

CLYDESIDER

OUR COMMUNITY'S POSITIVE PRESS

ISSUE 26 Winter 2023

FREE



Sharing Love & Hope

INSIDE: WOMEN WARRIORS... WHY MENTORS MATTER... ROOM FOR EVERY VOICE

POETRY COMPETITION WINNER

ERROR 404

BY MT KIELTY

I did not know the short time we had left.

I texted.

Facebooked.

Googled gossip.

Made no real contact.

Never studied you.

**I twittered trivialities,
played heroic games,
wasted wild emotions
flung in far-out fantasies.**

**But never knew
what you
were all about.**

**Earphone-deafened as I walked along
I never listened to your secret song.**

**Pleasuring myself in all technologies,
there always was tomorrow...**

Till today.

WELCOME

And with a blink of an eye another year has almost disappeared!

I hope you have enjoyed our focus on Access for All in 2023; I know I've learned so much thanks to the informative and thought-provoking articles shared by our volunteers and contributors.

In this issue we have some very powerful personal experience features. They explore extreme life challenges and the struggles faced by many individuals and families.

Some of these are not the easiest articles to read, but living in poverty, recovery or with a chronic illness or disability, are rarely easy places to be.

While highlighting the challenges faced, our contributors also share hope.

Their stories demonstrate how, with the right support, the dark times can be turned into personal strengths which have the potential of benefiting the whole community.

And a common thread winding through all these pieces is how much stronger we are when we find ways to work together, sharing our skills, experience, and knowledge.

There are so many inspirational individuals in our communities, and it is always a privilege to share their stories in the magazine.

So, next year our volunteers have chosen the theme of People, Places and Outside Spaces.

They want to ensure the voices of our community continue to be heard loud and clear through the pages of the magazine.

They are also keen to champion the spaces and places which make a positive difference to people living and working in West Dunbartonshire.

If you have a story you think should be told please do get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

For now, I hope you enjoy this winter issue and a peaceful festive season.

Amanda & the Clydesider Team



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, X, Youtube and Instagram. If you would like to get involved and contribute to Clydesider please email jenny@clydesider.org

CLYDESIDER CREDITS

A big thank you to our fantastic team of volunteers who 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.

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.



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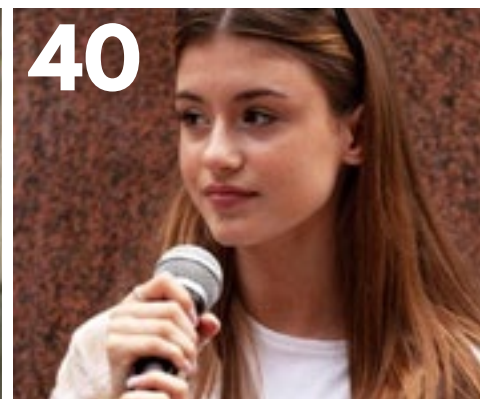
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Cover Photo by Caroline Finn

SPONSORED EDITORIAL

VILLAGE HALL REVAMP REVEALED

Volunteers and staff at a local charity are celebrating receiving the keys to the Old Kilpatrick Napier Hall.

The Old Kilpatrick Food Parcels charity (OKFP) signed a 10-year lease to the building on October 1 after West Dunbartonshire Council identified it as one of seven community facilities earmarked for closure.

And within days their exciting plans to regenerate the hall for the use of the local community began to take shape.

Maureen Cummings, founder of OKFP, said: "We're looking forward to transforming the hall and are starting with renovations to make it a really warm and welcoming space.

"We are also trying to secure funding which will allow us to build an extension to the side of the existing annexe.

"OKFP's priority is to ensure the building is wind and watertight and we are working closely with West Dunbartonshire Council to make sure the electrics are safe, gutters cleared and the ladies and gents toilets are fit for purpose.

"In the past all areas of the building were available to hire by anyone for events like parties, weddings, activities and we plan to restore it to its former glory."

The charity will move from their existing premises in Station Road in early 2024 and temporarily operate out of the main hall whilst building warrants are being secured for the proposed extension.

They hope to secure funding to build an extension to the small hall to double its size and

this space would then be used as their headquarters. The extension will be home to the OKFP Food Pantry, the Chatty Café plus varied office and meeting rooms which will be available for hire.

As part of the proposed refurbishment the changing area in the ladies toilets would become a community laundry and funding has already been secured for this work.

Maureen added: "We're excited to bring this new service to the village. We're also working closely with West Dunbartonshire Greenspace and West Dunbartonshire Environment Trust to design and create a child-friendly garden around the hall.

"And work has already begun to improve the building's kerb appeal. Working with Ayegrow gardening service the flower beds at the front have all been given a new lease of life and we have new hanging baskets planted up fresh for Christmas.

"We do realise the enormity of the project at hand, but we have a terrific team of advisors, consultants and local volunteers who have helped us achieve so much already.

"We started OKFP to help people during Covid but the cost-of-living crisis has meant demand increased far beyond what we had ever anticipated.

"The need for our charity has never been greater and the move to Napier Hall will enable us to expand our services further whilst refurbishing the property.

"The next 12 months will be a very exciting time for OKFP."



COMMUNITY NEWS ROUND-UP

WEANS ON A PLANE BY ANGELA CLARK

A group of kinship carers are fundraising to take the children they care for on a holiday in the sun next year.

For some of the families it will be their first time on a plane and they want the children to enjoy this experience before starting high school.

For the past three years, the group has been bag-packing, selling prize cards and organising entertainment evenings to help raise funds.

Micheleine Kane, chairperson of Kinship Carers WD, said: "It has been in the pipeline for a long time. After we found out how many kids hadn't been on a plane, we decided to try and give them this experience.

"The main reason is some of the grannies also need support.

"Mary is 69 and has health problems. So when we're together, we are there to support each other.

"The weans have people they know to play with, and this takes some of the strain off their carers."

The plan is to take 17 children and their kinship carers to Turkey next year.

Pensioner Mary from Dumbarton has looked after her grandson since his birth. She said: "We could never afford to go on holiday.

"His friends are doing these things; my grandson never asks or moans about anything. It would be awesome if just for that one time he gets to go away on a plane.

"Going on holiday with them gives me the extra support I need as I would struggle if I went away on my own with my grandson.

"He has trust issues and doesn't have many people in his circle. I don't know where we both would be without the support of the group."

The group support kinship families in West Dunbartonshire meeting regularly at their new premises in Erskine House, Clydebank.



WELLBEING HUBS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Families in West Dunbartonshire will benefit from specialist help and support as new Whole Family Wellbeing Hubs open across the area.

The aim of the three hubs is to improve family wellbeing, reduce inequalities and reduce the number of families needing crisis intervention.

The bases will also offer a range of universal, targeted and specialist services to support families.

Specialist services on offer will include neurodevelopmental workers; Includem; education outreach workers; specialists in family group decision-making; speech and language therapists; occupational therapists and family nursing staff.

West Dunbartonshire Council and Health and Social Care Partnership, invested £604,000 in the family wellbeing spaces.

The hubs are located at the Concord Centre in Dumbarton, the Hub C.E Centre in Clydebank and Y-Sort. It's base in Bonhill and are open Tuesday - Thursday between 9.30am - 4pm.

ART GROUP IN SEARCH OF MEMBERS

A local art group is looking for new members.

The Hub Art group meets every Friday from 1.30pm – 3.30pm in Clydebank Hub and £3 a week covers materials, tea/coffee and room hire.

John Pugh is a regular attendee. He said: "The last couple of years our numbers dwindled so we're keen to get more people involved.

"Everyone decides what artwork they want to work on. It would be good to get our numbers back up again."

To find out more pop into the Hub on a Friday afternoon for a chat with John and the other group members. The group finishes for Christmas on December 15 and will be back in the Hub from January 12 2024.

VOLUNTEER ART TUTOR NEEDED

A community art group is searching for a volunteer tutor to support their activities.

The Vale of Leven Mature Art Group (VOLMAG) meet every Friday from 10am – 2pm in Dalmonach Community Centre in Bonhill.

They are looking for an experienced art tutor to work with members to encourage and improve their creative skills.

Please contact Secretary Roseanne McCallion on 07506 595436.



CLYDESIDER NEWS

At Clydesider we are celebrating two very successful collaborations.

The first is with the peer mental health group Chance 2 Change, who we started working with in 2022 on a digital learning and film-making project.

Together we co-created two short films; one explores the impact of digital by design health services and the other focuses on the power of peer support. Both can be viewed on our Clydesider Creative YouTube channel.

This year they asked us back to work on a photojournalism project commissioned by the Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland (QNIS) to use photography to highlight the impact of health inequalities.

The films were screened, and

a selection of images displayed at an event in the University of Glasgow as part of the Scottish Mental Health and Arts Festival.

The screening was attended by around 100 people from a wide range of academic, health and community backgrounds.

Our second collaboration is as part of the Scottish Beacon, a group of independent community media organisations in Scotland.

The collaborative has been nominated for a top press award - the Press Gazette's Innovation of the Year award, part of the British Journalism Awards 2023.

With over 800 entries to a variety of categories, the Scottish Beacon members are delighted to be short-listed alongside international media players including Sky News, Financial Times, the Telegraph and the BBC.



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JOY IS NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS

WORDS BY ANGELA CLARK
& PHOTOS BY CAROLINE FINN

For many, Christmas is a time to think about helping others, but for Mathew Kelly it is a daily pleasure to bring positivity to the life of anyone he meets.

The young Bankie from Whitecrook was diagnosed with Aspergers, a form of autism spectrum disorder.

He has difficulty remembering things and his thought patterns can be rigid and repetitive, although he lets nothing stop him from trying to bring joy to other people, as many have helped him through some difficult years.

Mathew explained: "When I was younger, I had trouble understanding things. I would get paranoid, I had white hair and had to dye it because I was getting taunted in school.

"I was also overweight, but I got help with that. I eventually went to the College of the West Scotland and did a transition course to get used to college life and I met new friends."

Two years after completing his college courses he went on to be involved with the Golden

Friendship Club and is now an ambassador for the charity.

His role involves welcoming people, helping them fit in and supporting them in the community.

He said: "I was given lots of support in school and college and that's why I love being an ambassador to help new people and support them. I like to be a positive person in the community."

Julie McGarry is full of praise for the support Mathew provides.

She said: "Mathew was the first person I met when I went to Golden Friendships Club.

"He introduced me to people as I was nervous and because of his encouragement I now have a great group of new friends."

As well as helping others Mathew is a keen photographer with a special love of old photographs. He regularly goes out and about taking pictures of historical landmarks.

This wasn't always possible as

he suffered from anxiety.

He explained what changed: "I suffered from bad anxiety and Martin Kirkwood, my support worker, took me right out of it.

"He encouraged me to think more positively about life and every morning when I wake up now I have a positive attitude."

Mathew's enthusiasm to help others and his passion for photography recently landed him another ambassador role, this time for Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

After completing the Picturing Our Past photography project run by Inclusive Images social enterprise, he was asked to join a small group of participants to help advise HES on how to make their buildings and activities more accessible for people with disabilities.

This involved a visit to Stirling Castle where the group discussed any changes that would benefit and improve the experience for people.

