

THE DARVEL BULLETIN

Frank Donnelly Doorstep History Community Action Plan



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We've been telt tae tell ye this winter...



The Darvel Bulletin team would like to wish all our readers a Happy New Year and a big thanks for supporting our Bulletin venture.

Looking back, 2024 has been a very busy year for lots of activities across the town. The Corner continues to be very successful. The 2024 survey conducted in December confirmed that The Corner is a much-loved resource within the town. Not only have the community markets and the Darvélo cycling event proved to be very successful, but increasingly it is being used, as it should be, as a genuine resource that individuals and groups within the town can use.

It was also a good year for awards: Darvel was awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service and we also won the national "My Place Award 2024" from the Scottish Civic Trust and shortlisted for Scotland's Town of the Year.

Darvel enjoyed a sell out concert by Skerryvore at the Town Hall on St Andrew's Night and this was but one of the ever popular musical events that are organised each year by the Darvel Music Company. The Darvel Improvement Group (DIG) continue to provide a very important function in the town – maintaining the various community gardens, especially the Rose Garden, the wonderful display of flowers in planters and the Hastings Square hanging baskets. Sports Darvel has extended its range of activities and is presently making structural adjustments to their hall.

In the run up to Christmas, the town came alive with events and activity that captured the festive spirit. We can but mention a few of these: DIG's ever popular Christmas Fayre in the town hall and the amazing display of Christmas Lights throughout Darvel, particularly at Glen Brig which is now visited annually by many locals and visitors (including Kel from Australia). We had DART's Christmas Market including the local brass band and inevitably some mulled wine. Festive Lights and decorations at The Corner brightened up the centre of town and there is scope for this to be improved upon later this year.

Community entertainment was again a feature of the festive period with the very successful and ever popular Darvel Dinner Ladies annual Christmas lunch for the more senior citizens amongst us. Darvel Parish Church organised its festive Friendship Lunch in the Church Hall. Many folks also enjoyed the Hogmanay Ceilidh at the Town Hall. We also need to mention the support that organisations such as Verve, Warm Welcome, the Food Locker and the Dinner Ladies give to many of our residents throughout the year.

Looking ahead to 2025, Darvel will certainly come back to life after a quieter (and alcohol free?) January. There is a great double bill concert coming up in February at the Town Hall with The McCommitments – an amazing tribute soul band and the Deke McGee Band (who performed brilliantly at Darvélo last May). There will be an extensive consultation as the community compiles information and views that will feed into the next Community Action Plan. Another busy year is planned for The Corner, with more events being organised following suggestions in the annual survey.

With your support we continue as a community to make Darvel a fine place to be.

Very best wishes for 2025.

YOUR COMMUNITY - YOUR VISION

Darvel & District Community Action Plan

LOOKING TO 2037



Invitation to all community members

"How can we make Darvel and the surrounding area an even better place to live, work and visit?"

Tell us what you think during the forthcoming consultation which will take place from March to July. You will be able to provide your views and ideas via:

- Online questionnaire
- QR Code
- Social media surveys on Facebook
- Printed copies of the questionnaire
- Focus Group discussions

**Then come along to the
DARVEL BIG VOTING EVENT
Darvel Town Hall
in September**

Take the opportunity to have a say in how Darvel develops over the next 5 years

YOUR COMMUNITY - YOUR VISION

Darvel & District Community Action Plan 2026-2031

The **Darvel Strategy Group** has begun its planning and preparation for the 2026-2031 Community Action plan. This is Darvel's third Action Plan following the two previous plans for 2014-2019 and 2020-2025.

What is a Community Action Plan?

Community led action planning is a tried and tested way of setting out a vision for a community with an accompanying set of actions to be delivered over time. It is a participatory tool aimed at not only developing that plan, but, in the process, building the capacity of the residents of a community so that there are the skills, confidence, resources and resilience to implement the plan with external support where appropriate and available.

The action plan will be set out in response to the needs, challenges and gaps in a community and identified by the community itself and the implementation of the plan will be rooted in the assets of a community. Under an aspirational statement about what people want the community to be like in an achievable future, there is detail about what will be done, who will do it, how it will be resourced and how it will be undertaken. Delivery is the responsibility of the whole community and one organisation. As a result, a good plan will see existing organisations stepping up to the plate, and new organisations forming.

find the 2020-2025 on the East Ayrshire website:

<https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/D/Darvel-and-District-Community-Action-Plan-2.pdf>

our annual report on implementation and review of the 2020-2025 plan:

<https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/D/darvel-cap-annual-review-4-2024.pdf>



Why is a Community Action Plan Important?

The strength of our locally led Community Action Plan is that it belongs to the Darvel community and is informed by extensive community engagement prior to them being published. In East Ayrshire a plan is not active until at least 40% of households respond, certifying a community wide mandate.

The plan identifies the priorities that the Darvel community feels are important and sets out how they wish to pursue their goals and aspirations. This process is ensuring that local people have a real voice and can influence the decisions which impact on their communities.

The Community Action Plan not only identifies priorities and actions that the community itself can take forward, but it can provide a degree of leverage in convincing appropriate authorities such as East Ayrshire Council and Ayrshire Roads Alliance to take action on issues which fall within their areas of responsibility.

Many organisations that provide grant funding look for clear evidence of community support for projects for which funding is being sought, A community action plan provides the necessary evidence of community consultation and support, indeed some funders make specific reference to projects being identified with a community action plan.

What are the Steps in Creating a Community Action Plan?

The first step is to form a Steering Group that will oversee the whole process, advise on the detailed consultation and ensure effective communications with the community along the way. Our Steering Group is made up of members of the Darvel Strategy Group which has representatives from the Community Council, DIG, Sports Darvel, Darvel Music company and DART. In addition there are representatives from other groups together with a representative from the business community. There is also an open invitation for other community members to be part of the Steering Group, to ensure that there is wide range of enthusiasm, interest and experience as we go forward.

The Steering Group is chaired by who is independent of the organisations represented in the group. There will also be a more focussed working group that will undertake much of the detailed mechanics of the process.

How will the Consultation be Conducted?

The consultation period will commence in March and run through to the end of July, giving plenty of time and opportunity for the community to make their views and ideas known. We start with the preparation of consultation questionnaire and promotion material in February.

This will be followed by the main focus of the consultation using a range of approaches

- On line questionnaire available on various social media platforms
- Printed versions available from Darvel Library and made available to organisations
- Surveys on specific topics or themes
- Focus group meetings including seeking the views of school pupils and young people

There will be a final community meeting at which there will be the opportunity for members of the community to vote on what they think are the key priorities for action which have emerged during the consultation.

What are the Key Themes?

In the final report, the priorities for the town will be grouped together under key themes. The key themes might well be:

- **Town Appearance and Local Environment**
- **Town Centre Regeneration**
- **Community Facilities, Activities and Events**
- **Local Economy, Heritage and Tourism**
- **Local Infrastructure and Services**
- **Community Wellbeing and Spirit**

Although these might change during the consultation period, reflecting the views emerging during the consultation period.

