

"You don't even need to do any work, just come for tea, coffee, biscuit and a blether...it's a valuable mental health project: come along and put the world to rights."

One member tells me he had not wanted to leave the house for years and felt isolated. He is a regular and his life has changed for the better.

It's not all long-standing members either. Brett, a retired engineer, has been coming for a couple of months. He loves the Shed atmosphere, finding it welcoming and friendly.

Brett's speciality is automatons: intricate models with finicky moving parts. He is currently working on a secret Christmas project which demands endless patience and all my admiration.

Brett designed and made all the moving parts himself and is at the all-consuming assembly stage.

His next project will be a cracker: it will take at least a year and a half and has something to do with a trip to Egypt.

Ian also has an interest in Egyptology. He shows me photographs of an Orkney chair he made, I was bowled over by his skill.



"I would like to build a Pharaoh's chair," he reveals, a look of determination in his eyes.

Men's Shed members also get involved with projects to support other local charities and organisations. They have done work for Old Kilpatrick Food Parcels, Clydemuir Primary School and an old folk's home in Dumbarton.

Joe's ambition is to have a purpose-built two storey Men's Shed and he would love to visit other Sheds on a fact-finding mission.

"We have to aim high," he laughs.

I love that 'can do' attitude: it kind of sums up Clydebank Men's Shed.

"Have a laugh, don't take yourself too seriously, have a chat and in the background you can be productive or not be productive, do what you like, just go with the flow..."

My morning in the Men's Shed flew by and I didn't want to leave.

What I discovered there was vision, passion, fun, interesting chat, all that coupled with productivity, creativity and just general well-being.

And contrary to Billy Connolly's portrayal of the Shedders, there were no "old guys" there, more boys with their toys.

MEN'S SHED FACTFILE

- The Men's Shed movement began 3 October 1993 in Australia
- Founder Maxine Chaseling worked in elderly care and highlighted the lack of services for men. She noted the only thing which gave her father purpose was to work in his shed.
- There are 136 Men's Sheds in Scotland with 66 in development. Men's Shed members are called 'shedders' and Scotland currently has 3,074 shedders.
- There are now an estimated 1,800 Men's Sheds in Australia, the UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Finland, New Zealand and Greece, supporting approx.100,000 men.
- Shedders can visit and work at Men's Sheds in different towns.

Clydebank Men's Shed is based in the grounds of Dalmuir C.E Centre, Duntocher Road, Clydebank G81 4RQ. It is open Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat 10am-3pm. Email: mens.shed@gmail.com

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A SWEET COMMUNITY CONSTANT

BY JENNY WATSON
PHOTOS
BY KATIE KENNEDY

TOM SWAN SWEETS



Walking through that familiar red door in Renton, first-time visitors are hit with an instant sweet aroma.

For those of us who have become regulars over the years, the nostalgia gets you first.

That's right, we're in Tom Swan's Sweet Shop where I am instantly transported back to the days of strolling along on my school lunch break for a pot noodle, a quarter of chocolate nibbles and five chocolate cups (no-one tell my mum!) The shop hasn't changed too much in that time and Tom's cheery, sometimes mischievous, face is still greeting customers from behind the counter, as he has been for over 65 years.

Rows and rows of sweet tubs line the walls; an explosion of colour and texture everywhere.

Everything from strawberry bonbons to Renton Rock call on me to buy them, but I walk away with the nibbles and chocolate cups, plus a wee cheeky bag of jelly babies for my gran.

The memories those sweets brought back had me smiling all day.

The shop was originally a general store but with the growing number of supermarkets, Tom decided a change was needed.

"We used to sell fruit and veg. Potatoes. Every Thursday we would get a big delivery of trays of cakes from Tunnocks



and we would be queued out the door. The wee trifles were popular," Tom reminisces.

The shop was originally run by Tom's grandmother who bought it in 1946.

Since Tom took it on he's been there almost every day. As he said, "that's been a lot of shoes."

He now takes more time for himself and often doesn't open until mid-day. He's seen a lot of changes in the local community over these decades and has felt the impact of many of them. Most recently the Covid pandemic.

"We shut completely until November 2020. I had to shield due to my health. That was strange but I got to spend more time gardening," he said.