Mathew said: "A few weeks back Charlie Sherry from

Inclusive Images took me and some others to Stirling Castle as I couldn't have got there myself.

"Together in the group we discussed wheelchair users and how they would benefit from a lift being installed to allow them to have the same experience as others."

Being a member of other clubs before Golden Friendships has given him a better understanding of how to make people with disabilities feel welcome.

This and his own experience make him perfect for these ambassador roles.

He said: "I'm not a support worker but I like to think the ones that reach out to me, can trust me.

"My role is to be there for people.

"I would never lose patience or get angry or stressed with them. They can come and speak to me, and I'll treat what they tell me in confidence."

Mathew had many people help him and their attitude had a lasting positive effect on his life, now he wants to do the same for others.

To view Mathew's photographs, visit Mathew Kelly's Photography page on Facebook.



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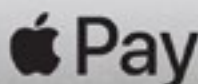
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Women Warriors

Words by Amanda Eleftheriades and Photos by Katie Kennedy

There is a small room in Dumbarton's Leven Valley Campus which once a week plays host to a group of female fighters.

The women range in age from early twenties to seventies and at first glance might appear an unlikely tribe.

But spend a short time with them and the bonds of comradeship, trust and friendship are clear to see.

Each of the group face their own daily struggles with the pressures life throws at so many women.

But on a Friday morning over a cuppa and a slice of toast they make time and space to breathe and be there for each other.

Volunteer facilitator Fiona Upton explained how it all began: "I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia in December 2020 and told I'd never be able to work full time again.

"During the pandemic Janice O'Connor from the Corra Foundation contacted me to see if I would be up for starting a women's group as she knew there were a lot of women struggling to cope with the extra

pressures of the lockdowns."

Following conversations with local women to identify what they wanted the group started meeting regularly from March 2022.

It was to be a space for the women of Dumbarton West.

Fiona added: "Corra supported us in the beginning, we use their room for free; financially they gave us grants for activities from our first day.

"It started with me and the two Monicas, and we've just grown from there."

Now with 10 regular members the group have tried their hand at a range of well-being activities and holistic therapies; they've organised days out and residential for themselves and their families and earlier this year became constituted and opened their own bank account.

At the start they were supported by Janice, a project worker for the Corra Foundation who also lives and is based in Castlehill.

Fiona said: "I knew Janice from studying my Community Education degree back in 2014, I was on placement with the

Council and had the privilege to work alongside her.

"It was enlightening for me, Janice is an amazing person.

"She has built my confidence up, believed in me, given me the emotional strength to do the role of facilitator for the group. She cares and is passionate about her role too.

"As a facilitator I went from quite low confidence to being immensely proud of what we have achieved together."

Some members shared how the Empowering Women group is changing their lives.

Angie said: "I feel as if I am taking more time for myself as I have been struggling with Mum-guilt.

"Through coming here I'm starting to realise I need to take time for me and not feel guilty – the group helped me do it. This is two hours a week for myself."

All the group agree they prioritise this precious time together wherever possible.

Monica explained: "Sometimes you can be feeling really down and then you come in here and

Fiona said: “We had a barbeque, the ladies had a kids-free night, had a few drinks, a fire pit and shared some really personal stuff together.”

For older member Margaret the group has been a real lifeline.

"I was really ill early in the year; my organs failed and I was housebound. I had been so independent and active before but being stuck in the house I was getting into a right depression.

They are also making plans for a return to Carbeth in the Spring and a kids' summer camp.

Fiona summed up why the group is so important to her: "I am immensely proud of our women's group, we are like an extended family."

“When I hear some of their laughter, it’s comedy gold and



And they enjoyed it so much they returned for the September weekend, this time with their kids.

"It was very busy the first night, like a big sleepover, but lots of

“Coming here has been a lifesaver for me; they even made sure I got to Carbeth.

“You can come in here feeling down and go out feeling brilliant.”

For some this group has been the first step to becoming more active in their community.

Margaret is now a leading light in the local Sewing Group while several of the women are part of the local Social Change Action Group.

And in September the Empowering Women group

when I've had a rough day they cheer me up.

“They also look out for each other; the bond is incredibly strong.

"To be part of something like this is incredible, but knowing I helped to create it gives me the best feeling inside."

**To find out more about the
Empowering Women group
email: [empoweringwomen
dumbartonwest@gmail.com](mailto:empoweringwomen
dumbartonwest@gmail.com)**



And Breathe...

Words by Angela Clark & Photo by Claire Love

Local Reiki practitioners in Clydebank are offering free classes to help people relax and deal with stress.

And as Christmas approaches this is needed more than ever.

Anne Murray started delivering the free classes as she knows how much stress can impact on our mental and physical well-being.

Anne said: "I thought it was an excellent opportunity to help people by running a group that would help them connect and deal with stress and anxiety without having to worry about being able to afford it."

Reiki helps people get into a relaxed state that helps release tension in the body which improves their mood.

This allows the body to relax, reduce any pain they may be experiencing and improve their mental state.

She continued: "When we experience stress, we stop caring for ourselves, we don't eat or sleep.

"What we are trying to do in Reiki is rejuvenate our energy

through meditation.

"These sessions are a safe place that allows people to breathe and switch off for the time they are here."

The festive season is a time of year that puts a lot of extra pressure on people, especially those with children.

Reiki practice allows you to gather your thoughts and make wise decisions. As a result, children are more relaxed and happier as parents are less stressed.

Anne said: "People don't have money, and we live in such a materialistic world. The kids want loads more items, often things outside of family budgets.

"Parents get themselves into debt and it is just a vicious circle."

Reiki practice encourages people to have gratitude for what they have.

Especially for the simpler things in life like health, happiness and contentment, over the belief material things will make them feel fulfilled.

Sharon Thomson, who attends the free Reiki classes said: "I was diagnosed with terminal cancer, and I am grateful to be alive today.

"Reiki helps me be at peace with myself and allows me time to relax and solve any problems I have.

"The visualisation through meditation we do in the class, takes me to a place where I feel safe and happy and it's always a place with nature."

Another participant of the group Karene O'Neill said: "This group has made me realise what is important in life.

"It has helped my mental health, helped me relax more and improved my sleep. It has given me coping tools I can use throughout my life."

Reiki is for everyone to enjoy and learn to slow down and appreciate the meaningful things in life through relaxation.

Pop along to the Hub C.E Centre, Kilbowie Road, Clydebank on a Thursday from 1pm to enjoy a free Reiki session.

SPONSORED EDITORIAL

IMPROVING LIVES

Improving Lives are excited to announce that we are launching an independent advice and guidance service for Self Directed Support (SDS).

Working together with the SDS team at West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership (WDHSCP), and funded by Support in the Right Direction (SIRD) funding from Inspiring Scotland, Improving Lives are looking forward to spreading the word about the benefits of SDS and helping people navigate the process.

We have a series of coffee morning information sessions planned at our Improving Lives Hub in Clydebank over the coming months and we'd love people to come along, ask questions and find out more.

We will also be out and about in the local community, so keep an eye out for our advisors!

Self Directed Support is for everyone in Scotland who needs social care services or support and it offers choice and control to individuals and carers who meet the eligibility criteria for access.

SDS is underpinned by the values of respect, fairness, independence and safety and is underpinned by four principles – participation & dignity, involvement, informed choice and collaboration.

To access SDS people must have an assessment of their needs completed and once eligibility is established a budget would be generated



that is linked to agreed outcomes for the person.

SDS is delivered through four options: –

Option 1 – the supported person gets a direct payment and uses it to arrange their own support

Option 2 – the supported person decides what support they want and it is arranged for them

Option 3 – the supported person asks the HSCP to decide and arrange support for them

Option 4 – the supported person uses a combination of the above three options

At Improving Lives we are passionate about personalised and holistic approaches to support everyone in our community.

We know the difference support can make to people facing challenges, their families and carers.

This has always underpinned our work and we are excited to be delivering a service that will increase awareness of SDS for people across West Dunbartonshire.

You can find out more about SDS, our information sessions and the other supports we offer by contacting us on 0141 237 4560 or checking out our website at www.improvinglives.co.uk



Rails and Long Tales

WORDS & PHOTOS BY LAYLA BLACKWELL

As the flashes of passing colour fade quickly into and then from view, I reflect on my journey.

Adventuring is not something I usually get to do in my life and as the train shudders along the rails, I am content.

There is peace in the unknown and untravelled land.

This is as close to freedom in life as I get.

A freedom I had to pay for of course and book in advance to have.

But in this moment, I have nothing but gratitude that I have the health, the support and confidence to make this journey.

Much of my life has been filled with isolation and solitude, despite my best efforts to combat this.

These are common factors for

those with disabilities.

There are a lot of factors we must consider to enable us to have social lives.

Our health being the main problem, we also need to have the suitable support and the finances to cover our extra needs.

This makes any journey more difficult.

In the times before now, I have travelled by myself and hoped it would serve as a catalyst for the life I wanted.

Those miles I filled with hope and the possibility of the unknown. Thoughts of unfamiliar faces, places, and stories to tell.

That journey takes bravery and confidence of a different kind.

This journey, however, I booked with the intention of heading towards security and

familiar faces. I feel like a stranger to myself but in the best way.

I've always preferred travelling by train, less cramped and slightly less inaccessible than the bus.

When it works, it's as smooth as the tracks it follows.

When I first started taking the train, you had to book train assistance by phone 24 hours in advance of travelling. This was to ensure that someone was there to meet me and assist with getting the wheelchair on and off trains.

These days they recommend six hours and there is an app to book assistance, it's called 'Passenger Assistance,' I was pleasantly surprised how simple it is to use.

However, an increasing number of stations are now unstaffed.

These stations have contact



points only and it means you'll have to rely on the staff on the train to assist with the ramps.

The driver of the train gets notified but there is no guarantee that the next train will be achievable. I would recommend booking assistance in this case.

I also book ahead when I have a particular time I want to be somewhere.

Even at manned stations, different trains have different ramps, and you need the right one to match the train to the platform.

Also, different stations have different layouts and can prove quite difficult to navigate, especially quickly if you need to make a change on to another train.

I also recommend going from end of the line to end of the line, when you can, this gives you more time to get situated.

Booking ahead is the best way to ensure less stress but at the end of the day, it's the attitudes of the people around you that can make or break a journey.

The more helpful and understanding people are, the less stressful things can be.

That's in all things and not just rail travel.

Life won't always go to plan, be realistic about your expectations and try to be flexible and understanding when things go wrong.

That's just my general advice, I don't always get what I want but usually I will get what I need, with a cheerful outlook.

I try to remember that travel is supposed to be fun.

This part of my life is new and at times, I let my anxiety slow me down, but it will never stop me.

I've learned what I want in my life and the concessions I am willing to make.

It's a daily fight but I am prepared, willing and capable to pick up my sword and shield to defend my ideals.

That has been the largest journey I've undertaken and one I will continue to build on.

My sense of self is vital in this adventure.

As I settle down to watch the blur of unknown places and faces, the traces of paths unchosen fading into the distance as we hurtle past. I grip my ticket a bit tighter in my hand. Glad to be moving forward and into the unknown beauty of what tracks lay ahead for me.