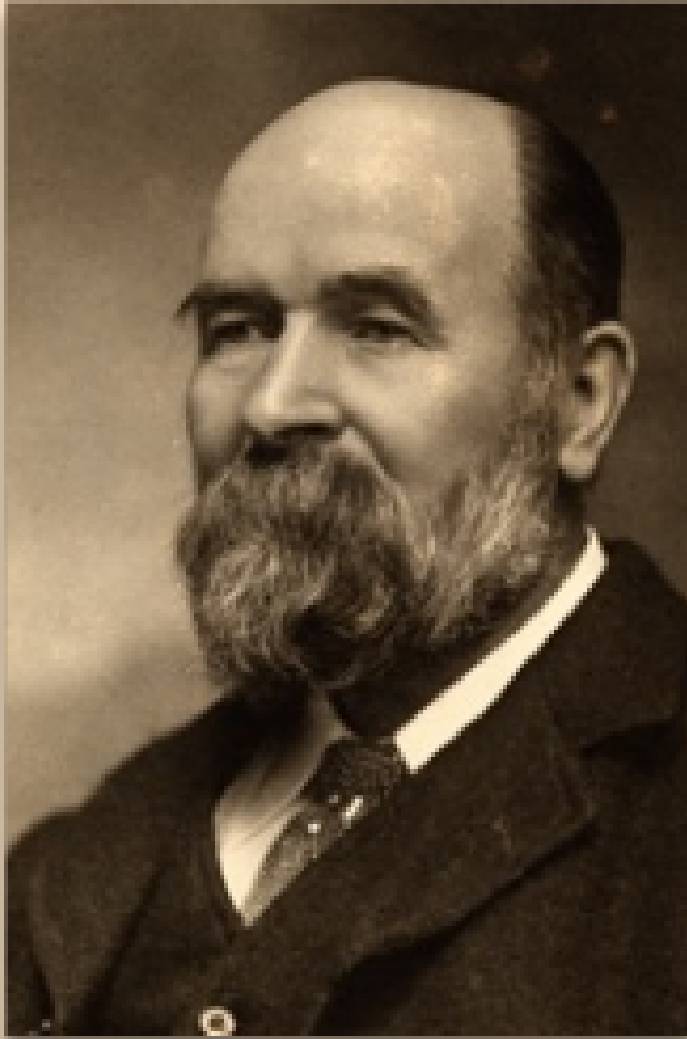
What happens after the consultation period?

There is a big task for the working group to analyse all of the information arising from the consultation and pulling this together into a draft Community Action Plan which will then be signed off by the Steering Group and published in the latter part of the year. And the challenge for the community then is to work together to do our best to implement the priorities which have been identified.



LATE NEWS

Watch out for a new Facebook page – Darvel Voice – which will be our vehicle for the community consultation



ALEXANDER MORTON

A LACE PIONEER

In every continent throughout the world, the words 'Darvel' and 'Lace' are well known. It was thanks to Alexander Morton, a son of the village who came from humble origins that, in the heydays of the lace industry, over 1000 people were employed in 20 lace factories in Darvel. Sadly, these days are over, and all lace factories in Darvel are closed but there can be no doubt that Alexander Morton was a local hero for the prosperity he brought to the Valley.

Alexander Morton was born in a weaver's cottage in Ranoldcupp Road, Darvel on 9 February 1844. His father, Guy Morton, combined handloom weaving with employment as a woodsman on Lanfine Estate in order to support his wife and family of two sons and three daughters. Life was hard and was made harder for Alexander when his father died in 1850.

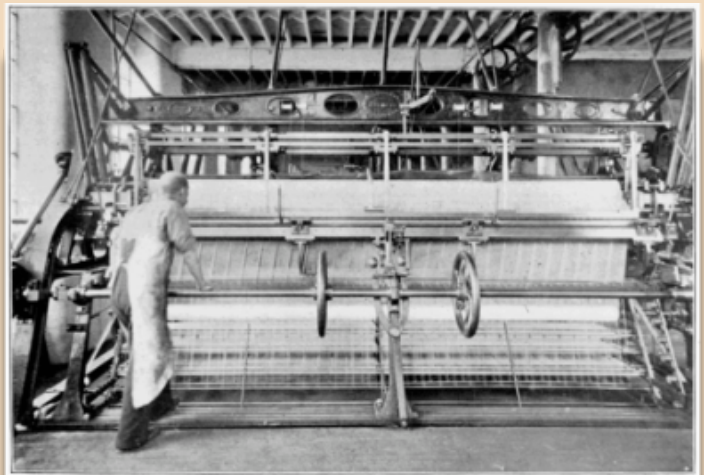
The family subsisted on parish relief, and Alexander started work at the age of eight as a farm worker at Greenbank Farm then as a herdsman at a farm on the Sorn Road, before moving on at age nine to herding on a moorland farm near Muirkirk for the next three years. At the age of 12, his mother brought him back to learn the weaving trade along with his brother. He devoted himself with characteristic enthusiasm to the new task and by age 15 he had managed to save £16 which he used to buy a new loom.



A handloom of the kind initially purchased by Alexander Morton

Through his love of singing, Alexander Morton met Jeanie Wiseman in a church singing class, and they married when he was 19 and she was 18. They set up home in a 'but and ben' at 104 West Main Street, Darvel, and soon Alexander became an agent, selling lace curtains to Glasgow buyers as well as manufacturing lace himself on his hand loom. Then he decided to by-pass the middlemen and sell directly to the Glasgow shops. A steady market was built up for his goods which were of high quality, and he decided to try to break into the English market. At the age of 24, armed with a case of sample patterns, he crossed the border to Carlisle and booked orders for 100 pairs of curtains. Flushed with success he proceeded next to Newcastle, then later to London. However, San Morton could foresee that the weaving of lace curtains by hand was a dying industry. In the autumn of 1874, on one of his business visits to London, he went to the South Kensington Museum where an industrial exhibition was being held. To his delight he saw there a Lever's lace machine in operation, and, on his return journey, he stopped at Nottingham to visit the firm of Sharman and Tilson, lace machine builders, who gave him an estimated price of £1050 for a lace machine.

The Leavers machine is a lacemaking machine that John Levers adapted from Heathcoat's Old Loughborough machine. It was made in Nottingham in 1813. The name of the machine was the Leavers machine (the 'a' was added to aid pronunciation in France). The original machine made net but it was discovered that the Jacquard apparatus could be adapted to it. From 1841 lace complete with pattern, net and outline could be made on the Leavers machine.



On his return to Darvel, Alexander Morton called a meeting of lace weavers and agents and proposed that they should all co-operate to establish a new lace industry using power-driven looms. They refused to risk their savings in such a costly venture, and in 1875 Big San, Wee Rab and cousin Alexander Morton formed the firm of A. Morton and Company, ordered the lace machine, and erected temporary premises to accommodate it beside the 'clipping mill' at the Townhead, on the east side of the Glen Water. Power was supplied firstly by a waterwheel and later by steam. Such was the success of this and so popular did the new curtains become, that the firm found it impossible to meet the demand. So, within a year, two more lace machines were bought, then a new more spacious factory was built west of Ranoldcoup Road, and within the next ten years 24 lace machines were installed. The result was that the click-clack of the handloom was heard no longer in the long village street, many young men began to leave the village, and many old thatched cottages stood deserted and derelict. To relieve the distress of the out-of-work weavers, Alexander Morton started a new venture — hand-woven tapestry which gave employment to 150 people. The demand for lace curtains continued to increase, and other manufacturers set up factories, so labour had to be brought in from Newmilns, Galston, Hurlford and even Kilmarnock.