With Tom shielding and the sweetie emporium being closed for the better part of the year, Tom and his family had to find ways to keep the business running and adapt to the times.

That's when his daughter Margaret turned to the world of social media and started offering local deliveries.

"We put a message on Facebook in June 2020 during lockdown saying we could do deliveries and the orders went crazy.

"We were only going to do two days a week and we ended up doing four. That was just Alexandria and Dumbarton."

It wasn't long before requests to post tasty treats all over the UK and beyond started coming in.

"A lot of the postal orders are to people who used to stay here. They go to people down in the Borders, London and Northern Ireland," Margaret said.

The shop and the man are both legendary in the village and beyond and the support that Tom receives is a testament to that. He even has a street in Renton named after him!

Cris, a young man formerly of Renton, now living abroad, described his childhood visits to Tom's as "walking into an Aladdin's cave of confectionery."

"Wall to wall was filled with tubs containing every imaginable colour and shape of sweets.

"I've been living in Korea for more than 10 years and when I'd visit my hometown it often felt a little sad to see things change but it was always comforting to see Tom and his store still there, serving as a constant focal point in the community."

To join in sharing the love for Tom and find out what is going on in the shop, join The Official Tom Swan Appreciation Society on Facebook.

THE STORY SEW FAR

WORDS BY ANNIE JORDAN & PHOTOS BY
CAROLINE FINN

Clydebank, once home to Singer sewing machine factory, recently played host to a creative sewing project sharing some of the untold stories woven into our community.

The six-week quilting workshops, part of Clydesider's creative storytelling project, paired artist Flo Dwyer with local charity Isaro Community Initiative.

Isaro was set up in 2010 to welcome new Scots to the area.

Rose Sehazizinka, one of four founder members, and now project co-ordinator explained: "When you are new, you feel very isolated and it is important to have a social space to meet other people who speak the same language to learn more about life in Scotland and Glasgow: a place where you can go to ask for information on how to access services, how to study, where to find this and that, and socialise."

There is a mix of nationalities and cultures represented in the group including Arabic and Farsi speakers who provide peer support, translating and interpreting.

"Peer learning is central to what we are doing," Rose added.



Pre-covid the women had a regular sewing group and during the pandemic they continued to sew at home, making scrub bags and masks for NHS staff.

So the group were keen to work on another textile-based project with Clydesider. Both experienced and inexperienced sewers



worked together to produce beautiful quilts.

Samina, one of the participants, explained: "Sewing is part of our culture. We sew our own veils and embroider our saris."

She showed me some intricate embroidery. "We hand down our skills to the younger generation. Otherwise our traditions could die out."

All the material for the quilts was donated. And for Samina, this was the best part:



"Materials were set out, all different designs and colours. Some were very vibrant.

"We worked in teams to decide which colours we were going to pick for our quilt.

"Once we had our colours and patterns, we then had to decide what to make together

and how to complete the work."

Their eye-catching work is exhibited in a display cabinet in Whitecrook's Centre 81. There are purses, bags, plus larger items like bedspread and throws.

My favourite is a patchwork quilt in the shades of autumn: bright oranges, yellows and rich rusts and burgundy.

Rose tells me: "Some of the items have been sold at markets and at a shop in Dumbarton and the ladies intend to use Instagram and maybe Etsy.

"We're setting up a social enterprise to use reclaimed material to make new things, like the patchwork pieces made on the Clydesider project."

Rose appeals for unused sewing machines, they are happy to take older machines. "We have a technician for repairs. Some of the ladies can also do a little bit of maintenance themselves."



It makes me smile to think the sewing machines built in Clydebank and shipped across the world, are now whirring away under the steady hands of new Scots women who are sharing their own creative traditions and styles.

I wonder what Isaac Merritt Singer, American founder of Singer sewing machine, would make of it all?

Sponsored Editorial

JOIN OUR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL HOUSING IN FAIFLEY



Knowes Housing Association was established in 1998 in the Faifley and Duntocher area of Clydebank. Knowes is a charitable registered social landlord managed by a voluntary Management Committee who play a key role in ensuring its continued success.

We are recruiting enthusiastic individuals for our Management Committee. We are particularly interested in hearing from local residents who understand the area and would like to contribute to the continuous improvement of the community.

