

ALL HAIL THE TRAIL

Since it was started and continued with BID support, the Linlithgow Ale Trail - now the Linlithgow Trail - has been a resounding success.

This can be measured by the fact that Linlithgow Pub Watch has seen this (now self-financing) addition to the town's attractions give out almost 20,000 T-shirts to those who complete the Trail.

This has not simply translated into custom for the eight participating pubs, with stag and hen parties, birthdays, or groups of friends out for a good time: Ian Gibson, mine host at Platform 3, and Secretary of Linlithgow Pub Watch, reckons it now generates around quarter of a million annually for the local economy at large.

“People taking part may eat or buy gifts in the town, and many like the town so much they return with family or friends.”

Ian said that since the Trail started in 2014, Linlithgow Town Centre BID (now One Linlithgow) had injected some £13,000 into the venture and the pubs involved had made a substantial contribution, mainly towards the T-shirts.

“We have now provided further improvements to the High Street, with large tiered planters near Platform 3 at the start of the Trail, and close to the West Port Hotel at the finish. We also put up 12 attractive Christmas decorations - four at The Cross, and one each outside the West Port, Black Bitch, Kelpies, The Crown, 1807, Four Marys, and Platform 3. They've been much admired.”



ONE
LINLITHGOW
 BUSINESS. COMMUNITY. ENTERPRISE

UP TO PLENTY IN 2020

The festive motifs aren't the only artwork to be admired in recent weeks. The Black Bitch sculpture at the “serpentine bed” (opposite the Golden Chip takeaway) has been turning heads for all the right reasons. She's an integral part of Linlithgow's heritage and has rightly taken pride of place in the heart of the town.



The tireless work of Linlithgow Burgh Trust's Ron Smith was the primary driving force behind the project. It was funded, again in part by the BID, but also the Town Management Group,

community groups (see previous issue of this magazine) and a very successful local crowdfunding campaign.

After a busy and successful festive season, businesses reported that December's late-shopping evening was by far the most successful to date. Many participants had customers queueing out the door, stocks of mince pies and mulled wine were decimated with extreme prejudice, and the Christmas soundtrack kept spirits bright. Thankfully, the weather was kind this year! It always helps, but the event is really gathering some excellent traction in any case.

Our video of the Advent Fayre reached 11,000 viewers and quite right, too! The event was as magical as ever, with the community turning out in force all day long. One Linlithgow is discussing with community partners (chiefly Linlithgow Community Development Trust) how best to make it even bigger and better in 2020.

Town centre CCTV is finally seeing some physical progress after being beset by delays and setbacks throughout its development. A cabinet has been installed next to the CCTV pole at The Vennel, with underground works, ducting and cable splicing now complete.

The connection will be activated in the coming weeks, after which installer FPG (based at Mill Road) will be able to calibrate the cameras from West Port to The Cross, making that half of the town centre system fully operational. Immediately after that, the second phase (The Cross to Low Port and Regent Centre) will begin. After one round of civil works at The Cross, the full system should be working, since that half of the system is wireless.

Further updates will be shown in this regular submission.



SWEET LITTLE CHEESECAKE CAFÉ

Carol Paton proved the truth of the old saying “every cloud has a silver lining” after she suffered a setback in her attempt to move her successful cheesecake business from Armadale to Linlithgow.

She was unable to secure the High Street premises she wanted - and ended up with a much larger place nearby that allowed her to combine this with her long-held dream of opening a café.

In the short time since it opened, the Sweet Little Cheesecake Café in the former Linlithgow Papercraft shop has proved a big hit with locals and visitors alike.

It offers a bewildering array of cheesecake - naturally! - but also a wide selection of imaginative breakfast and light lunch offerings. The emphasis is on healthy eating and on catering for children.

Carol said she and her partner James, with a five-year-old son, Ryan, knew how tricky it could be to eat out with young ones.

“At the café I’ve ensured that there is a good range of options for kids, and that they don’t just appear as an after- thought on the menu, as is so often the case.”

Carol said that her own background was in events management after graduating from Napier University with a degree in Business Management.

“I really loved the jobs I had, but after I had Ryan the hours were proving too unsociable.”

With the inspiration to bake from her mum and gran, she took several courses to develop her skills.

“I opened up the cheesecake production in Armadale about 18 months ago, and it was a huge success, largely through word-of-mouth. Aside from locals, we had a range of corporate clients. We required more space due to the high demand for made-to-order occasion cheesecakes, plus keeping the shop stocked with freshly made ones.”

Many customers had commented, Carol continued, that it would be fantastic to be able to sit in and enjoy their cheesecake and a coffee:

“When the opportunity eventually arose to have much larger premises in Linlithgow it seemed very much like a win-win situation.”

Carol added that her intention was that the Sweet Little Cheesecake Café would be very active in the local community.

“We want to sponsor local events and support charities in the area. We will also be running frequent competitions for our customers on our Facebook page.”

BRIGHT STAR TOYS

Linlithgow youngsters have been persuaded to lay aside their smartphones and tablets, at least for a time, by a new toy shop in town that is exciting their imagination.

Bright Star Toys can fairly lay claim to the description “traditional” and it’s what it has to offer that is resonating with many young people - and not a few of their parents.

Owner **Ian Melville** has been pleasantly surprised at the change of emphasis he has encountered after more than 20 years in retail in the West of Scotland, mainly in toys and arts-and-crafts supplies.

“The kids here appear to want more stuff that is educational and creative, and I see that on a daily basis, being encouraged by their parents.”

Ian said that he was not attempting to take on the Amazons of this world with expensive “must-have” toys.

“Kids can come in here with their pocket money and purchase something that is fun and affordable, and that they can look at and handle before they buy, which they can’t do online.”

Encouraged by his wife Kristine and 16-year-old son Ethan, Ian decided to branch out on his own and open what is a fairly small outlet in the former Linlithgow Pet Shop.

But it belies its size with its wide range of toys, collectibles, games, jigsaws, and arts-and-crafts materials. Unless you know what you are looking for, browsing can be a lengthy - and enjoyable - experience.

“I had a Pokémon card swap session recently,” said Ian, “and it was a huge success. OK I stock cards, but it was fun to see so many kids swap their own cards with other collectors.”

Ian said perhaps the most popular craft line was Hama beads, with designs being ironed on by parents. He intended to have design sessions in the shop, and he would iron on designs for youngsters.

The most popular range in his shop, he continued, was “Squish Mallows”, which originated in the US.



“There’s another consignment of 12 characters coming in January, and they’re selling fast. They’re being spotted everywhere, and one was even seen recently on Coronation Street!”

Ian is also stocking a wide range of quality models of endangered species, underwater creatures, and dinosaurs.

“We’ve also a large collection of jigsaws from 12 to 1000 pieces, including Harry Potter, Toy Story, Pokémon, Spider Man, and a range of Disney characters.”

And just to prove the “traditional” description is justified, Bright Star Toys have snakes and ladders, ludo, tiddlywinks... and little bags of beautifully coloured marbles!”