Such was the growth in the industry that A. Morton and Co. decided to build a new factory in Carlisle. Lace and madras weaving continued to be conducted at Darvel, but the tapestry and chenille curtain production was transferred to Carlisle. Alexander Morton then turned his attention to carpet making, and at Killybegs, County Donegal in Ireland, he converted a barn into a carpet weaving shed. The beautiful Donegal hand-tufted carpets became so popular about the year 1900 that four large factories were erected to cope with the demand. Donegal carpets were installed in Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament, 10 Downing Street and the Bank of England, as well as into the houses of ordinary people.

Yet in spite of his business dealings, this man, who had only the bare rudiments of education, developed a wide variety of interests – reading, horse-breeding and judging (he established a hackney stud at Gowanbank House), farming, fruit growing, history, architecture and horticulture (he specialised in the growing of pansies). He once bought a horse called 'Goldfinder' for £100 and a few years later sold it for 3,000 guineas!

In the public life of Darvel, Alexander Morton served on the Town Council and became Chairman of the School Board. He also bequeathed to Darvel the land now known as the Morton Park on condition that no housing should ever be built on it. In August 1923, he and his wife quietly celebrated their diamond wedding, but on 28 December that year Alexander Morton died at his fruit farm in County Donegal. He was interred in Darvel old cemetery on New Year's Day 1924.



On Saturday 12 November 1927 the memorial to Alexander Morton, erected by public subscription, was unveiled by the County Convener J. Harling Turner in the presence of a very large gathering of people. This memorial is by the roadside midway between Newmilns and Darvel, close to the home he built at Gowanbank House, and commanding a magnificent view of the Irvine Valley and the Lanfine woods which he had loved so well. In a recess in the centre is a bust of Alexander Morton, and underneath it are the words carved in stone: "Alexander Morton, who led this valley to industrial fame and prosperity". The two stone panels on either side of the bust illustrate the old handloom weaving and the modern power loom. At the top of the wall, running from end to end of the monument, are the following words carved in relief in the stone: "The wonder of the world, the beauty and the power, the shape of things, their colours, lights and shades, these I saw: Look ye also while life lasts." This is a very fitting epitaph for a man of such aesthetic sense and artistic taste as well as first class business acumen.

What's **DIG** all about?



At the recent DIG Christmas Fayre, some newcomers to Darvel were asking what does DIG mean and what do we do? DIG stands for **Darvel Improvement Group**. Following very successful Millenium celebrations in the town the local Community Council (CC) realised that there was an appetite within the community to expand our zest for change and to create a more cohesive society. With that aim in mind a group was formed, initially within the CC, called Darvel Improvement Group . The group focused on a number of areas of interest – Environmental issues, Heritage of the town and providing entertainment – all designed to bring the people of Darvel together working to “make Darvel a better place to live”. A meeting was held in Darvel Town Hall where a large number of people volunteered to become involved in their specific area of interest.

In 2001 Darvel Improvement Group was born! Since then huge improvements have been made to the town.

One of the first areas improved by the Environmentalists was the creation of welcome gardens at the West and East ends of the town. These areas have evolved over the years with planting and weeding by volunteers.

Environmental Projects

This group were responsible for a number of major projects including replacing broken fencing at the “Dam Corner” between Darvel and Priestland with railings which hold plaques telling the story of “Dervall Dam”. The Toll Gate Garden in Ranoldcupp Road which is home to the original toll gates was opened by EAC provost Jimmy Boyd.

Morton Park rose garden had been abandoned by EAC and it was decided that DIG would seek funding to have it renovated. This project was completed in 2017 and is now a great asset to the park being used by adults and children. The latest improvement to the area was the extension of the railings along Mairs Road making the area much safer for children. The grassed area behind the railings has now been planted with daffodil bulbs for spring colour.

A joint CC and DIG effort saw the purchase and installation of named planters along Main Street and Hastings Square. In addition Dig organises litter picks, all floral displays, including hanging baskets in Hastings Square and gardens and tubs on Burn Green.

Heritage and Social Events

DIG members, Frank Donnelly, Mike Duffy and, no longer with us, Reid Ross and Les Pittams worked tirelessly to have the old Co-op building demolished. This project was successfully achieved having enlisted the expertise of EAC officers. In order to have the area cleared and re-purposed DART was created opening up opportunities for major funding. The result has been very successful. A memorial tree has been planted in the garden and a plaque installed in memory of Reid and Les.



Frank Donnelly also created a Heritage Museum in Darvel Town Hall. This project showcases life in Darvel over the years with photographs and memorabilia on display. The museum also focuses on Sir Alexander Fleming's connection to his birthplace of Darvel.

Annual events include an Easter Egg hunt, which is held in Lanfine Estate, an outdoor Café Day, Quiz Nights and, of course our Christmas Fayre.

What's Next?

DIG's next big project is the replacement of the existing crumbling memorial to Sir Alexander Fleming in Hastings Square. This project has been on-going for a number of years, being delayed due to land ownership issues. Sir Alexander Fleming is Darvel's most famous son, revered around the world for his discovery of penicillin in 1928 the impact of which cannot be underestimated. Millions of lives, including those of Spanish bullfighters, have been saved by his amazing research. The 100th anniversary of Sir Alexander Flemings discovery will be celebrated in 2028 when, hopefully, the new memorial will be in place.

Should you like to join in Darvel Improvement Group activities you will be made very welcome.

Contact: Maureen Ross at ross31@btinternet.com or Joyce Morton at aljomorton@msn.com

— Profile



Frank Donnelly...local hero

DART had the pleasure of interviewing Frank and let me tell you, this issue of the Darvel Bulletin is not big enough to include everything we chatted about over the pleasant 90mins. Frank has devoted more of his time to improving Darvel than most of us but a humbler man you'll struggle to meet. You may have seen him at The Corner events, as he keenly attends and enjoys them.

Frank was born on 6th Oct 1937 and has lived in Darvel all his life, except for 6yrs in Stewarton after getting married to Ruby on 22nd July 1969 in Glasgow University Chapel. He recalls, "When I was a boy, I remember the Luftwaffe flying over Darvel on their way to bomb Clydebank during WWII". He also remembers watching Polish planes carrying out manoeuvres over the town and surrounding area. "Sadly, two Polish planes crashed into each other at Mucks Burn and the pilots were killed. I remember seeing parts of these planes in the local garages at the time". Frank's dad was in the ARP (Air Raid Precautions) during WWII. They would hand out gas masks and direct people to shelters in the event of an air raid.

No slouch at school, he was awarded the Dux in 1952, an annual award for being top of the school. Amazingly, his twin brother Donald was runner up the same year. But get this, none other than Sir Alexander Fleming came to the town and presented Frank with his award!...*more about him later.*

Back in those days, you spent your schooling in Darvel until you reached 15yrs of age. During that time Frank was a keen sportsman and had a particular passion for football. He was involved in the founding of Darvel Amateurs and managed to get donations from the local Lace factories to buy their football strips. Frank recalls washing his strip by hand after each game, a task most young footballers nowadays don't need to do. He recalls as a youngster Darvel had full employment, "The majority of the population lived, worked and shopped in the town. We had twenty textile factories exporting all over the world. Darvel was a Proud Wee Town back then."