In return we can offer you:

- A great opportunity to enhance your skills, knowledge and add to your CV
- A supportive environment where your views are heard
- An opportunity to meet new people and develop friendships with others with a shared commitment
- Appropriate IT equipment and training

If you are interested in joining our Management Committee please call 01389 877 752, and choose option 5, to speak to Amy.

Or if you would like to find out if this is for you, please feel welcome to join our monthly Committee meeting, have some sandwiches and cakes and talk to other members of the Committee and the staff. You can also email your interest to info@knowes.org.



SKYLARK SKIFFS

**WORDS BY JENNY WATSON
& PHOTOS BY HARVEY SMART**

Recovery takes many shapes and sizes, but when it brings a community together something magic seems to happen.

Regular readers might remember a story in Issue 11 about a little boat with a big heart. For those who missed that issue, here's a quick recap.

In 2010 the Skylark IX, a little boat which once rescued hundreds of stranded soldiers from the beaches of Dunkirk during WWII, sank in Loch Lomond. The Dunkirk Veterans put out an appeal for help and Alternatives, a local recovery project, answered the call.

From there, an unlikely partnership formed the Skylark IX Recovery Project. Working together they weathered many storms to lift the boat out of the Loch and give it a second chance at life.

The rescuing of the Skylark provided opportunities for those in addiction recovery to learn, train and take up apprenticeships. It also brought boatbuilding back to Dumbarton.

Fast forward 12 years to a sunny afternoon in September and the launch of not one but two, St Ayles Skiffs.

The first 22ft skiff, aptly named '*Happy Days*' was built by hand by members of

the Skylark IX Recovery Project as part of an addiction recovery programme with the volunteer trainees from Alternatives working in the Scottish Maritime Museum.

James, one of the boat building crew, said: "It's been a great journey. I've relearned woodworking skills; it's been great having a purpose again. I feel valued and respected and love being around good people."

The crew originally learned how to build model boats over Zoom during lockdown. "It was freeing and liberating to learn something new during a really hard time," another crew member explained.



"I had a change of attitude and purpose. I was proud of what I achieved and named my model boats after my kids to show them that."

The Scottish Maritime Museum's boat building school in Irvine built the second boat. It was named 'New Beginnings' by 14 year-old Erin Brown of Alexandria who won a competition for local schoolchildren.

She said: "I thought about what recovery meant to people and came up with New Beginnings. I was really happy and excited to find out I had won."

Jade West, Community Engagement lead for the project, said: "It was a fantastic milestone for our project to reach and for our crew as individuals.

"I'm incredibly proud of everyone involved for their dedication and hard work in building these skiffs."

The current team of boatbuilders have volunteered over 1,000 hours of their time but more than 20 people have been involved in the project over the years.

Jade added: "Each person who has lovingly handcrafted this boat has their signature pyrographed on our Happy Days boat.

"Finally getting these into the water with all our friends, family, and supporters here was really heart-warming and exciting.

"It has made our dreams of developing the Skylark IX Rowing Club possible, and we are now taking names and details from anybody in the community who is interested in getting involved.

"We are looking to start rowing together next spring. Over the winter months, we plan to get together and discuss all things rowing as we learn and grow the club together, keeping this project community-led all the way."

The highlight of the day was watching the faces of the boatbuilding crew light up as the skiffs launched from the Duncan Mills slipway on their maiden voyage up the Loch.

For one of the boatbuilders the launch gave her hope for her future.

She said: "This has been an amazing day. It's emotional having everyone here celebrating our achievements with us. I have a whole new lease on life."

To find out more about the Skylark IX Rowing Club complete the form at -
<https://forms.gle/6PEskLxVeCvSxRf4A>



BIRLIN BANNOCKS

Words by Steven Hastings
Photo by Lottie Barker

The people and stories of Dumbarton West have featured in a community film about the local area.

Lottie Baker of Clifftop Projects and film maker Joe Dalton teamed up with Anne Pitcher, storyteller in residence for Dumbarton West.

Lottie said: 'It was a great opportunity to work with local people to tell local stories and get them involved in film-making in a creative way.'

The filming took place in various locations in Dumbarton West on the first weekend in September.