I don't know where I am going but I am grateful for the journey.

SPONSORED EDITORIAL

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU



Millions of people across Scotland, including here in West Dunbartonshire, face a bleak winter.

They're worried about the cost of food, their energy bills, keeping their home warm, mortgage costs and the cost of living in general.

To add to these problems, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) is now implementing the "managed" migration of Tax Credit (TC) claimants to Universal Credit (UC).

This could prove to be a challenging process for people who have been in receipt of TC for many years as they are forced to move from a straightforward paper-based system operated by HMRC, to the online, real-time UC journal process.

They will also enter the world of conditionality and potentially sanctions should they fail to maintain their journal.

Although DWP is offering assurances Job Centre staff will take a light-touch approach, UC claimants will be expected to seek better paid work and/or ask employers for better pay or increased hours.

If they haven't already, Tax Credit claimants will soon receive a letter (the Migration Notice) from DWP advising their Tax Credit claim is being closed and explaining the process for claiming Universal Credit.

Tax Credit claimants will have three months from receipt of the Migration Notice to lodge a Universal Credit claim and secure transitional protection.

Tax Credit claimants should be clear – their Tax Credits claim will stop. It is being replaced by Universal Credit. There is no other option other than to allow your TC claim to be closed.

There is a period during which TC claimants who apply for UC will have transitional protection.

Claimants applying for Universal Credit before they receive the Migration Notice or after the three-month deadline will lose any transitional protection.

Tax Credit claimants who do not make

an application for Universal Credit will lose entitlement which may also affect Social Security Scotland payments (e.g Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant, etc.)

It's a stark message and we estimate over 1,000 households in West Dunbartonshire could be affected by this change – adding further financial pressures to those already struggling.

Child Poverty Action Group research on earlier pilots shows around 30% of TC claimants did not apply for UC during the migration period which would result in a significant loss for some households.

We fear local people will not understand or will find the UC claim process complicated and/or journal management too cumbersome.

If you have received a Migration Notice telephone us on 0800 484 0136 or contact us via our website www.wdcab.co.uk

Worried This Winter?

Millions of people are worried about their energy bills, keeping their home warm, and the cost of living this winter.

West Dunbartonshire Citizens Advice Bureau is taking part in the nationwide "Worried This Winter?" campaign run by the Citizens Advice network in Scotland.

If anxious about your bills and keeping your home warm – seek advice.

Last year WDCAB helped 5,448 people and unlocked £1.65m in client financial gains and debt write-offs through things like social security payments, employment entitlements, and benefits in-kind.

Check out our online information pages and interactive self-help tools to see how to boost income or cut costs at **www.cas.org.uk/worried**

CLAIM WHAT'S YOURS – CLYDESIDER CAMPAIGN

The Cost of Living – My Story

BY JENNY FULTON



When people talk about the cost of living they talk about fuel poverty and food poverty, but what does that actually mean to the average person?

I am gonna give you all a little insight to my life in the middle of the cost-of-living crisis.

I get paid every fortnight which is every second Tuesday.

This has always made it difficult for me to plan and budget, skills I had to learn from scratch again on my recovery journey.

I spend over 35% of my benefits on fuel.

They say if you spend over 10% on fuel, you're living in fuel poverty. So, what is my situation then??

And even though I put in over a third of my benefit to gas and electric I spend approx three days before I get paid with no heating or hot water.

I run out of gas.

Usually, my gas cuts out on the Saturday night and I am left until the Tuesday morning to cope with this. This happens every single fortnight.

The effects on me are far-reaching.

I have chronic psoriasis. Not having hot water means I cannot clean my skin properly.

I use boiled kettles, but I need several to wash my skin and even though I do try to keep up with this routine wither I have hot water or not, there is nothing more depressing and challenging than facing a freezing cold bathroom and trying to be thorough with my skincare two or three times a day.

My skin gets worse over winter, and I am now battling daily infections and escalating painful weeping sores, so I have been referred to dermatology.

A prime example of how the cost of living directly impacts

the NHS.

So, I need to wash my skin at least twice a day to put all the creams and lotions on it and this is no easy task.

All those boiled kettles only add to my electricity bill. This continually impacts my mental health and well-being.

I also use the kettle to do dishes and to clean. Again, adding pounds to my electric bill.

Then I use a small electric fan heater in the living room. This is really expensive to run and I am only willing to put it on for twenty minutes at a time.

But as soon as you turn it off the room cools down really quickly. After 20 minutes it is freezing again.

My house is becoming cold, damp and very uninviting.

Consider my circumstances; I am someone who has an unhoused mind* and am trying



to gain the tools and skills to create a home. This is not the environment for me to do this.

*An unhoused mind is where a person has no skills or tools or experience in creating a home for themselves. They struggle to create a place where they feel safe and settled, a base for them to go to relax and recuperate from the world. Somewhere they can find peace and safety.

Trying to change a mindset from high alert and feeling vulnerable and unsafe to being comfortable, relaxed and at peace. It's a work in progress for me.

I have lived like this before but had some understanding of why I did.

My chronic addiction saw me without heating, hot water and even electricity but the need to feed my habit always took precedence over these things.

I am now over three years clean and sober. I do not understand why I am having to live like this now.

I hear people say they cannot afford take-aways or to eat out due to the cost of living.

Well for me and so many others, because over 35% of my benefits goes on fuel, I am struggling to spend anywhere near the amount I need to feed myself and my partner Steph good food every day.

I cannot afford a big shop every fortnight. So, with choices limited, I have got into the very bad habit of shopping daily.

Often Steph and I meet after our days are done and count out how much money we have between us before we decide what we can afford to eat that night.

This means I cannot plan meals for the week.

And when we wait until 6.30pm or 7pm to see how much

money we have, the last thing you want to do is go shop, then prepare a dinner.

So, we are depending more and more on poor and unsubstantial meals.

Pot noodles, cheap microwave dinners, beans on toast, are becoming the norm.

Steph and I spent many years hungry, choosing our habits over eating, so it is very easy to slip back into old ways of going to bed hungry rather than facing the supermarkets at night with pennies in my pocket and feeling panicky and sick with anxiety.

Taking so much time as I go round the aisles adding up the cost of my shopping. The feeling of panic as I go through the tills, I find it very distressing to ask to put things back when I don't have enough cash to cover my shopping, or I have added it up wrong.

Recently I got home at 6pm. Steph and I put what money we had together, and it came to £10.

That was to buy dinners, snacks etc for three days. However, we needed washing powder - a necessity as my skin is so impacted with trying to cope with my lack of washing amenities that I can only wear two specific pairs of baggy trousers which need to be washed every other day.

We needed salt. My partner is already extremely thin. He is naturally thin but because of the years he spent starving himself, choosing his addiction over food, it has left him on the tipping point of being extremely underweight.

It may not seem important or even healthy to some, but to buy food and not have salt is just going to encourage him to not eat at all.

Washing up liquid - we need to wash our dishes as we only have four plates and



four bowls. It's enough for us if we can wash them. And lastly, we needed deodorant.

So, this took the £10 down to £3 for food for three days.

This again leads to buying noodles or cheap micro meals or toast and beans or soup.

Or what is happening more and more, we are just not bothering to source dinner at all.

Feeling hungry going to bed, trying to get to sleep, was a thing I thought I had put behind me in life.

It is not just lack of heating, hot water or food that is the issue, it is the negative impact these have on my ability to keep myself and my partner healthy, both physically and mentally.

The lack of being able to plan is very unsettling for us.

Living without care for our welfare is a role we can very easily slip back into, and this could easily lead us back to chaotic and unhealthy lifestyles.

I am extremely fortunate to have an amazing team to support me and who carry me when I need it. However, for most in my position they don't.

They turn to their doctors, to hospitals to community-led projects and right now these amenities are looking just as vulnerable as the people turning to them.

I know you all must be feeling the cost-of-living crisis both personally and professionally.

It is important we share our stories and keep sharing to get those who can make change happen, to listen and take notice.

Photography by members of Chance2Change, in partnership with Inclusive Images and Clydesider Creative, as part of a project commissioned by the Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland and funded by the Burdett Trust for Nursing. Chance2Change is a peer support group, which has also taken up an expert reference role (lived experience) for the Scottish Government Primary Care Health Inequalities Development Group. Chance2Change is based in Drumchapel, Glasgow and was first established in 2017 through a QNIS small grant awarded to a local practice nurse. In 2023 the group was commissioned by QNIS to undertake photojournalism work exploring health inequalities. The topics included homelessness, grief, trauma, early deprivation and neglect, addiction, poverty, and physical ill health. These topics were all part of a professional development programme for community nurses and midwives, and Chance2Change have produced some thought-provoking images that are helping us better communicate our work.

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Unlock energy-saving tips that'll save you money on your bills and help reduce your carbon footprint too.

Choose from air fryers, heated clothes dryers, fitness watches, and more. Take the quiz now and be one of the 25 lucky winners*.

Enter here:



Competition closes at 11.59pm on **Sunday 24 March 2024.**

* Terms and conditions apply. See our website for more info.

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WARM SPACES

Clydebank

Kilbowie St Andrews Parish Church -

Warm space open every Wednesday from 10am - 2pm. Free food/hot drinks are available.

The Salvation Army

- Community Cafe, Sylvania Way South - Wed & Thurs 11am - 1.30pm. Donation only.

Dalmuir

Dalmuir Barclay Church – Drop-in

Tots - Teens on Weds 10am - 12noon; Cafe & Community Pantry and Craft Group Thursdays 6.30pm - 8pm & Drop-in café & Community Pantry on Fridays 11am - 2pm

Improving Lives Group Hub -

9am - 5pm Mon to Thurs and 9am - 3pm on Friday. Men's Group every Thursday and Sunday 9.30am - 2pm. Warm space offering free tea, biscuits plus advisors available.

Old Kilpatrick

OKFP Chatty Cafe

serving food, tea/coffee and a place for a blether from 12 - 4pm Mon to Fri. Closing December 22, due to move to Napier Hall.

OKFP Community Food Pantry

is open for emergency food on Tues, Wed & Thurs from 12 - 2pm.

Dumbarton

Food for Thought

- Community Soup & Sandwich in St Augustine's Church Hall, Wednesdays 11.30am - 2pm.

Ben View - Warm & Toasty Breakfast Club. Tues & Thurs 9.15am - 11am, Ben View Resource Centre

St Augustine's Church Hall - Soup Club -

Fridays 11.30am - 2pm & St Patrick's Church Hall, lunches every Mon 11am - 2pm

Phoenix Community Community Cafe -

Castlehill, Dumbarton - Weds & Thurs 12 - 1.30pm; breakfast Tues 8am - 10.30am - now donation-based.

Lennox Evangelical Church Soup Spot -

12 - 1.30pm every Tuesday.

Tullochan Community Social Hub -

Tuesdays 3pm - 5pm Board games, TV and Wifi, free soup, tea, coffee and snacks. Open to everyone. 9am - 11am Poplar Road, Dumbarton.

Alexandria

Renton Football Club -

Every Thursday Tontine Pavilion 12noon - 3pm tea/coffee, food pantry, wifi & chat.