Frank playing for Darvel Amateurs football team in the 1950's

He is very appreciative of the education he received, paying special tribute to Alex (Elkie) Clark, his Headmaster at Darvel Junior / Secondary School. "He was a teacher who knew the importance of introducing his pupils to all kinds of experiences like Youth Hostelling, Hillwalking, Cycling and Sports. He also encouraged me to play the violin in the schools' orchestra, and we didn't do too badly. However I wouldn't say I was all that good"...*I told you he was humble.*

Aged fifteen, Frank had the chance to go to Kilmarnock Academy for his 4th, 5th and 6th years and a young Frank grasped the opportunity to further his education. He came away from Kilmarnock Academy with a great education. In 1962 Frank returned to Kilmarnock Academy but now as a history teacher and thereafter from 1977-97 as Rector. The school role was over 2000 pupils at any one time and 39 teaching staff making it one of the largest schools in Ayrshire. "I drew on my time as a pupil. Many times, I would think about my headmaster Alex Clark and use my experience with him to guide me".

Franks was always a keen writer and had three books on local history published; History of Kilmarnock Academy, History of Loudoun Gowf Club 1909-2009 and The Kilmarnock Club 1884-1999. These are no longer in print so if you have a copy, keep it safe. There won't be many in circulation.

Frank recalls that way back the Darvel District Community Council was struggling for membership when he first went along to a meeting as an eager reporter for the Irvine Valley Advertiser (another of Frank's unpaid interests). He came away as Minutes Secretary! There were only seven members at the time, and you were allowed seventeen! Frank enthusiastically led the way to recruit members by adopting a more personal approach, and soon thereafter the DDCC was fully filled, re-energised and vibrant.

Yet another of Frank's unpaid roles on retirement was serving as a Deputy Lieutenant for Ayrshire. A role he thoroughly enjoyed and found extremely rewarding.

Frank is currently on the Fleming Committee which is a small group of local volunteers keen to promote the history of Sir Alexander Fleming. They are working towards 2028 which is a very significant date as it will mark 100 years since Sir Alexander Fleming, born in Darvel, discovered Penicillin. The Committee plan to commemorate this global event within the town with a more befitting memorial to Alexander Fleming in Hastings Square. Approaches are being made to pharmaceutical companies for financial support.

A few years back, Frank made approaches to the EAC to ask if he could take the space within Darvel Town Hall that used to be the old Rent Office and convert it into a museum. He said, "To their credit, they agreed. This museum is by appointment only and contains a rich variety of old Darvel artefacts, photographs, records and memorabilia including a section on Sir Alexander Fleming. The museum has been a passion of Frank's now for many years.

Not many people can say they met Sir Alexander Fleming. Even fewer can say they shared a stage with the great man...Frank can! He recalls when he was awarded the school Dux prize, Fleming whispered to the young fifteen year old Frank and said.....

"This is important you know", with a glint in his eye and a playful smile. What a memory to have!

Article by Ricky Rowe



Frank Donnelly being presented with the Dux Prize by Sir Alexander Fleming at Darvel Town Hall, 1952

Darvel Music Weekend

Late November is always a time for great concerts at the town hall and this year was no exception. Now entering our 23rd year of live music we kicked off proceedings with a fantastic two-set performance by **Genesis Visible Touch**. Genesis Visible Touch are currently performing their LONG and SHORTS playlist throughout the U.K, appealing to fans of 80's pop, rock and classic prog. Darvel was one of two Scottish dates of their tour. Genesis Visible Touch are the ultimate Phil Collins era Genesis show. Over 200 fans thoroughly enjoyed the wide range of band classics.

The next night was a sellout show featuring The Eves and Skerryvore. We welcomed music fans from as far away as Dublin, England and the Scottish Highlands. Scottish pop duo 'The Eves' are Marissa Keltie and Caroline Gilmour, one of the UK's most promising emerging pop acts in recent years with their stand-out brand of uplifting, melodic pop. They have received a wide range of plaudits across the music world and are definitely going places in the music industry.

Skerryvore are one of Scotland's National Treasures. They have appeared at Darvel many times, often kicking off their winter tour on St Andrews weekend at the town hall. Performing across the globe this dynamic and exciting band have gained thousands of fans and high praise and many accolades.

The band will be celebrating 20 years with a landmark concert on 31 May at Floors Castle in Kelso. Skerryvore have performed 12 times at Darvel. Legends!!!

The Darvel Music Company is a not for profit community organisation run entirely by local music loving volunteers. Having produced the annual Darvel Music Festival for many years, we now concentrate on a series of concerts throughout each year held at the Bowling Club and the Town Hall. DMC are also working in partnership with DART to bring a great night of soul-blues and jazz/swing music featuring the amazing **McCommitments** and **Deke McGee Band** on Saturday 15 February at the Town Hall.

The next Darvel Music show is on Saturday 25 January with the excellent **Reclaimers** at Darvel Bowling Club. Tickets for both gigs can be purchased from Thistle du Florist, West Main Street, Darvel.

DMC would like to thank our kind sponsors and grant provider of the 2024 concert series; Loudoun Valley Trust, West Siphonics and East Ayrshire Council.

We also want to thank our wonderful festival crew, bar staff, town hall/bowling club staff and Kevin Kerr Photography plus Nathan B for all the music pics.

Finally huge thanks to everyone who support and keep us going year on year by attending our concerts and buying raffle tickets.

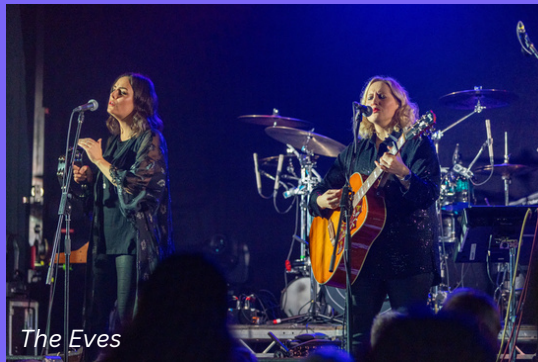
For more concert information go to www.darvelmusiccompany.com



Skerryvore



Skerryvore



The Eves



Genesis Visible Touch

History ...on our doorstep

by Agnes Wilson

Darvel is the youngest of the Valley towns, sitting at the Eastern edge of not just the parish of Loudoun, but also of the county of Ayrshire. Even as part of the Irvine Valley trio of towns, it is still quite insular. However, Loudoun parish makes up Darvel, most of Newmilns and part of Galston and the collective history within it has substantial and interesting historical anecdotes. Besides Alexander Fleming and Alexander Morton, there are a few others who helped to put Loudoun on the map.

John Loudoun McAdam, a structural engineer, known for his development of tarmacadam as a road surface, has some tentative roots with Loudoun. He was the youngest of 10 children born to James McAdam and Susanna Cochrane. His grandfather James McAdam married Janet Crawford of Loudoun Castle, so it's likely that's where the Loudon middle name came from.

Murdoch Nisbet of Hardhill, (b. 1470 d. 1538) translated the Holy Bible into Scots language.



Murdoch Nisbet's translation of the New Testament. British Museum

Here is an example foretelling the birth of Jesus..