On the Sunday my Dad and I went to Havoc to join the film.

There were lots of children and adults sitting at picnic tables. Lottie was handing out blue and green scarfs to everyone, my Dad and I both picked a blue one.

The stories for the film came from history, legends, and folklore of the local area.

Over the past year Anne has gathered stories from people, books and the local community and wove them into one story.

Joe and Lottie adapted this tale to make it work in a film setting and to get local people involved.

The main actors in the film were all children who go to Clifftop Projects and their parents.

The story starts at Knowetop Farm where an old couple make some bannocks - a cross between a scone and a cake.

Some of the mixture is left over so the old lady makes a wee bannock, with raisin eyes and nose and half a cherry for a mouth.

The Wee Cheeky Bannock comes alive, jumps out of the pan and goes on adventures through Dumbarton West.

He rolls through both Dalreoch and St Michael's Primary Schools meeting people from history, including William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. He also meets a fox and Clutha the Sea Serpent.



We were all to be the Sea Serpent. Lottie lined everyone up in a queue holding our scarfs. My Dad and I were near the back.

We were all given a number, when it was called, we were to move our scarfs in the air.

This was all being filmed by Joe and at one point he came past with the camera to film close ups. A drone was also used to film us from above.

Next we all walked to a story-telling area. A blanket was on the grass with a chair for Anne, the storyteller, to sit on with what looked like a pirate's chest beside her.

The children sat on the blanket with the adults sitting or standing behind. Anne told the story of the Wee Cheeky Bannock while being filmed.

The chest contained two puppets - a fox and a Sea Serpent. In the second take Anne really entertained everyone and had the sea serpent flying in the air. The filming took about an hour and was lots of fun.

The Wee Cheeky Bannock film premiered in the Phoenix Centre in November.

LET'S GROW

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

By Rose Harvie

Nearing the end of the gardening and growing season, it is time to plan for next year, and also to enjoy some of this year's crops.

Hopefully your spuds are carefully tucked up in a frost-free shed or outhouse. You may also have had a good crop of onions and garlic this year; if so, they should also be kept in a cool place, preferably tied up in strings and hung up until needed in the kitchen.

Time now to prepare your soil for next year. If your compost bins are full of well-rotted compost, then spread it on the veggie beds and let the worms do your digging for you.

To prevent weeds, if we have a fairly warm winter, cover your beds with sheets of porous black polythene or thin carpet, weighed down with bricks or boards.

Make sure you have a good selection of seed catalogues to browse through during the autumn, and make a seed and plant list. Many seed companies offer a reduction for quantities of seeds and plants purchased, so why not get together with neighbours or other plot and community garden folk, and take advantage of these offers. Maybe try different and unusual veggies and share delivery.

It is not too late to plant garlic, which likes a cold winter and a hot summer. Plant the cloves about 10cm apart, and 5cm deep. Also overwinter onions, in the same bed as the garlic.

Spend some time making a chart for your veggie garden, planning a 4-year rotation of crops. Remember: potatoes – peas and beans – brassicas – roots. Fit in onions/leeks/salads, and unusual things like artichokes and sweet corn.

You can continue adding kitchen and garden waste to your compost bins, but keep a watch out for rats, eager to exploit your compost. If in any doubt do not add kitchen waste.

A couple of recipes to try: if you've grown Tuscan kale (the dark green one) strip the leaves from the centre, chop up, toss in olive oil, and roast in the oven until crisp - 'kale crisps' - delicious!

Jerusalem artichokes – if you have not grown them, they are sometimes on sale in farmers' markets, and make a welcome change/addition to roast potatoes and parsnips. They also make excellent soup. (I can provide some for you to grow next year.)

If you read this in December, Christmas is just around the corner. Why not drop a hint to your nearest and dearest about a new wheelbarrow, cold frame, garden tools etc.

And don't forget the garden birds will need feeding, and gather small quantities of holly and leaves to make a Christmas decoration for your front door.

A very Happy Christmas to all gardeners, and all the best for the coming new season.

CREATIVE Q&A: THE BANK STREET MARTYRS

BY JENNY WATSON

"It's a love letter to the Vale," is not something you often hear and certainly not about a musical album. But that's what new band The Bank Street Martyrs have created with 'Leven The Vale'.