BENEFITS SUPPORT

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU - Freephone 0800 484 0136 (Mon-Thu 8:30am - 4:30pm, Fri 8:30am-3pm) www.wdcab.co.uk

WORKING4U MONEY - West Dunbartonshire Council's money advice service providing support with benefits, debt and money issues. Call 01389 776929 or email wrmass@west-dunbarton.gov.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: www.cpag.org.uk/scotland/welfare-rights/scottish-benefits

ENTITLED TO - free online benefits calculator blog: www.entitledto.co.uk plus 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. Martin Lewis of the Money Show is one of CAP's patrons.

To access support call their Helpline on 0800 328 0006 (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



SPONSORED EDITORIAL



Dumbarton Area Council on Alcohol (DACA) Festive Fun....Without the Hangover

As we head towards another festive season, the opportunities for overindulgence abound.

Parties and get-togethers at this time of year are often boozy events, and it can be difficult to keep control of your alcohol intake in the whirl of social activity.

Here at DACA, we want everyone to have a safe and hangover-free festive period, so we're sharing some top-tips for moderation.



- Preparation is key, so when you're doing your Christmas food shopping, be sure to include some tasty alcohol-free drink options in your trolley. There are loads to choose from, including beers, wines and even spirits. You'll be the coolest host and your sober guests will be thrilled.
- If you've got a full social calendar, make sure you consciously plan for some alcohol-free days – 3 per week ideally. Your body will thank you for it.
- Day drinking can become normalised during the festive period but drinking Bucks Fizz for breakfast or bubbly with lunch can set us on an unhealthy course for the rest of the day. Leave your alcohol consumption as late in the day as possible, ideally until after you've had dinner.
- Always try and pace your alcohol intake, spacing each alcoholic drink with a soft drink in between. If your tummy feels full, you're less likely to drink as much.
- Sip your drink and put your glass down between sips. If you hold it in your hand, you'll sip more often.
- (Always be careful not to leave your
- drink unattended in a public place. Anti-drink-spiking covers are widely available – collect yours from DACA).
- If you're going to a pub or club, set a budget in advance. Decide how much you're comfortable spending and stick to it. Keeping track of costs = keeping track of consumption.
- Avoid 'rounds'. If you drink in a round-buying group, you might end up pacing yourself to the fastest drinker in the group. It's much better to opt out and drink at your own pace. If you are buying rounds, stick to your soft-drink spacing plan.
- Do you give booze as a Christmas gift? It's not always obvious when a friend, colleague or loved-one is struggling to control their drinking, and giving them alcohol as a gift could cause unintended harm. Avoid any pitfalls by keeping alcohol off the gift list.

And if you do find yourself struggling at this time of year, remember the DACA team will be working throughout the festive season, and we're just a phone call away. You can call us on 0141 952 0881 (Clydebank) or 01389 731456 (Dumbarton).

Happy Christmas from DACA!



Working4U is a service which supports West Dunbartonshire residents seeking employment opportunities, provides assistance with benefits and debt issues, helps to access learning, gain qualifications and improve digital

- Community Learning courses

How to Contact Us:

We are based in Alexandria and Clydebank Library every Tuesday from 10am - 12 noon, pop in and see us.

Or

Complete the online referral form at www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/jobs-and-training/working4u/how-do-you-access-our-service/

Or Email:

AdminEmployability@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Further information can be found on our web page at <https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/jobs-and-training/working4u/work/>

Interested in attending our courses?

Check out the advert opposite for details of courses starting in January 2024.

literacy.

Our Aim:

"To support customers and communities to improve their skills, learning and financial situations, assisting them on their journey into work and protecting the rights of our citizens."

Working4U Work offers a wide range of services which support West Dunbartonshire residents who are unemployed or employed, including parents, young people, or anyone looking to get back into work, to gain qualifications or move into a new job.

Working4U Can Help With:

- One to one support for learning, training and finding work
- Funding for training and/or costs associated with starting work
- Assistance with application forms and CVs
- Employability advice and job specific training
- Support with CV writing, application form filling and Interview skills
- Intensive job search assistance
- Work experience/Volunteer opportunities
- Improving numeracy skills through multiply courses



It's never too late to learn!

Boost your skills and confidence at our free community Adult Learning classes, starting January:

- Core Skills:** brush up your reading, writing and computer skills
- Wellbeing:** group activities to help you feel better
- SQA qualifications** in partnership with West College Scotland:
- Multiply:** give your numeracy skills a boost
- ESOL:** English for Speakers of other languages
- Child Care; History; Criminology; Cooking; Textiles; Gardening**

Contact us to find out more:

01389 738775
cld@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

TRAINING COURSES

Steps to Excellence

Starts Jan 24 - Are you ready to challenge yourself and build your confidence and motivation? This course once a week over 6 weeks will help you make positive change in your life. Contact to find out more!

Ready2Thrive

Start 29th Jan- Aged between 16-24 and looking for one to one support to help you progress towards your goals? Over 12 weeks we will support you with: Increasing self confidence, Motivation, Get back into a routine, Goal Setting

Thrive

Start 29th Jan - Aged between 16-24 and looking for support to help you progress towards employment?

12 week programme that helps you work towards your goals at your pace with support to help you develop your confidence and life skills.

Emergency First Aid

1 day course - 18th Jan - Would you like to know more about first aid and update your CV with a new qualification? Course covers CPR, choking, general first aid responses.

Volunteer Programme

Start 29th Jan - 7 week training programme including a 4 week volunteering placement. Upon completion you will have achieved a Volunteering Skills Award

Customer Service Skills

3 day course - 22/23/24 January- Customer service skills in retail and hospitality, Create a positive impression for customers, How to identify customer needs, How to handle difficult situations, Safe sale of alcohol overview

REHIS Health & Safety

2 day course - 17 & 18 Jan - General overview of workplace health and safety and is accepted by employers as proof of basic H&S awareness.

This certificate can also be used to qualify for the CSCS Green Labourer card exam.



Photo Competition - Black & White



WINNING ENTRY
by Mark Woodliff

Thank you to everyone who entered the competition.

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

The theme for our Issue 27 photo competition is **Water**, see page 42 for details on how to enter.



RUNNER UP by Scott Chisholm



RUNNER UP
by Gavin MacDonald



COMPETITION ENTRY
by Corrina Lacey

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**Your MP, working for
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Here to help...

In the past year I've provided advice and support to more than 2,000 constituents living in West Dunbartonshire.

As your MP I hold weekly advice surgeries across Clydebank, Dumbarton and the Vale. I also offer virtual surgeries via phone or video call. Appointments can be booked via my website: **www.martindocherty.scot**

If you'd like to get in touch please email me on martin.docherty.mp@parliament.uk, or call my local constituency office on 0141 952 2988.

Thanks, Martin



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



Why Mentors Matter

Jamie MacLean explains how life experiences led him to set up Mentor Scotland

Photos by Chris McCaughey & courtesy of Mentor Scotland

Like many people in Scotland, I was brought up with little and life was chaotic.

I was brought up an only child by a single mum, she done great by me although things were very tough.

She suffered severe trauma at an early stage in her own life and carried this burden with her whilst bringing me up.

I have other siblings from my dad who I care about although we never had time with each other to form strong relationships, this is something we have gained as adults.

My father was a drug addict and he himself struggled with mental health issues from an early age until he passed away.

The relationship between him and my mother was very fractured and some memories I have of them are toxic and inharmonious, seeing them fight

and my mum being seriously assaulted.

We had drug dealers at the door looking for money with weapons that would scare anybody, never mind a young child confused, scared and feeling unsafe.

I cannot thank my mum enough for removing us from that situation.

Life was difficult and seen us have many moves throughout my childhood, I would need to use two hands to count the number of primary schools I went to.

This theme of moving made it exceedingly difficult for me to find my place wherever we were. It is always easier to fit in if you act out and this was an effortless way for me to be what I would perceive as being popular.

My behaviours in secondary school were less than satisfactory for myself and those around me, I was constantly

disruptive and getting into situations that caused problems.

I have recently understood a little more about myself as an adult and may have the answer to that however it is too soon for me to know.

These behaviours were with me out of school as well, trying to fit in and doing anything daring to get me recognition and status in whichever group setting I was in.

After my behaviour not getting any better my mum seen that I moved away and move in with my auntie.

This was okay for awhile as I had a plan to train and join the army.

I started training to get into the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, seemingly all going well training and passing all my tests.

I come home on leave and went out partying and like, I decided to take ecstasy. However, my inability to control myself meant I continued to take them until I overdosed.

This was a life-threatening overdose which left me critical in the high dependency unit in the Vale of Leven hospital.

On recovery my mental health plummeted.

This left me struggling with paranoia; going out at the weekends I could not stay out on a night out as I felt like everyone was looking at me or talking about me.

I would often try to drink through this and get myself in such a condition that I would be aggressive in nature.

Looking back now I see I was in a constant state of alert (fight or flight), I don't feel like I was ever a bad person however I understand why people would avoid me.

I was always overly self-conscious of myself, and this added to how I felt about myself.

My early 20s just seemed to be average.

My group of friends and I were into a sesh (drinking alcohol and taking recreational drugs) and that's what we done, sometimes four days a week.

I was reckless and the sesh came before anything.

Even the birth of my first beautiful daughter was not enough to slow me down, although at this time I knew there was a bit of a problem, and I was still letting people down. Not showing for work and making other people's life difficult.

I could not be where I am now without being open and transparent.

My actions led to me hurting the people that loved me the most. I decided to leave my family and continue living life how I wanted to live it.

Which still wasn't constructive for others, and I soon fell into a deep depression whilst continuing the

journey where I partied hard for a few days and lay depressed for a few and dragged myself to work; this cycle continued until I could not cope any longer.



It got to a stage when I was 27 I was suicidal and the ideation of suicide ruminated in my mind over and over for longer than a year, I can only describe this feeling as a deep black rotting pain in my gut, and in my mind

countless plans of how I can kill myself.

That's the harsh reality. I sat in my own final resting point on many occasions sometimes loaded with recreational drugs and alcohol.

My experience of the NHS throughout this ordeal was something I feel was always non-existent.

My GP never considered me to be in danger enough to need any special help other than medication.

Thankfully this passed.

I put this down to someone persuading me to consider starting to train in a gym. I agreed and in time I grew in confidence and even seen a difference in myself.

I slowly started to see a good person, a caring loving person that I know I am.

I am far from perfect, and I sometimes let myself down, however I'm now on a journey



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where I enjoy life and what it has to offer.

I also have a purpose and my purpose is to support those in our community who are suffering.

People need not suffer alone, and this is where Mentor Scotland comes in.

I have long wanted to set up something locally to help support those struggling with their mental health.

Ever since I felt better, I felt called to do something.

I worked in a children's residential through the coronavirus pandemic and that is where I learned about trauma and understood its effects on children and adults.

If trauma is left it can affect us in so many ways.

It helped me realise my drinking habits were a trauma response which helped me mask the problems I had.

In September 2022, I created a post on social media declaring my desire to move forward and create a group to support people with mental health struggles.

This was the beginning; the response was great.

I had a grand plan and like any good plans it fell by the wayside.