King James version:

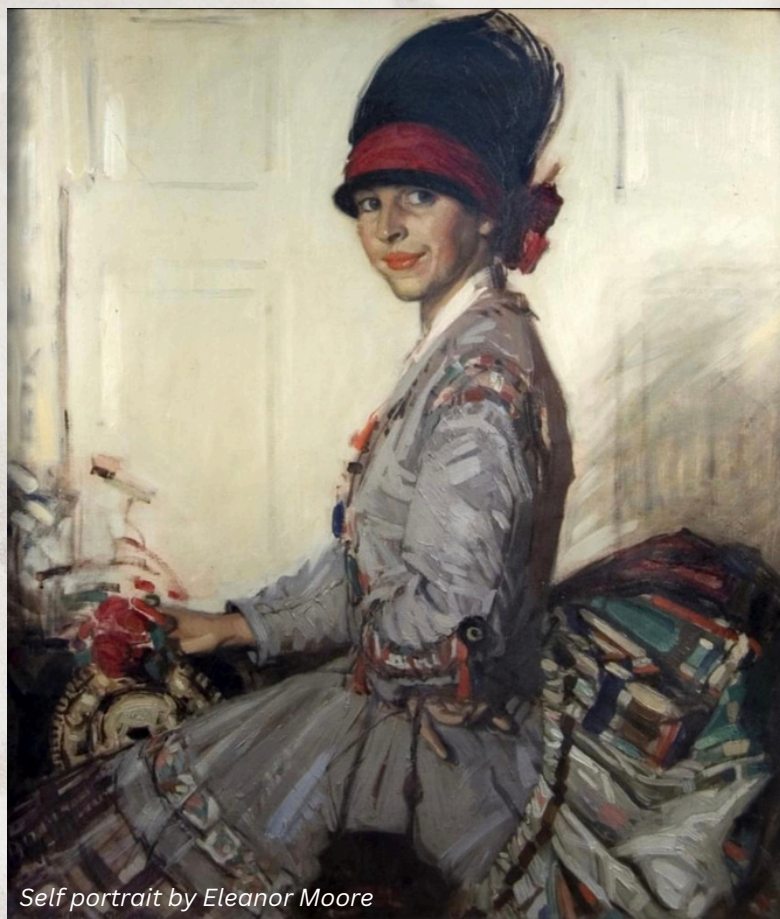
Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

Murdoch Nisbet's translation of the same passage:

This is the stories of the birth of Jesus Christ. His mither Mary wis tryst til Joseph, but afore they war marrieth she wis fund the be wi bairn bi the Halie Spirit. Her tryst husband Joseph, honest man, he'd nae mind the affront her afore the warld an wis for brakkin aff their tryst hidlinweys; an sae he wis een ettling the dae, when an angel o the Lord kythed til him in a draim an said til him, Joseph, son o Dauvit, be nane feared the tak Mary your tryst wife intil your hame; the bairn she's cairiein is o the Hailie Spirit. She will beir a son, an the name ye ar the gie him is Jesus, he will sauf his fowk frae their sins."

Eleanor Allen Moore, daughter of the Rev. Hamilton Moore, minister of Newmilns Parish Church, was one of the 'Glasgow Girls' from the school of art, who revolutionised art. She and her husband Dr Robertson, specialised in Oriental paintings. They bought a barge and along with their young daughter, Ailsa, spent some of their lives sailing and painting in China. Eleanor and Ailsa eventually returned to Scotland where Ailsa attended Kilmarnock Academy, she also became an artist (Ailsa Tanner).



Self portrait by Eleanor Moore



John Moffat b.1841, Newmilns. After working as a clerk in Newmilns and Glasgow, he went to Australia where he eventually built up a mining empire in Queensland. He opened Loudoun Museum in Irvinebank, Queensland, where a painting of Ranoldcoup Road bridge, Darvel has pride of place.

<https://irvinebank.org/loudoun-house-museum/>

First known as Gibbs Camp, the town of Irvinebank was founded in 1884 by John Moffat, who had purchased the mining leases from the original prospectors. From 1889 he owned the Vulcan tin mine. He built a dam, a mill, smelters and other infrastructure that attracted settlers and miners to the area. It is assumed he named the town Irvinebank in honour of his home town. Irvinebank became a thriving town with an economy based on mining, milling and smelting.

Dr John Boyd Morton CBE FRSE (1925- 1998) was a zoologist, writer, conservationist and a pioneer of nature conservation in Scotland. Boyd was born in Darvel, Ayrshire, the son of Thomas Boyd, master builder and Jeanie Morton. He was educated at Kilmarnock Academy. He then attended the University of Glasgow where he began a course in engineering before switching to zoology. As an undergraduate he studied sand dune snails on the island of Tiree in the Inner Hebrides, subsequently undertaking a doctoral study on the earthworms of the machair and further ecological research. He went on to become Director of the Nature Conservancy Council in Scotland.



Nicol Peacock, born in Darvel in 1931, became a renowned nuclear fusion scientist best known for his work on confirming Russian claims that they could produce fusion energy. (Daily Record). Peacock passed away in 2008.

Peacock's focus his work was research into nuclear fusion, a task to which he brought his trademark enthusiasm. His ability saw him rise swiftly, and to many colleagues, he reached his apogee when at the height of the Cold War in 1969 he pulled off the astonishing feat of leading a five-strong team of UK scientists to the Kurchatov Nuclear Fusion Institute in Moscow with the objective of examining a controversial Soviet assertion about the high performance of their nuclear fusion experiments. Peacock's confirmation of Soviet success astonished western science. The Moscow mission confirmed Nicol Peacock's international reputation as a nuclear fusion scientist.



Sir Alexander Taylor, physician, born 1802 at Alton, Loudoun. In 1835 he served as Staff Surgeon to the English Auxiliary Force in Spain and attended both sides in the Franco-Prussian war. In 1839 he settled in Pau in the Pyrenees and lived and worked there for the rest of his life. He published a book on "the curative influence of the climate of Pau and the mineral waters of the Pyrenees". In 1846 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1865.

John Douglas (clockmaker) and Mary Newton's family of Galston became clockmakers, photographers and artists, including James and Edmond Douglas, both well known painters.

John Morton, blacksmith fought at the battle of Drumclog, ancestor of Alexander Morton lace Mill owner.

There's no doubt these are only some of the people who have been a valuable asset to the Valley and we can be proud to say ... *"wha's like us?"*



A COMMUNITY REPORT

Introduction

From its first meeting in October 2019 to its AGM in October 2024 DART has generated and invested almost £900,000 in Darvel and our community. A remarkable amount for an organisation still in its infancy. The purpose of this special community report is to give clarity on where DART's funds come from, how it has been spent and if Darvel is seeing the benefit.

Where the money comes from?

Over the past 5 years DART has bid for and received grants from multiple sources including the Scottish Government, East Ayrshire Council, the National Lottery, the Postcode Lottery, The Darvel Lottery, the Ayrshire Rural & Island Fund (ARIA), Renewable Energy Funds, Garfield Weston, the Hugh Fraser Foundations, SOLWEC, EBS Landfill and SUSTRANS,

Every one of these bids for funding is highly competitive. They are often oversubscribed with multiple good causes across Scotland chasing the same money. DART's recent accolades including receiving the King's Award for Voluntary Services helps to establish our credentials but, more importantly, we have built a track record of using the funds and achieving results. This is very important to funders who want to ensure that their resources achieve results.