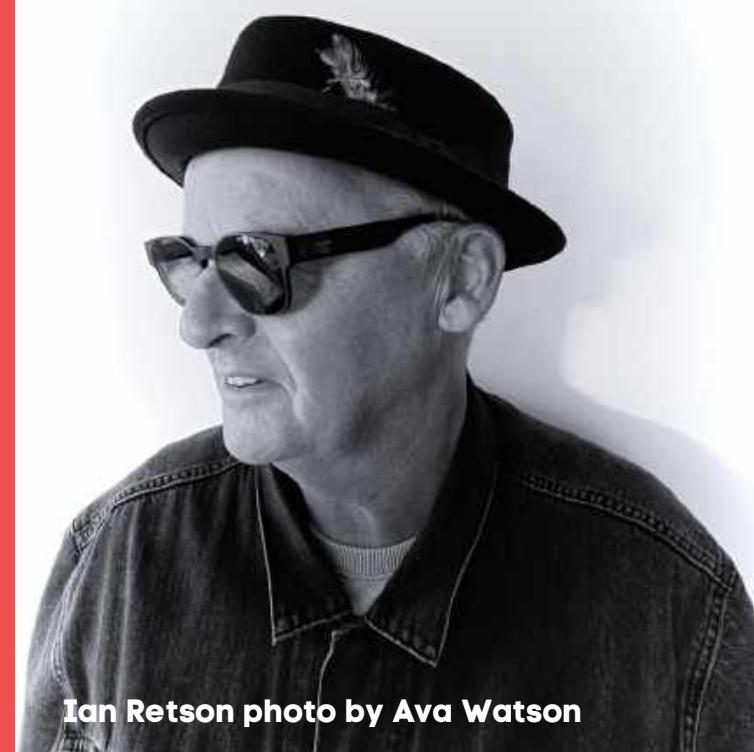
Formed of Ian Retson, Andy Marsland and Joseph Montenegro Watema, The Bank Street Martyrs, have created 10 tracks full of love, history and the many issues faced by the Vale over the years.

Q: Tell me about yourselves.

Ian: I am from the Vale originally. I moved away for about 40 years. I've worked all over, mostly in Dublin for the past 20 years. I came back to visit, then Covid began. For various reasons, I've ended up here permanently again. As an older man, I see the Vale through different eyes from the young man I was when I left. A few years ago I wrote a poem about leaving the Vale. It stuck with me, I always wondered if it could be a song.

Andy: I'm from the Vale and am related to Ian, that's our connection and I've been recording music with Joe for awhile. My first guitar was a Christmas present. I was about three or four. It wasn't something that really grabbed me. I was about 12 when I picked it back up. Now I'm 28 and been playing it obsessively ever since."

Joe: "I'm Ugandan by nationality but have lived a long time in Mauritius which is multicultural, it helped me appreciate art from a whole lot of backgrounds. I started singing at about six years old - my mum entered me in a talent competition. I met Andy in Glasgow. We got talking, had this connection and started making music. I really appreciate someone like him because our system of coming up with music is really unique."



Ian Retson photo by Ava Watson

Q: Where did the name come from?

Ian: We wanted a Vale reference but also something universal to not hedge us into one place or time. Growing up Bank Street was one of the glorious streets in Alexandria, now it needs a bit more attention. Many great artists came from the Vale, we want to acknowledge that.

Q: How was the band formed?

Ian: It started with one song, 'Leven the Vale' - the poem I wrote years earlier. I asked Andy if I gave him some words, could he add some music and make it a song? I'd seen Andy and Joe online doing their own prog-rock stuff. These boys are so talented, I thought if only I could harness that into the Vale beat.

Andy: I didn't know what to expect but then I saw the words and became excited. I didn't know there were more songs, I thought it was a one-time thing and thought it would be fun. I knew Joe would be the best fit for singing it and sent it to him.

Joe: I didn't know anything about the place but having been in different places and seeing different people, I know life is a universal experience. We just see it through different lenses. When someone is singing about a town they grew up in, I can relate to it. Ian sends me footnotes with facts about the area, which helps me get a feel for the place.