However, I proceeded without any finances to support the

cause and with a few chance meetings with people who wanted to get on board after seeing the social media posts, we had a team ready to go.

I must give a special mention to Men Matter who I spent a little time with volunteering and who provided us with Asist Suicide prevention training.

On Friday October 21, 2022, my second daughter was born, just as beautiful as her sister.

A week later Mentor Scotland hosted its first Men's group in Ben View Resource Centre in Dumbarton.

We had a drop-in tea, coffee and people came along and said hello.

We had our first talking group of seven and all the seven guys who showed up left feeling better than they had coming in the door.

It was a successful night and the start of what was to come.

We have now celebrated our first birthday and I couldn't be any prouder of what we are achieving.

Attendances upwards of 25 on Friday night. We have links with the NHS in the addictions and recovery project at the Joint Hospital and we get referrals from the local GP Link workers.

We now cater for everyone over 18 and we will look to reduce this

to 16 in due course.

We have our drop-in and our separate men and women's talking groups and we are seeing people walk through the door feeling low and in a matter of weeks making strong connections and feeling comfortable enough to share what is holding them back.

We aren't offering anything more than a safe, confidential, and non-judgemental environment for people to talk openly.

Our other activities have included football, walking group, badminton, and cold-water exposure.

We had a charity football match in the Tontine Park where we raised £1150.40 and we're looking at our next steps to provide a more comprehensive service for the community.

We are very thankful for all the support that the group has been shown.

My own life continues to grow, and I become more responsible for myself with every passing day, I have found out many things about myself in the brief time that the group has been running.

I know that I hold the key to how my life is going and it is my own responsibility to move forward in a positive way.

Through the group I learned I also may have ADHD which



would account for why I struggled so much in school and wasn't able to concentrate on one thing at a time which continued into adulthood and makes my day-to-day life very difficult if I am not organised.

Thankfully, I have coping mechanisms in place to help me get through.

On that note I would say the group is there to support everyone, however we are not there to do it for you. We are

here to support you to do it yourself and to learn from each other.

We continue to meet in Ben View Resource Centre on a Friday evening for our drop-in and talking groups from 5.30pm to 10pm.

And we have just opened our second men's talking group in Alexandria Community Centre. We will be there every Wednesday from 6.30pm - 9.30pm and our women's group

is adding a bi-weekly drop-in at Ben View Resource Centre from 12 - 2pm.

I would personally like to let everyone in our community know it's okay to open up, people do really care, and we are here to support you.

Our motto is 'End the Stigma' and that's our aim - ending the stigma attached to mental health.



MARIE MCNAIR
MSP for Clydebank and Milngavie

NEED HELP OR ADVICE?

Every day I help constituents with their problems. I will always do everything I can to support you.

As your MSP you can contact me by email or phone. I also regularly hold Advice Surgeries across the Constituency where I am available to listen and help. You can book an appointment by emailing or calling me.

Email: marie.mcnair.msp@parliament.scot

Tel: 0141 737 8010



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Sharing Stories Creatively

BY THE CLYDESIDER TEAM

'A picture is worth a thousand words', so the saying goes, and our first Community Exhibition created a buzz of conversation.

The light and airy surrounds of Dalmuir Barclay Church provided the perfect setting for the event which brought together all aspects of our work at Clydesider Creative.

On display was the artwork created by local groups we worked with as part of our Community Media and Creative Storytelling project.

This included a creative

photography project we designed for Crafting Together CIC to showcase the heritage jewellery made by their young makers with additional supported needs; quilting workshops with Isaro Community Initiative who shared their creativity and stories in their stunning patchwork quilts; a cleverly illustrated comic from the creative young minds of Duck Duck Dragon and the environmental artwork and mural created by Neighbourhood Networks members using and inspired by nature.

Using more traditional

media techniques we also showcased the social media campaign we created with local carers accessing support from Carers of WD and the information leaflet produced with members of Kinship Care West Dunbartonshire.

These creative storytelling and community media workshops are part of a three-year project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund Scotland.

They aim to encourage people who are often underrepresented in mainstream media to



"Great range of activity and support happening and amazing art work"





“ You never know the talents a community can have until you have a space to showcase it ”



creatively share their stories at events such as the Community Exhibition, as well as in the magazine.

The Exhibition also included a showcase of contributions from our talented Clydesider volunteers, with a selection of their poetry, photography, features, cartoons, and quizzes on display.

With a monitor and headphones set up in one corner of the hall, visitors also had the opportunity to watch some of our Take a Minute heritage videos.

And it wouldn't have been a Clydesider event without our community and creative partners being involved.

Susan Laws Artworks and her helper Finn got the creative juices flowing with their autumn arts table while Lin Pin showcased examples of her felted artwork and the early stages of felting created by Maggie's Yarn Buddies for our current creative storytelling project.

Over on the Community Information stall partners from Social Security Scotland and Carers of WD



“ Such a wonderful day of community sharing ”

were on hand for advice while several representatives from local third sector and statutory services popped in for a browse and a chat.

Around 100 people attended the Exhibition which was our contribution to the Scottish Mental Health & Arts Festival

Their theme this year was 'revolution' and we hope our collaborative, creative and positive approach which puts our community at the heart of the storytelling process, can help revolutionise and develop a media that matters to all.



“ What creativity, support, advice and friendship is on offer. ”



“ Definitely came out feeling happier and more positive than when I went in. That's the 'Clydesider Effect'! ”



Room for Every Voice

by Mary Irvine

In the centre of Dumbarton is the Church where Charles Rennie Mackintosh married Margaret Macdonald on August 20, 1899.

Established in 1873 the church of St. Augustine (of Hippo) recently hosted a series of events to celebrate its 150th birthday.

Among them a special Eucharist, an all-community festive lunch, and, a vintage Rennie Mackintosh tea, with the Helensburgh String Quartet.

This is a church that has moved with the times to meet the modern day needs of the whole community as well as maintaining its Christian values and worship.

A centre, not only for the spiritual but also for the wider community of all beliefs and none.

It hosts regular entertainment events, a foodbank, a warm hub, there is a hall for hire containing all the modern technology any meeting would require.

And several community-led groups such as Every Voice Choir use it as their base.

It was the choir I had come to

visit.

The seed which led to the formation of the choir was sown some seven years ago.

Fiona Kane, a dementia advisor with Alzheimer Scotland who has an interest in music as therapy, approached Bryan Marshall, the musical director of Westerton Male Voice Choir and founder of the Sing Aloud singing for pleasure groups.

She wanted him to be the Choir Master for a new group. Numbers attending the first meeting in the Church's small hall were in single figures.

Originally it was planned as a six-week project, with initial funding coming from the Life Changes Trust.

However, when this ceased the members decided to continue with their own 'Purple Fund-Raising Club.'

The choir now numbers 70 to 80. They are people living with dementia, their carers and extended family, specialist carers and anyone who wants to sing.

Two of the original members, Liz and Betty, are still regular attendees and in charge of the all-important refreshments and

social gathering.

Rehearsals now take place fortnightly on a Wednesday afternoon in the nave of the church.

There are no auditions, and a warm welcome is extended to everyone in the community, regardless of age or creed.

This was reflected when Jesse was treated to a rousing rendition of 'Happy Birthday' as she was 93 years old that very day and newcomer Paul was welcomed with a round of applause.

A welcome was extended to me, and I felt myself drawn into the joy, enthusiasm, and the commitment.

The Choir Master has an excellent rapport with the choir members, who have an obvious close relationship both with Bryan, who exudes and evokes enthusiasm, and each other. Bryan has seen from experience the positive influence singing has on people's lives and wellbeing.

He said: "Leading Every Voice Community Choir, along with the dedicated team at Alzheimer Scotland, is an absolute honour for me. "The fabulous members are an

inspiration to me every time we sing together.”

Several people, each with their own reasons for joining, shared with me the benefits of belonging to the choir.

Kate Donnelly, an NHS carer, was with Margaret. She told me she can see Margaret’s face light up with joy when she realises she is going to the choir.

Margaret can follow the words and likes to dance to the music. Kate said it is a great atmosphere which both she and Margaret enjoy.

The choir has featured on BBC’s Make a Wish, performing with the Scottish Ballet for their 50th birthday and performing at the Festival Theatre, Edinburgh.

There are also plans afoot for a collaboration with the Scottish Chamber orchestra.

I attended the performance arranged as part of the Church birthday celebrations, along with some 100 others.

I even got a mention as Bryan told the choir they had to be the best as a ‘member of the press’ was there!

The Choir didn’t disappoint.

Their versatility shone through with an eclectic mix of songs. I loved the a cappella ‘Rula Sana’, a South African lullaby and the poignancy of Burn’s ‘Ae Fond Kiss’.

At the other extreme was a raucous and enjoyable ‘Drunken Sailor’ to the audience accompaniment of foot stamping and loud, salty ‘oorays.’

Dementia in whatever form is no respecter of age, gender, creed or standing. It can strike at any time and affects every member of the family. They all live with the diagnosis.

Music has always been believed to have therapeutic properties for all and this community choir bears genuine witness to that belief.

I paid two visits to the choir. What did I come away with? Apart from enjoying the singing, it’s good to laugh and we should do more of it!!

I shall certainly be attending their next concert – why don’t you join me?

To find out more about the Every Voice Choir or other support for people with dementia contact Alzheimer Scotland on 0141 4105306.



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Ivory Satin

A Short Story by Leslie Hills (1996)

My wedding dress. It's on the top shelf of the cupboard in my bedroom underneath the blankets we discarded when the duvets came in. The box is grey with age and the tissue paper brown and scratchy. I lay it on the bed and lift out the dress, high and I shake it till the skirt flows, just so, across the bedroom carpet.

It's ivory satin with long beaded sleeves that come to a point and a short train. Even a train that length meant saving the clothing coupons for months. We'd waited and waited for so long, right through the depression when there was no proper work for him, saving every last penny so we'd have the money to do it all properly - the deposit on the house, which was cheap because Glasgow was thought to be risky for bombs; the furniture, only the back bedroom was war utility furniture and the rest we got from Wylie and Lochhead; the wedding, full tid and a reception at the Ca d'Ora; my wedding dress from the bridal department at Frasers.

And here it is, fifty-five years on, still perfectly beautiful. But not quite perfect. Look here. See where the satin folds into the train and look closely, here at the hem. It's more like a spot of rust than anything. But it's not. It's blood.

Oh, we'd waited so long and then the war came and by Christmas 1940 we knew it was going to go on and on. So we decided on April 12th 1941. I spent January scouring the fabric departments and finally settled on my ivory satin and they offered to make it up for me, very reasonably. I had my wide shoulders and hips even then, of course, but there wasn't an ounce of extra fat on me. The girl had me put on a white cotton slip and then she measured me top to bottom and all round while the saleswoman wrote it all down, in a black notebook. I wonder what happened to that notebook.

Over the weeks the dress took shape. She had wonderful hands that girl. They cut and stitched and pinned and smoothed, like you never saw. She was just a wee thing, always dressed in black with a white apron, her tape measure round her neck and a pad with pins on her left wrist. She was pleasant enough, but you felt that once the dress was on you, she saw nothing but the dress. The dress was the thing. She'd pin a bit, then stand back eyeing and thinking; then she'd kneel and pin and suddenly the line flowed. She was a marvel. When the fitting was done she'd smile, a big smile, say "good morning" and leave. We didn't talk much, but by the time it was nearly finished I felt easy with her. You got the impression she really cared.