Whilst grants make up the majority of our income DART has also generated its own funds over the last two years from hiring trading spaces at The Corner Markets and from selling the Lang Toon Gin (sadly now sold out!), plant sales at Gardeners Corner, special prints (the timeline) and from regular fund raising activities (e.g. tombolas). If you have purchased any of these you have directly helped us improve our town and community.

We have also gained from donations, some privately given and some gathered with collection buckets at our events and markets. All donations, large or small, are very welcome and help us pay for operating costs.

You can expect DART to continue to fight Darvel's corner for funds and to find innovative ways for the community to contribute. For example, we are currently planning a crowdfunding exercise to help pay for the proposed mural at The Corner.

How has the money been spent?

The largest spend, approximately £550,000 over the past few years, has been The Corner. This includes demolition of the former Co-operative buildings, groundwork, infrastructure (e.g. drainage, power supply), construction (e.g. fencing, planters, auditorium seating, stairways, store room), the installation of the canopy, soft landscaping, and security (24 hour CCTV).

Operating costs at The Corner are approximately £6,000 per annum including insurance, power, WiFi, cleaning contracts and essential maintenance. Money has also been spent to make our events that extra bit special including Halloween decorations, Xmas decorations, sound systems (e.g. speakers, microphones, cables), light systems, camera equipment, computers, staging and the hiring of special equipment (e.g. Muckmeddens Bike Track for Darvélo), and band hire for live music events (e.g. Deke McGee Band).

Funds have also been spent on trader tents, gazebos, weather proofing (e.g. weights), tables, chairs and first aid equipment. All of these make for an improved trader and consumer experience at The Corner Markets.

However, it's not just The Corner where funds have been spent, as illustrated on page..... Improving the safety and enjoyment of the Waterlip Path has taken considerable financial resources and funds have now been secured to complete the improvement scheme. The same for improvements to the kids play equipment at Morton Park with the replacement of the sand pit, following consultation with the community, with a soft play area for toddlers and replacing worn rubber matting below the existing play equipment with soft surfacing. Another important scheme was the Covid Support Programme with funds acquired enabling the provision of food and other essentials during the pandemic and afterwards through the Get Darvel Cooking scheme.

Ongoing projects include Darvel Bee'ing Better with wildflowering in various locations in the town, the publication of the Darvel Bulletin, with 100 printed copies available supplementing the online version and the digitisation of the wealth of material held in the Town Hall Heritage Museum making it readily available to all through the internet.

In addition to direct investments DART has donated funds to other local volunteer groups and good causes and to international causes like the Darvel Ukraine Appeal.

Summary

The success of DART in securing funds from a wide range of grant providers has significantly benefited the town. The development of The Corner is a prime example of this.

The task of compiling application for funding is demanding. Applications need to be carefully put together with a range of supportive information and documentation accompanying the application. All grant funders understandably require to ensure that funds made available to community groups reflect the needs and aspirations of the community and that there is confidence that projects being funded can be delivered effectively and efficiently. The existence of the Community Action Plan and its links to key priorities for improvement is an important element in securing funding.

DART has demonstrated through the delivery of our projects that funders can be reassured that any funds allocated will be well used. A final and comprehensive evaluation report with evidence of completion is required for every fund made available and the feedback we have received has been consistently positive. We have been approached by other organisations for advice on constructing a successful application and we are only too happy to provide this.

DART will continue to bid for funding that can be invested in the Darvel Community confident that our track record to date will have a positive impact on how our applications are viewed by funders.

Summary of the Corner Annual Survey 2024

In response to the **key themes** the feedback is overwhelmingly positive, highlighting The Corner as a vibrant, transformative space that fosters community spirit, enhances the town's appearance, and supports local businesses. It is a valued asset, though opportunities exist to expand its reach and impact

The feedback on **desired improvements** reflects general satisfaction with The Corner, with many participants struggling to identify major issues. Most suggestions focus on incremental improvements to amenities, event diversity, inclusivity, and aesthetics. These adjustments could further enhance its role as a community hub and make it even more accessible and enjoyable for all residents.

In response to **desired events for 2025** Participants expressed enthusiasm for expanding The Corner's event offerings, emphasizing inclusivity, community building, and creative engagement. There is significant interest in events that cater to families, youth, and diverse tastes, as well as opportunities for local talent and businesses to shine. The focus is on creating vibrant, welcoming experiences that foster connections and celebrate Darvel's community spirit.

THE STORY OF DART

DARVEL: GATEWAY TO EAST AYRSHIRE (DDCC 2019)

The focus of the report was the redevelopment of the Coop buildings/site – a key priority in the Darvel & District 2014-2019 Community Action Plan. The report was prepared by two members of the DDCC who subsequently became founder members of DART and proposed that a Darvel “Garden and Market” should be established on the site. The report found support from East Ayrshire Council and funding was identified to get the project started. However, the legal parameters of community councils prevented the DDCC from taking on what would be a major project, and the Darvel Area Regeneration Team was established in September 2019 to take forward this major regeneration project.

Darvel Garden Market (Main Street Market at The Corner)

DART is born

THE CORNER

- Community Markets
- Major events:
 - Darvelo
 - Halloween Special

DARVEL: A TOWN IN TRANSITION (2021)

This subsequent report highlighted further major improvements that would benefit the town and working with partners further plans were developed for the town's Morton Park and Town Hall.

MORTON PARK

- * Play Area
- * Environment
- * Facilities

DARVEL TOWN HALL

- * Internal Layout
- * Facilities
- * External Features

In the five years to September 2024 DART has taken forward a wide range of projects all looking to secure improvement and support for the town and its residents. Membership of DART has grown from its small beginnings to 25 volunteers and the impact of our team was recognised nationally in November 2024 with the Kings Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS), the equivalent of an MBE for voluntary organisations

ENVIRONMENT

- ❖ Waterlip Improvements
- ❖ Darvel Bee'ing Better
- ❖ The Corner landscape
- ❖ Morton Park
- ❖ Shop Front Improvements

TECHNOLOGY

- ❖ Digitisation Project
- ❖ Discover Darvel Website
- ❖ Facebook Platforms (Discover Darvel, The Corner and Dawn to Dusk)