Joe photo by Bibi Dubois



Andy Marsland

Ian: I supply all the words, Andy creates all the music and Joe does the vocals and melodies. Andy also does some of the vocals. These boys take my words, almost static verses and they turn them into a colour pallet.

Andy: We have a group Whatsapp and a lot of the collaboration takes place there. It can be a painstaking process but we've made it work.

Q: Tell me about the songs.

Ian: The muse is the Vale of Leven - the culture, the people and their humour. No one has really done this in a modern setting. There are loads of songs about striding through the heather, the beautiful views and roamin' the gloamin' but the people here have never really been sung about. Other artists have sung about their hometowns. My way of

describing it is rhythm and blue-collar. Around the start of this year I was really fed up, I think we were in the third wave of Covid, I took myself on walks around the Vale and started writing stuff down; everything from bottle banks to the Torpedo factory. I thought about the symmetry of an old building put to better use and that kind of fits in with an old man being put to better use. From there all these songs came pouring out of me.

Andy: When we started to work on more songs, I began to feel we had something really special here. The three of us have a very wide range of tastes in music. We all really just love it, I think that has benefitted the album.

Leven the Vale will be available to stream on various music platforms; for more details visit www.bankstreetmartyrs.com





WALK THIS WAY: A WALK FOR ALL SEASONS

WORDS BY HARVEY SMART PHOTOS BY PAUL MURDOCH

"There are lots of books purely focusing on one topic, but I wanted to give people a full experience of the area through the local walks I have done for the past 50 years - everything from an historic building to a hoverfly and all points in between."

This was the motivation for local author Paul Murdoch when he started writing his latest series of books, 'Four Walks in West Dunbartonshire.'

For each season, he mapped four walks, highlighting natural and historical curiosities to be found along the way.

The latest instalment, 'Four Winter Walks' follows this theme.

The actual routes he takes us on are varied in difficulty, length, terrain and surroundings.

Most are accessible to those with reduced mobility, but I wanted a challenge, so I picked the longest, from the centre of Balloch, right up to the trig point in the hills to the west of the Vale of Leven.

Following the directions in the book, we begin at Balloch Visitor Centre and head westward along the main road.

This section of the walk is mainly oriented towards the historical, the book gives us facts and context about places as we go.

It's fascinating the history you pass every day without knowing.

The information the book provides is enlightening, although I can't help feeling a little sad as well, as these are stories of a heyday well in the past, all the industry that once made this area a thriving cultural hub is now barely a memory.

Meandering further west and higher up the hillside, the history gives way to a more nature-oriented experience as Paul talks about the flora, fauna and fungi to be seen in the area.

As we ascend the hill, the woodland thins out and you find yourself surrounded by heather and, on a clear day, revealing gorgeous views of the Loch, the islands on it, and Ben Lomond beyond.

It's at this point I would highly recommend a sturdy pair of welly boots, as the terrain becomes extremely wet and muddy as we ascend to the trig point marking the summit.

On this stretch before we start making our way back there is still more to see, in particular the remains of some WWII bomb craters that pepper the hillsides on both sides of the Vale of Leven.

Upon reaching the trig point, you can see for miles in every direction, with panoramic views of Ben Lomond to the

north, the Kilpatrick hills to the east and across the Firth of Clyde to Dunoon in the west.

This is truly one of the best views in West Dunbartonshire and worth the walk even for this alone.

Beginning the descent again, the heather seems to come alive, with grouse shooting out from the brush in front of us, wings making the distinctive flapping sound that hunters prize so much.

A lone snipe also flees from our path as we weave our way down the hillside. Deer can also regularly be seen foraging on these slopes, but they eluded us on this occasion.



The route from here is all downhill until we reach the banks of Loch Lomond once again, ending the guided walk beside the Maid of the Loch.

I thoroughly enjoyed this jaunt and learned many things, both historical and natural about what this area has to offer.

Paul's biologist background and appreciation of local biodiversity really shines through and he adds his own personal flair to the book, making it feel like he's accompanying you on the walk himself.

I would recommend it to anyone, no matter if you have lived here your whole life or are just visiting for the holidays.

Just one thing, bring your wellies!



Paul's books are available to buy at www.paulmurdoch.co.uk or from the VisitScotland iCentre in Balloch and various outlets throughout the Vale.