We'd been out at our new house. It was special. No-one we knew had ever bought their own house before. On the edge of Glasgow it was, with parks near and a school right on the corner. We were planning ahead. But it was miles from the river so when the bombs started falling and we saw the light in the sky, we could still get a bus back to the east end without much bother. And when we got there my mother was in the kitchen, just sitting.

My father had a good job. In his fifties, when the railway yards got too much for him, he was lucky. When the big ships docked in the Clyde with their holds full of cargo, someone had to go and get samples so that everyone knew that the cargo was what it was meant to be. That was what my father did. He had a leather bag and lots of little bottles and boxes, some of them special, carved and made of ivory and the like, and he'd go to the Clyde and fill his boxes with grain and cement and spices and all sorts and take them back to his office where the chemists analysed them.

So, he was in Clydebank when the bombs started falling.

He never heard the planes. One minute he was walking up the street away from the river and the next the buildings around him were falling down. He wrapped his scarf around his face, to try to keep the dust from his mouth and then it was all confusion and shouting. There was a woman running in a petticoat, blood streaming down her face and he tried to help her but then the ambulances appeared and there were police everywhere. My father wasn't young and suddenly he couldn't breathe. He stood for a minute, leaning against a shop door, but then the building began to shake and he ran for the middle of the road and just stood, breathing as best he could. When the dust had cleared a little, a green basket chair with a flowery cushion still on it had

appeared from nowhere, right in front of him. He sat on it and tried to clear his lungs. A couple of ambulance men came by but my father said he was all right and they should look after folks worse off. He just wanted to get home. That was the one thought in his mind. To get home. The ambulance men said that was going to be a problem. There was no transport out of Clydebank that night unless you were injured or dead. And then there was a howling and the house opposite fell down and the chair collapsed.

My father picked himself up and started to walk home. Through the bombs and the broken houses and the shouts and the screams. He said to himself that if it was his time, it would be for him and if not, well, he'd get home.

And so he walked right through it and out the other side. Hours later his key turned in the lock and my mother stood up. So stiff she could hardly take a step. They put their arms around each other and went to the bedroom. It was the one night in their whole married life, I think, that she didn't take out his piece tin and clean it, ready for the morning. So I did it. After all, I was practically a married woman. All his bottles and boxes stood in their little compartments and nothing was broken.

I was tired the next day, and so glad he'd been spared I was a bit light-headed.

I went for my final fitting. It was a sharp bright March day and I jumped off the tram, ignoring the awful newspaper placards, one of the lucky ones. The seamstress was late but nothing mattered today. I waited and tried out a few poses for the photographer, in the big mirror. I have to admit I was pleased with myself. She came in. There was just the hem to finish. I stood tall and white, you wouldn't believe it now, in the sunshine. It was spring and there I was like a big white crocus on the green carpet, starting out. A perfect new beginning. I smiled, just at me.

She was on the floor crawling around. And suddenly she said, "Sorry! Oh, I am so sorry. It just slipped."

I looked down where she was hunkered, her head forward, one hand clutching the other, on her chest. The satin rose around me as I sank down beside her. Her face was thin and white as white, except for her eyes which were creased and puffed and red-raw. She held up her finger. A little blob of blood plumped out and she caught it on her other hand. The one with the pin cushion on the wrist. The red blood smeared across her palm. She clutched her apron over it and up around her neck.

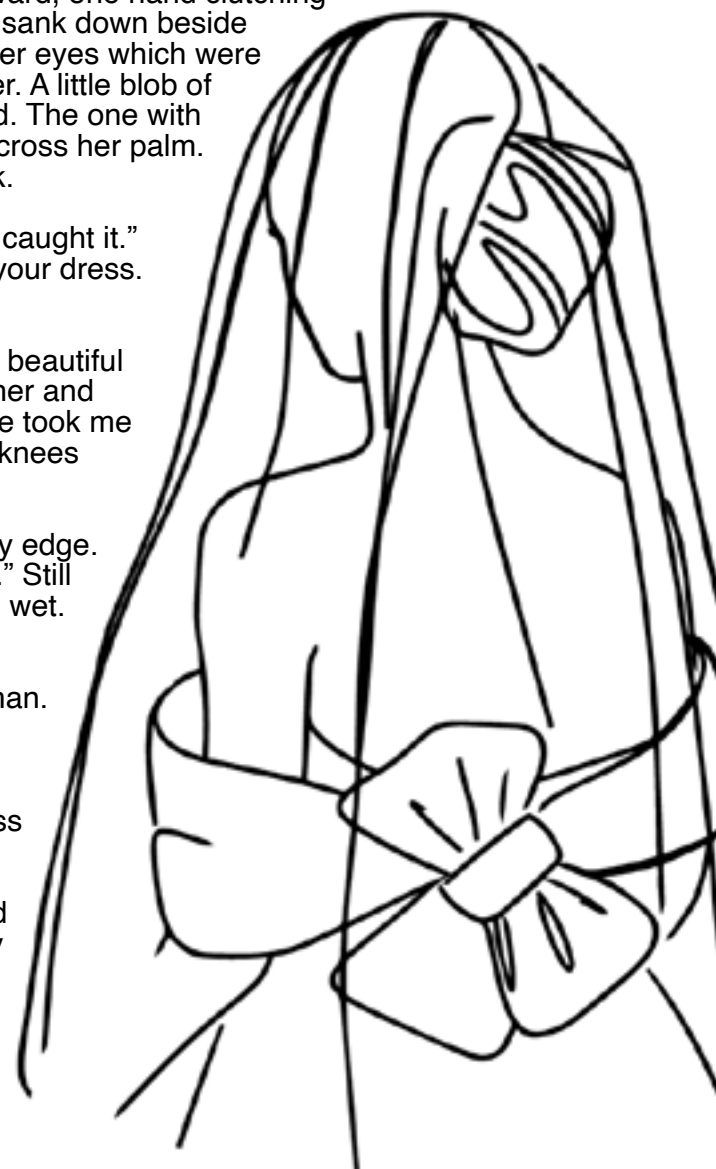
"There's no harm done," I said. "It's not a tragedy. You caught it."
"It's too late," she said. "It's too late. There's blood on your dress. On the hem. Look."

I looked and there it was - a tiny spreading spot on my beautiful dress that had been perfect. We crouched there together and suddenly I felt quite sick. I turned, reaching out and she took me in her arms and sobbed and sobbed. After a while my knees started to hurt.

"Come on, now," I said, "It's only a drop. It's on the very edge. We can turn it under and stitch it in. No-one will guess." Still she sobbed, her apron up round her neck catching the wet. Her voice whispered raw, close to my ear.

"My sister..... She got a house in Clydebank with her man. And the baby..... All three of them. All three of them."

She was still holding me there on the floor when the buyer came in and took her away. I packed up my dress as best I could and carried it home to stitch the little brown stain into the hem. But when the time came to do it I didn't have the heart for it. I left it there to remind me. To remind me to live my perfect new life minute by minute. But of course, mostly, I forgot.



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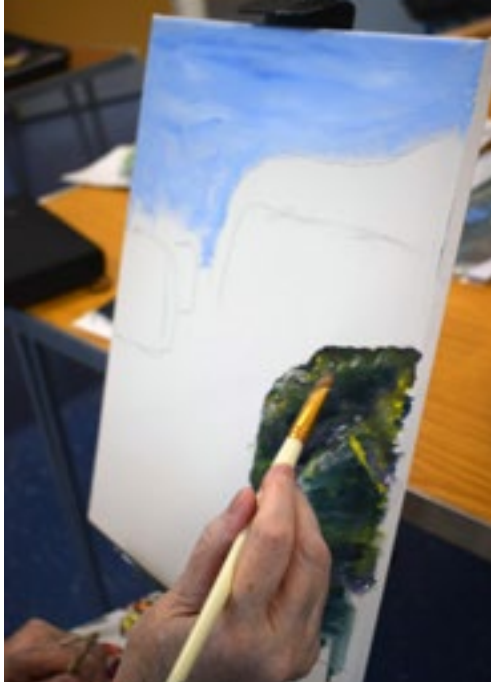


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CREATIVITY & FRIENDSHIP

Words and Photos by Jenny Watson

Pop into Dalmuir C.E Centre on a Wednesday morning and you will find a hive of creative activity as members of the Wee Scottish Art Group work on their latest artworks.

Originally coming from different art groups locally and wider afield, the members, aged 50 to 80+ years, with varied creative experience in multiple mediums, meet weekly to put brush to paper.

With the vast range of skills and styles in the group, they often help one another and even arrange tuition sessions.

One member is a former art teacher and another a retired architect, so the range of expertise is extensive with a good pool of knowledge to learn from.

Group member and co-secretary Margaret said: "Individuals are so completely different in their talents.

"We are not just artists, a lot of us have many abilities - some embroider, and one member is currently working with special intense paints on t-shirts."

Recently the group had an exhibition of their work in the Town Hall Gallery in Clydebank with over 20 pieces of work on

display.

"We did quite well. The exhibition ran for a few weeks, and we sold nine pieces.

"We used to exhibit more throughout the year but not many places offer gallery space any more and some charge quite a lot in display fees" said fellow co-secretary, Ellen.



The art group have an established committee, which is quite unique, with two people filling each of the office roles.

"We have two secretaries, two chair-people, two treasurers. When one is not able, the other does. It's made it much easier for everyone concerned because you don't feel the pressure." Margaret explained.

Each member of the group contributes a set amount of money monthly which covers their lot of the room, materials,

equipment and even teas and coffees.

They also previously received funding to help them with organised trips to galleries and museums. Linnvale Community Bus helps them with their transport and for that, they are very appreciative of the service.

If you missed the exhibition the Wee Scottish Art Group's work is always on display in Foodfillas cafe in Sylvania Way in Clydebank shopping centre.

These pieces can be bought, with all proceeds being donated to Macmillan Cancer Support. So far, the group has raised over £320.

"The owner of Foodfillas is very supportive of our work and would like our arrangement to be ongoing for as long as possible. When one piece is bought, it's replaced by a new one as quickly as possible," said Ellen.

The group also regularly share work and updates to 'Call Yersel a Bankie' on Facebook.

"Art is something that takes you into another world. Something we all look forward to but the best thing about the group, is the friendships," Margaret added.



LET'S GROW WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

by Rose Harvie

Here we are, nearing the end of the year.

Hopefully your gardening has been enjoyable and productive. If you concentrated on growing fruit and veggies, you should still have a good store of spuds, brassicas, and soft fruit.

Some of your crops – peas, runner beans and fruit, can be best stored in the freezer; tomatoes can be turned into chutney, and fruit into jam.

Now is the time to assess what was successful and what crops you would not grow again.

One of the most important crops is surely garlic.

It is easy to grow and should be planted before the end of the year. Garlic likes cold winters and hot summers!

Most garden centres and all the seed catalogues will sell bulbs of garlic. You should separate the individual cloves before planting about 10 cm apart. It is worth covering the rows with netting, to prevent hungry birds pulling out the little green shoots.