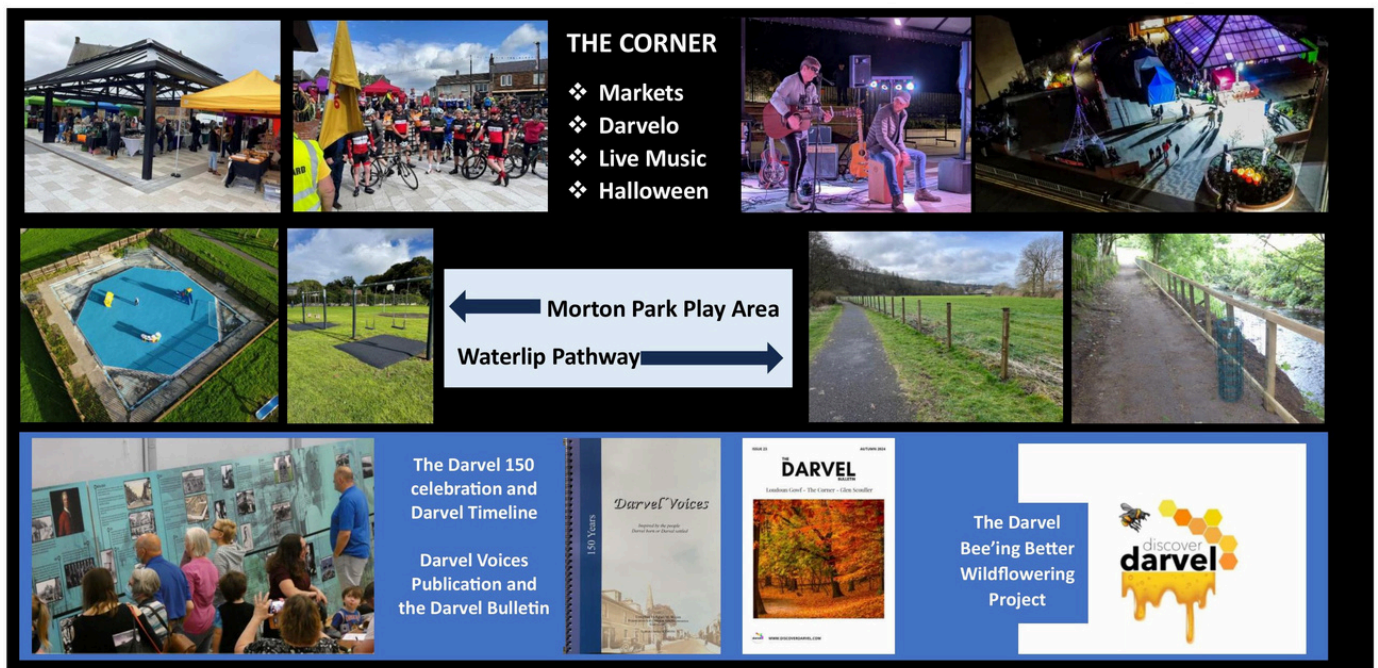
COMMUNITY

- ❖ COVID support
- ❖ Lang Toon Gin
- ❖ Darvel 150 Event
- ❖ Darvel Bulletin
- ❖ Darvel Voices



In its first five years, DART has established excellent working relationships with East Ayrshire Council, our local authority. DART was also instrumental in establishing the Darvel Strategy Group, which brings together representative of a number of other local organisations in order to ensure effective communications, co-ordinate activity and funding opportunities, and monitor the implementation of the 2020-2025 Community Action Plan. Darvel is recognised by our local authority as a town in which the various organisations work together harmoniously, and DART is at the heart of this. Indeed, at national level, the work of DART in transforming the former cooperative site and establishing excellent collaborative working within the town has been recognised, with Darvel being shortlisted in 2024 with four other towns in Scotland as “Town of the Year”.

Here are a few images of some of the projects which DART has progressed in the past five years:



SAT 15th FEB 2025
DARVEL TOWN HALL
DOORS 7PM / TICKETS £15



TICKETS
Thistle Du Florist
8 West Main Street,
Darvel
01560 428021

Darvel Area
Regeneration Team
discoverdarvel.com

Newmilns Regeneration
Association
lovenewmilns.org

Galston Community
Development Trust
galstontrust.co.uk

Darvel Snippets.....



The third annual Darvélo cycling event will be held on **Saturday 14 June**. Cycling activities will include the classic 75km and the leisurely 25km road cycle rides, spin bikes, all ability cycles, Dr Bike repairs, the family cycle ride as well as much much more. There will also be afternoon entertainment for all the kids and live music for everyone. Food and refreshments will be available throughout the day.

We will also have Yoga for Cyclists in the Town Hall and free health checks will be available during the course of the day as well.

Watch out for more information on social media. The full programme will feature in our Spring edition of the Darvel Bulletin.

The Waterlip

Regular users of the Waterlip path will be well aware of the very poor condition of the stretch of the path from the cemetery corner to East Main Street, especially the steep slope down from East Main Street as shown in the photograph below

The good news is that funding has been secured from the Place Based Investment Programme managed by East Ayrshire Council and the Spirit of Lanarkshire Wind Energy Coop (SOLWEC) to complete the improvement scheme.

The path from the cemetery corner to East Main Street will be resurfaced and a safety rail will be installed at the sloping section down from the street, The work will be carried out by Hamilton Tarmac in the coming weeks as soon as there is a reasonable spell of weather



Last Christmas



Friendship Lunch, Church Hall

Hogmanay
Ceilidh

Dinner Ladies, Christmas Lunch

DART's Christmas Market

Glen Brig,
Festive Lights

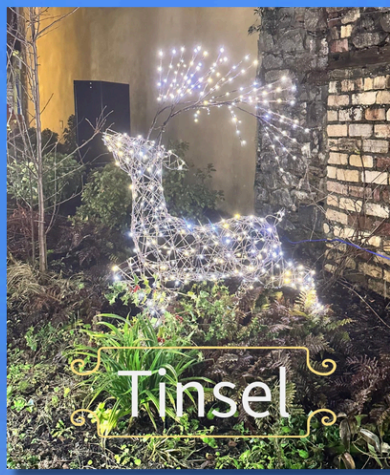
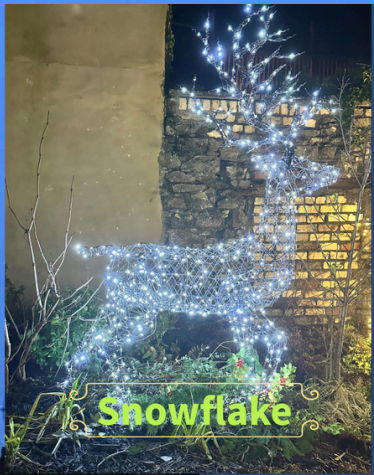
Christmas Songs at The Corner

On the morning of 11 December it was bitterly cold and the mist was gathering over the hilltops in the Valley. But then along came Darvel Primary School choir and provided a most enjoyable rendition of Christmas songs. The crowd was mightily entertained by the children and the cold was (almost) forgotten.



For Ricky Rowe's smashing wee video of Christmas lights in Darvel go to:

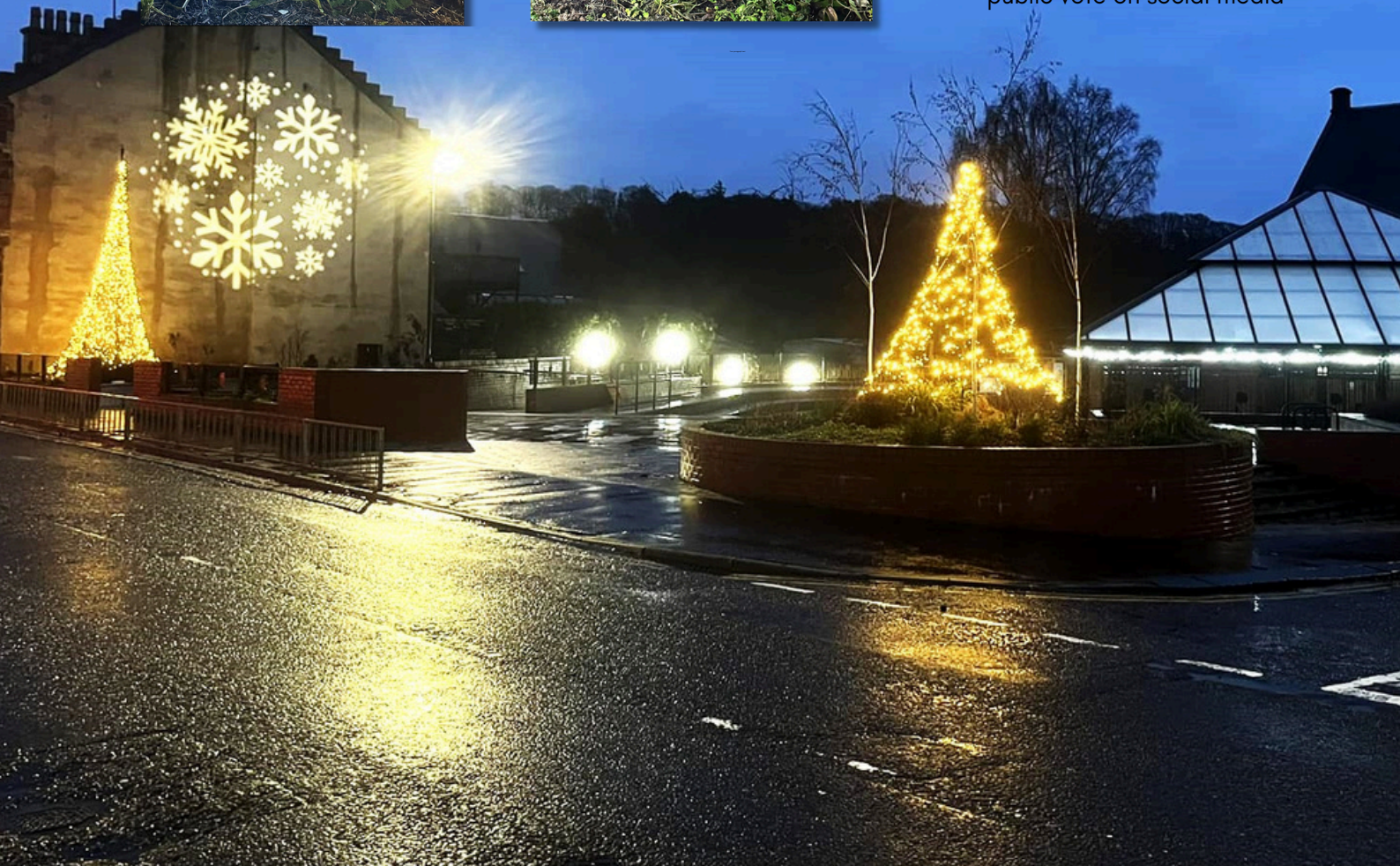
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Km5div_3E2o



the Corner

Christmas Reindeer

These reindeer names were the two most popular ones chosen by public vote on social media



The Christmas Corner



THE LANG TOON | We come from a small town in East Ayrshire, Scotland. It is at the eastern end of the Irvine Valley, with around approximately 3,200 citizens.

With its lively atmosphere, diverse events program, and tight-knit community spirit, Darvel offers something special for everyone. Whether you're yearning for outdoor adventures in the stunning countryside, seeking the thrill of a bike ride, eager to groove to live music, or intrigued by its rich history, Darvel has it all.

From the markets selling a variety of locally made crafts and produce, including the renowned Darvel Dexter Beef. If music is your bag we have the Darvel Music Festival, an ongoing celebration of live music featuring performances at various local venues.

Situated at the heart of the picturesque Irvine Valley, Darvel is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts, offering a variety of activities such as cycling and walking. And of course the main attraction is Recreation Park.

From the creator of Penicillin in Sir Alexander Fleming to Sammy Cox being on the ball, our town has raised a fair few famous sons and daughters.

This is an extract from Darvel Football Club's Facebook Page.

Why not come and visit us? [#TheLangToonsTeam](#). [#WeAreDarvel](#)

THE FOOD LOCKER

It is now 18 months since we opened our doors at The Portacabin at Darvel Sports Centre, and little did we realise how many people needed help with food for their households. We have around 150 households registered, with approximately 70 households coming along every week. These numbers are increasing on a weekly basis. This help would not be possible without the support of our wonderful Community.

Our thanks go to all of the Local Businesses, Community Groups and many individuals who support us with donations of money and food gifts, alongside various Grants we have managed to secure.

Thank you again to all of our Volunteers who give of their time in so many ways, to ensure we can keep The Food Locker open every Monday from 6-8pm and every Wednesday 1-3pm

WARM WELCOME

Warm Welcome continues to offer a place of warmth and fellowship together with hot soup and home baking.

It is now 2 years since we opened in VERVE premises every Saturday from 2-4pm. We welcome around 30 people from all backgrounds every week. This would not be possible without the very willing volunteers from Covenant Church, Flame Church, Irvine Valley Parish Church, Darvel and VERVE.

A simple **Thank You** is never enough for all of their time, talents and friendly chat, and their dedication to keeping this group open.

— What's on in Darvel this Year....



Saturday 25 January	The Reclaimers (<i>Proclaimers Tribute Band</i>)	Bowling Club, DMC
Friday 14 February	Valentine Quiz Night	Masonic Hall, DIG
Saturday 15 February	The McCommitments & The Deke McGee Band	Darvel Town Hall, DMC/DART
Saturday 1 March	Open Day - time tbc	The Corner, DART
Saturday 22 March	The Polis (<i>Police Tribute Band</i>)	Bowling Club, DMC
Sunday 6 April	Spring Litter Pick	DIG
Saturday 12 April	The Dughouse Ska Band	Bowling Club, DMC
Sunday 13 April	Easter Egg Hunt	Lanfine, DIG
Saturday 26 April	Corner Market	DART
Sunday 27 April	Spring Litter Pick	DIG
Friday 9 - Sunday 11 May	Walkfest	Loudoun Valley
Saturday 24 May	Corner Market	DART
Saturday 14 June	Café Day in the Square	DIG
Saturday 14 June	Darvélo Cycling Festival	The Corner
Saturday 28 June	Corner Market	DART
Saturday 26 July	Corner Market	DART
Saturday 23 August	Corner Market	DART
September - date TBA	Autumn Litter Pick	DIG
Saturday 13 September	Main Street Blues Band	Bowling Club, DMC
Saturday 27 September	Corner Market	DART
Saturday 11 October	Bison Hip + Last Resort	Bowling Club, DMC
October - date TBA	Hallowe'en Quiz Night	DIG
Friday 31 October	Halloween Special + Market	The Corner
Saturday 15 November	Christmas Fayre	Town Hall, DIG
Friday 21 November	Christmas Spectacular + Market	The Corner
Friday 28 November	Music Night	Town Hall, DMC
Saturday 29 November	Music Night	Town Hall, DMC
Sunday 30 November	Music Night	Town Hall, DMC

Raymie's Ramblings



Hi, it's Raymie Swan here and I would like to take you on some of my photo ramblings around the Valley. For this edition its... sunsets. I often head up the Darvel Mast Road this time of year on the off chance of a winter sunset. I was in luck one day, as just after 4pm up near the Gallowlaw Cairn I captured these photographs looking across the fields towards Cairnhill Farm from where the Burnawn gently flows on its way down towards Galston.