CLYDESIDER 
POETRY
COMPETITION

THEME: INSPIRATION
PRIZE: £25
CLOSING DATE: FEB 10, 2023
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.

CLYDESIDER 
PHOTOGRAPHY
COMPETITION

THEME: COMMUNITY
PRIZE: £25
CLOSING DATE: FEB 10, 2023
EMAIL ENTRIES TO:
CLYDESIDERCOMP@GMAIL.COM

CLYDESIDER CHRISTMAS QUIZ COMPILED BY STEVEN HASTINGS

1. Feliz Navidad is Happy Christmas in which language?
2. Which of Santa's reindeer has a shiny red nose?
3. Although now associated with Hogmanay, Black Bun slices were originally served on which night of the year?
4. Which actor, comedian and musician played Patch the Elf in the 1985 film Santa Claus: The Movie?
5. In which sea or ocean is Christmas Island located?
6. In 2009 which comedy dance act who came to fame after entering Britain's got talent, switched on Clydebank's Christmas lights?
7. What plant do people traditionally kiss under at Christmas time?
8. Born on December 25 1954 which Scottish singer was one half of pop duo the Eurythmics?

*Answers on opposite page



Christmas With Clyde By Steven Hastings

It's Christmas Eve and Clyde is out carol-singing with his pal Dave.

Clyde's dog Baxter is there too, dressed in his Santa hat and scarf to keep him warm. I wonder who that might be flying above them in the sky?

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from
Clyde & Baxter

WHAT'S ON IN WD

Christmas Tea Dance

Tuesday Dec 13 2pm - 4pm. Afternoon tea, Christmas music, dancing and more at Clydebank Town Hall. Free entry. Call 01389 737555 or email townhallenquiries@west-dunbarton.gov.uk for more details

Dumbarton's Glassmaking Days

As part of the town's octocentenary celebrations Dumbarton Library will host a short talk about artist Alexander Brown whose painting offers a unique insight into the town in the early 1800s. Learn more about the man, his work and inspiration at 1.15pm on Dec 13 in the Heritage Centre in Dumbarton Library.

Dance OFF Academy Snow White Pantomime

Clydebank Town Hall Dec 15 & 16. Tickets available from Dance OFF, 25 Kilbowie Road, Clydebank G81 1TL

Winter Wonderland

Flourishing Faifley's Secret Garden is hosting a free Winter Wonderland event with festive activities and Santa on Dec 17 between 10am-midday & 1pm-3pm Email flourishingfaifley.tony@gmail.com

Family Santa Walk

Join the OKFP Santa Walk on Sat Dec 17. Starting at 12 noon from Dalmuir Square the Santas will walk along the Saltings to the OKFP Hub for a Xmas Market. This is a free event but please reserve your spot on Eventbrite.

Fire Cloud Nativity 'Bind up the Broken-hearts'

The Christmas story is brought to life in music and drama.

Dec 18, doors open at 6.30, starts at 7 pm St. Margaret's Church, Clydebank, G81 1AE. Suggested donation £4 (£10 family). Mulled wine & mince pies. To book email tickets@fire-cloud.org

Alexandria Community Choir

A free fun community choir meets every Tuesday 10.15am - 12.15pm in Lomond Church, 1 Lomond Rd, Alexandria G83 8RL contact lynne@singergie.com

Food For Thought

Christmas Toy Bank

Runs Dec 12 - 23 from Unit 14A Artizan Shopping Centre, Dumbarton. Donations of new toys or gift vouchers needed for 0 - 18 yrs contact for info on 01389 743908 or email admin@foodforthoughtwestdun.co.uk

Writers Group

Every Wednesday 11am - 12.30pm in the Phoenix Community Hub 17A QuarryKnowe Dumbarton G82 5AF

Litter Pick in Linnvale

Linnvale community group meet every Saturday for litter picking in Clydebank and surrounding areas. All equipment is provided. Contact Stuart on 07810450419

If you have a community event or activity happening in West Dunbartonshire please share with us by emailing jenny@clydesider.org

8. Annie Lennox

7. Misstette

6. Stavros Flatley

5. Indian Ocean

4. Dudley Moore

3. Twelfth Night

2. Rudolph

1. Spanish

Answers

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