If you separated strawberry runners, they should be growing well in their little pots by now, ready to plant in the spring.

Continue to keep on top of the weeds, which will continue to grow if we have a warm winter; and cover the veggie beds with either green manure, rotted compost, or manure.

Now is also the time to order your potatoes for next year.

Every gardener (and their family

members) has their own favourite variety of spuds – waxy or floury!

Whatever variety you choose, they need to be ordered now, or carefully inspected if you have stored them in boxes in an outdoor shed or porch

You may want to save some of your favourites for next year or buy new varieties.

In any case, you should 'chit' your spuds in a cool dry place at least a couple of months before you plant them, to allow them to start growing shoots. Egg boxes from your supermarket are ideal for chitting spuds.

Sit each potato in an 'egg space', making sure the little shoots are the right way up! Store in a shed and the shoots will start growing. Don't forget to label the potatoes.

It is worthwhile checking you have bought or ordered all your seeds, whether flowers or veggies.

With Christmas just around the corner, now is surely the right time to drop hints to your relatives about any equipment you would like! Community gardens can start to organise their space for next year, and encourage residents without gardens to join them.

And finally, it is worthwhile talking to your local West Dunbartonshire councillor and pointing out there is an enormous waiting list for allotments and suggest various 'un-used' sites that might be suitable.

Happy gardening everyone.....

Christmas Greenery by Mary Irvine

Many people like to decorate their houses at Christmas with real plants such as holly, ivy and mistletoe.

Although there are songs and carols linking these plants with Christianity, they were originally used long before Christian times in the celebration of the winter solstice, a looking forward to the new growth of Spring.

Holly was male and ivy female. They were believed to keep evil spirits away.

Rather than stop people using this greenery new meanings were given.

Holly was said to represent the crown of thorns worn by Jesus at his crucifixion, whilst the berries represented his blood.

Ivy needs support to live, something to cling to, just as Christians cling to Jesus.

Mistletoe is a parasite that needs a host to survive.

The Druids had a ceremony

of cutting the mistletoe from the sacred oak (one of many hosts).

They believed it had mystic powers and could defend against evil. As it is green all year round it was also regarded as a symbol of fertility.

The modern idea of kissing under the mistletoe probably comes from Norse mythology but was made popular in the UK in Victorian times.

VALUE in VOLUNTEERING

LITTLE FACES

Words & Photos by Katie Kennedy

Hedgehog numbers in the UK have dropped from an estimated 30 million in 1950 to under 1 million in 2018, putting them on the UK's endangered list.

At Hogwatch Dumbarton, a rescue rehabilitation and teaching centre for hedgehogs, they are trying to change this.

Started two years ago by a kind, compassionate local lady, Dawn Sharkey, who transformed her husband's double garage into a rescue centre specialising in critical lifesaving care for hedgehogs struggling to cope and survive.

Dawn explained the animals' biggest challenges are the loss of hedgerows and erecting of fencing which fragments their habitats. Also, the use of pesticides and slug repellents and getting trapped in things like netting or falling down holes.

Squeak (pictured top right) is a hoglet who fell down an open drain missing its cover, a passerby heard her screams 22 inches down and called Hogwatch, who travelled to pick her up and take her back to the centre.

As you can see from her little face,

Squeak is becoming stronger.

Usually, they would be euthanised but Hogwatch have built a great relationship with a local vet practice and they work together with medications and critical care to do everything humanly possible to give these injured or disabled animals healing and a full life.

At the teaching and rehabilitation centre there is hydrotherapy available, and stookies for broken limbs are all part of the incredible care.

If you spot a hedgehog some things to cause concern - out in the daytime; sitting still not moving for long periods or being trapped.

Hogwatch Dumbarton is currently fundraising to invest in new insulated hutches, and vital incubators and to complete the insulation of the infirmary roof. They are also recruiting new volunteers.

To find out more about training to be a hedgehog foster carer or ambulance driver, or to donate to this good cause, please contact Dawn on 07712 254382 or via the Hogwatch Dumbarton Facebook page.



Creative Spotlight Musical Youth

BY ANGELA CLARK

PHOTO COURTESY OF EVIE MCCOLGAN

Teenager Evie McColgan hopes to carve out a career in musical theatre and inspire others to do the same.

The St Peter Apostle pupil auditioned for The Voice Kids show with her singing partner Jack. The duo got through to the blind audition although unfortunately never made it any further.

Evie said: "It was an amazing experience, it is something I will remember for the rest of my life.

"If I applied again, I would have to do the adults, but I feel as if I've done it now and I just want to remember it that way because it was such a positive experience.

"Now I'm a bit older I would be doing it myself, but it is possibly something I'll think about in the future."

For now, she is happy to busk and do gigs which see her travelling across the country.

She is also part of the Clydebank Musical Society Drama Club and landed the lead part of Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz.

She continued: "My main focus at the moment is the show, it has been an absolute whirlwind, it is amazing."

And she is keen to encourage other young people to find their voice.

"My real passion is to become a vocal coach and inspire other young people to sing.

"My vocal coaches helped with my confidence so much, it would be amazing for me to do it for another young person."

The schoolgirl's musical journey started after her brother Lewis enrolled in the Singer Station School of Music in Balloch. She joined shortly after and has been singing ever since.

She said: "That's what sparked my interest in



vocal coaching others.

"I saw many young talented kids who didn't know their worth, they didn't know how to show their full potential and I just feel like it would be amazing to help other young people."

The young singer has already taken steps to fulfil her dream and is teaching one day a week at the Singer School of Music while studying for her exams.

She then plans to take a gap year before applying for college places which will likely see her move to London.

Evie added: "I am taking on every opportunity I can. You never know what can come of stuff or who may spot your potential.

"I would say to anyone who enjoys singing to go for it. I have been fortunate to have the support of my family, they are my biggest fans."

Check out Evie McColgan's Music page on Facebook.

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

Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis -
Support line 08088 00 00 14
Mobile Number 07743807844

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 -
provides a range of mental health support
services: in person and via telephone and
video call

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

Alternatives Community-based Recovery
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Photography Tips & Techniques

By Harvey Smart

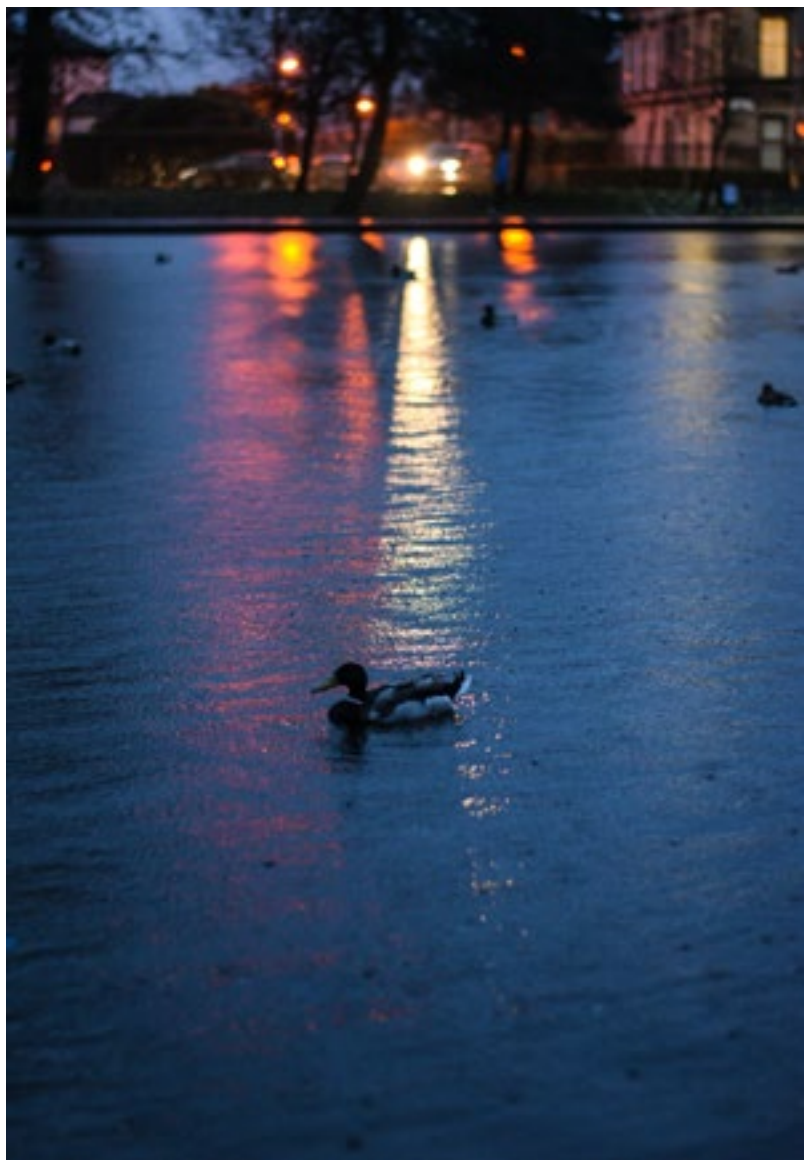
For this issue's photo competition, I've decided to pick the theme Water. You might think water is boring, but it actually offers a lot of creative possibilities for photography. There also seems to have been quite an abundance of it lately! Here are some tips and ideas to help you take photos of water:

Subject - Water is a versatile and fascinating subject that can alter its form and texture, depending on the temperature and the environment. As we head into winter, water will take the form of snow, frost, or ice, which can create beautiful and dramatic scenes that capture the essence of winter. You can photograph the intricate patterns of snowflakes, a sparkling landscape coated in the early morning frost, or the way the surface of an icy puddle cracks when you step on it.

Reflections - A fantastic way to add another interesting element to your shots. The obvious example for this is the reflections on a mirror-calm surface of a loch or pond, but even in the city, a humble puddle can add a whole new dimension to a subject. Simply get down low to find the best angle to catch reflections. You can also experiment with different perspectives to create unique and surprising images.

Shutter speed - Shutter speed is the key to capturing the motion and texture of water because it determines how fast or slow your camera records an image. A fast shutter speed will freeze the motion of water and show its details and splashes, while a slow shutter speed will blur the motion of water and create a smooth and silky effect. Experiment with different shutter speeds to change the look of moving water sources, such as waterfalls, rivers, or waves. You may need to use a tripod or a stabiliser to avoid camera shake when using slow shutter speeds. On some devices there is a flash or a burst mode you could try to capture fast-moving water shots.

Water is a wonderful and versatile subject for photography, always present here in Scotland! Just by using different techniques, settings and angles, you can find a new interesting perspective on what might seem like a boring subject. Whether you are shooting in nature or in the city, you can always find water sources with potential to enhance your photos, from that dirty puddle by the side of the road, to the glassy surface of a mountain loch in the morning, to the snow dusting the peaks of distant Munros. The next time you go out with your camera, look for water and experiment with its many possibilities. Think outside the box, and most importantly, have fun!





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CLYDESIDER PHOTO Competition

Sponsored by **JESSOPS**

Theme: Water

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Closing date: Feb 9

Email entries to:
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CLYDESIDER POETRY Competition

Theme: People

Prize: £25



Closing date: Feb 9

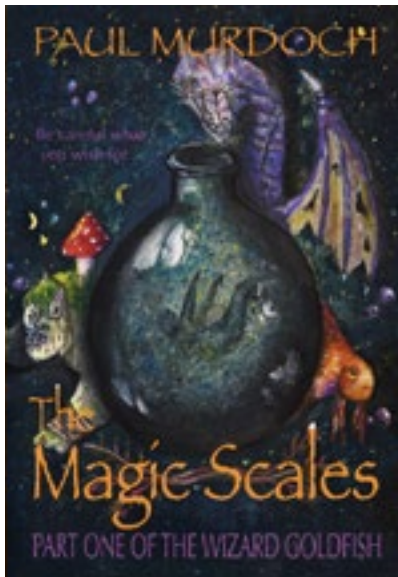
Email entries to:
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Rules: One entry per person for each competition, entrants must live, work or be part of a group in West Dunbartonshire; all entries must be your own, by entering you give Clydesider permission to publish your work in print or online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

READER RECOMMENDS

BY MARY IRVINE

'THE MAGIC SCALES' BY PAUL MURDOCH



Local author Paul Murdoch talks to Mary Irvine about how being asthmatic inspired his latest book.

Living with asthma

"At four years old I remember rolling down a grassy hill on a summer's day. I tried to take a breath, but I couldn't. This carried on throughout my childhood. Sometimes I would be fine, but then I'd start wheezing – usually when I caught a cold - and I just got used to it. I wasn't formally diagnosed with asthma until my early 20s."

How did asthma inspire your story?

"I have two sons who live with asthma. Joe has it mildly while Ryan has more severe symptoms. When Ryan was 11, he had a really bad attack. We were on holiday staying in a very damp cottage. Ryan ended up in hospital and was there for four days on a nebuliser; it was a really scary time.

To entertain him, I began telling stories about a boy who had adventures in fantasy lands with dragons and monsters. He was frustrated with me because

I kept forgetting the characters' names and wanted me to write them down, so that's how the idea for my books were born."

The hero, James Peck, lives with asthma. Why?

"Ryan asked me if could make the main character have asthma like him, so I did. People with asthma are often portrayed as weak in films and books, so I wanted to show children with asthma they are just as able and their condition shouldn't stop them doing things. Just look at all the people with asthma who achieved great things, like David Beckham and Bradley Wiggins.

The book also mentions James using his asthma inhaler. Hopefully this will help kids who are embarrassed to take out their inhaler in front of their peers, and help spread the message that, when managed properly, asthma need not be a barrier to living a full, healthy and adventurous life."

Review of 'The Magic Scales'

Although this book will probably be categorised as 'Young Adult' and end up in that section in most libraries I know many

adults would enjoy the story, especially if they are into fantasy.

All the elements are there - adventure, magic, excitement, drama, together with that touch of humour so characteristic of this author, who has a fantastic imagination.

All are woven together in a story packed with action which keeps the reader spellbound to the very end. The characters are well written, distinct, and believable – even the fantasy ones. Particularly intriguing is the wizard goldfish, Mendel.

An important aspect of the book is the hero, James Peck, who lives with asthma. This is one of those 'hidden' disabilities that can be ignored but James (or rather Paul) shows how a boy deals with asthma while embarking on his quest. There are occasions, not overdone, when James' asthma does come to the fore but with Mendel's help, he overcomes those times.

A well-crafted book all round and a joy to read good writing. I would recommend you join James in his truly 'fantastic' quest to find his father.

CLYDE & BAXTER

By Steven Hastings



Clyde's built a snowman. He called his new pal Albert. What's that Baxter's got? He seems to love it a lot!



Now Clyde's decorating his tree for all his friends and family to see. Oh no, Baxter's running away in the lights but he doesn't seem to mind.



It's nearly Christmas day, Clyde's got his pals round. They're all loving the mince pies but the festive fun has tired Baxter out!

WONDERFUL WINTER WONDERLAND WORDSEARCH

All these Christmas and Winter words are split into categories. All the words from each category can be found in the grid, going Left, Right, Up, Down & Diagonally. Words that are split with a / can be found in the grid separately.

C	L	A	O	S	O	C	B	C	A	K	V	S	N	A	M	W	O	N	S
B	A	U	L	T	M	A	H	D	R	O	Q	T	A	L	D	I	L	Y	O
D	I	R	N	N	P	Q	O	R	A	F	J	U	H	Q	O	G	F	H	C
T	H	Q	D	E	Q	U	M	B	I	E	A	W	A	U	N	H	A	O	H
C	Y	I	U	S	J	A	E	K	L	S	M	I	I	L	L	N	M	L	O
S	F	C	A	E	P	T	A	O	E	L	T	A	S	Q	I	B	I	M	C
E	P	I	S	R	T	Y	L	Z	I	H	F	M	V	U	T	T	L	I	O
L	R	C	T	P	X	H	O	M	L	O	R	C	A	K	M	P	Y	S	L
B	E	L	R	W	N	P	N	A	U	Q	P	T	B	S	A	V	R	V	A
U	F	E	Q	G	E	L	E	T	Y	U	Q	S	N	O	R	S	E	Q	T
A	Q	S	U	V	M	I	V	L	L	O	H	U	C	H	I	A	F	U	E
B	U	C	H	A	E	R	O	S	L	L	E	B	E	L	G	N	I	J	P
E	R	O	Y	W	S	N	W	I	M	A	Z	L	S	A	E	T	N	Z	H
M	L	H	L	H	I	E	F	A	Y	E	K	N	O	D	M	A	T	O	S
A	T	C	L	A	W	M	E	L	J	O	I	C	I	W	H	I	J	I	N
R	L	F	O	W	U	L	C	A	K	E	Q	I	P	E	F	S	L	E	I
Y	A	E	H	Z	C	B	N	E	L	U	L	S	T	W	M	A	H	Y	O
X	M	I	S	O	F	R	O	S	T	V	B	F	V	A	S	O	I	E	C
S	T	F	A	Q	U	A	L	M	I	S	H	O	L	M	A	L	N	R	L
E	N	M	I	S	T	L	E	T	O	E	G	T	E	E	R	T	S	E	Y

Decorations

Baubles
Fairy
Holly
Mistletoe

Films

Elf (2003)
Home Alone (1990)

Sweet Treats

Cake
Quality/Street
Chocolate/Coins

Songs

Jingle Bells
White/Christmas

It's Christmas

Cards
Presents
Santa
Family

The Christmas Story

Mary
Wisemen
Donkey

Winter

Frost
Icicles
Snowman

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WHAT'S ON IN WD

UNTIL DECEMBER 15

Faifley Arts Group's Little Arts of Love Exhibition in Clydebank Town Hall will be raising funds for Mary's Meals from 9.30am - 4.30pm Mon - Fri. All welcome

2 - 9 DECEMBER (EXCLUDING 3RD)

'Pirates of the Leven' DPT Panto. Denny Civic Theatre, Dumbarton. Doors open 7pm. Tickets £7 available from McDermids Keystore in Dumbarton and The Scandinavian Shop in Helensburgh

7 DECEMBER

Remembering Through Gathering. Is there a piece of writing that best communicates your experience of lockdown? Share it as part of a special 'reading lockdown' event. Dumbarton Library 11am - 1pm. All welcome

9 DECEMBER

Believe Dance Academy Christmas Fayre, 8 College Way Dumbarton. 2pm - 4pm

17 DECEMBER

FireCloud Nativity See the Christmas story brought to life in music and drama. Doors open 6.30pm starts 7pm at St Margaret's Church, Clydebank. Donations welcome on the door; £4 (£10 family) or whatever you can afford. Mince pies in the hall afterwards

19 DECEMBER

'Stars of Christmas' Singer Station Music Show. Denny Civic Theatre Dumbarton. Doors Open 6.30pm Tickets £12. Call 07481 204437 to book

20 DECEMBER

Community Carol Service, 2pm, Salvation Army Sylvania Way South, Clydebank. Free to all

20 DECEMBER

The Christmas Main Event Music Night. Denny Civic Theatre Dumbarton. Tickets £12 Doors open at 6.30pm. Phone 07340 827411 to book

15 JANUARY

Beginner Family History 11am - 12.30pm, Dumbarton Heritage Centre, Dumbarton Library, Strathleven Place, Dumbarton. Free admission no need to book

22 JANUARY

Advanced Family History 11am - 12.30pm, Dumbarton Heritage Centre, Dumbarton Library, Strathleven Place, Dumbarton. Free Admission no need to book

27 JANUARY

Artists Talk - Textile Artist Eve Campbell 11am - 12noon Alexandria Heritage Centre, 1st Floor Alexandria Library, Gilmour Street, Alexandria. Coming soon via Eventbrite

8 FEBRUARY

Talk on the Argyll Motor Works. 2pm - 3pm Alexandria Heritage Centre. Free admission no need to book

12 MARCH

Talk on Dumbarton and the American Civil War. 2pm - 3pm, Dumbarton Library. Free admission no need to book

CHRISTMAS TREE HEARTS & STARS

Every Wednesday & Saturday in December, pop into Salvation Army Sylvania Way, Clydebank to add a wish, prayer or memorial to the Christmas Tree.

LOMOND FOLK CLUB

Free friendly Folk Club. Every Monday at 8.30pm in Mavi Kitchen and Bar, Balloch Road, Balloch (formerly Corries). Come along and join in or just sit and listen. Raffle and free snacks at the break. Contact: donaldnelson71@yahoo.com

BIG HAPPY NOISE COMMUNITY CHOIR

Thursday evenings 7.30pm - 8.30pm. Try group singing in a fun, informal way. Run by FireCloud, no experience necessary or need to read music. All welcome. Our Holy Redeemer Church Hall Clydebank, G81 1PH

EMPOWERING WOMEN GROUP

Fridays 9.30am - 11.30am Space and activities for women to unite, break down barriers and reduce isolation, Corra Foundation office, Leven Valley Centre, Dumbarton

BOOK CLUB

Mondays 11am - 1pm for further information contact: lisa@comlinks.org.uk call 0141 952 4382

MAGGIE'S YARN BUDDIES

Improving Lives Hub, Dalmuir Wednesdays 10.30am - 2.30pm, tea and biscuits provided

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MPC ENERGY LTD



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Since 2017, MPC ENERGY LTD have been providing heating and insulation solutions to customers to help keep homes warm.

MPC Energy have access to funding streams for energy efficiency measures and you may be eligible for government funding under the flagship ECO4 scheme.

We install the energy efficiency measures below, so get in touch to see how we maybe able to help:

Internal Wall Insulation • Cavity Wall Insulation • Room in Roof Insulation • Loft Insulation • Underfloor Insulation

High Heat Retention Storage Heaters • Non-Condensing Gas Boilers • Back Boilers • First Time Central Heating

Air Source Heat Pump • Solar PV

There are many ways you can save energy, money and the environment by upgrading your home and the ECO4 Scheme is your key to getting the funding you need.



We are awaiting your call - or alternatively, email, or visit our website:

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PAUL JAMES

HOME & INTERIORS



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