

THE DARVEL

BULLETIN

The Fleming Mural

Darvélo 25

Walkfest



We've been telt tae tell ye.

Celebrating the Fleming Mural



Showcasing the Fleming Mural as our main feature needs no apology. Two years after Darvel FC's win against Aberdeen in the Scottish Cup, the town is again in the spotlight with the mural's unveiling. The positive response has been nationwide, prompting inquiries about its background and future.

Seizing the Moment

This is a great time to harness the enthusiasm. Our 2026-2031 Community Action Plan consultation invites your thoughts on continuing Alexander Fleming's legacy. Share your ideas on:

- Renovating the Sir Alexander Fleming memorial in Hastings Square
- Using Fleming's legacy to attract more visitors
- Celebrating the 100th anniversary of penicillin's discovery in 2028

Submit your comments through the online Community Action Plan questionnaire on the East Ayrshire website or on the Darvel's Voice Facebook page.

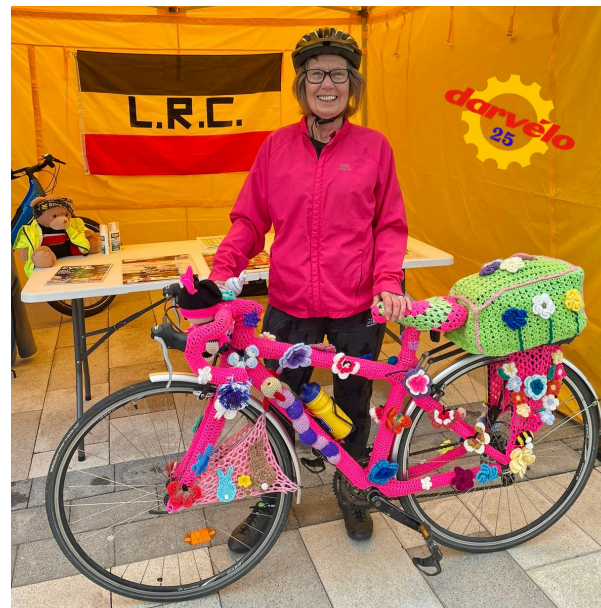
Looking Ahead

Let's look forward to a sunny July and August, with upcoming Corner Markets to enjoy. It's a perfect opportunity to connect with friends and engage in community activities. The Corner has been a valuable award winning community resource. Let's make the most of it, enjoying time together.

** Please take time to add your comments and ideas to the online Community Action Plan questionnaire which is still live on the East Ayrshire website [Darvel and Priestland Community Action Plan Survey](#)./ [Engagement East Ayrshire](#).*

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The Fleming Mural

The Plan...

The Corner was designed to make the most of a large derelict site in central Darvel. One of the site's most prominent features was a large neglected gable wall. This gable presented an exciting opportunity to create something special but what? The project team explored a range of possibilities but a mural was the popular choice. The next step was to decide on what to paint on this mural.

After public consultation three themes were shortlisted:

- The Lace Industry , which brought prosperity to Darvel
- The Battles of Loudoun Hill, Bruce and Wallace
- Sir Alexander Fleming, Darvel's most famous son.

The overwhelming public vote was for Sir Alexander Fleming and his discovery of penicillin.



The Man...

Born in 1881 at Lochfield Farm, high on the Loudoun Moor just a few miles north of Darvel, Alexander Fleming spent his early years surrounded by the rugged Ayrshire countryside. He began his education at Loudoun Moor School, later attending Darvel School and Kilmarnock Academy before moving to London at the age of thirteen to join his siblings.

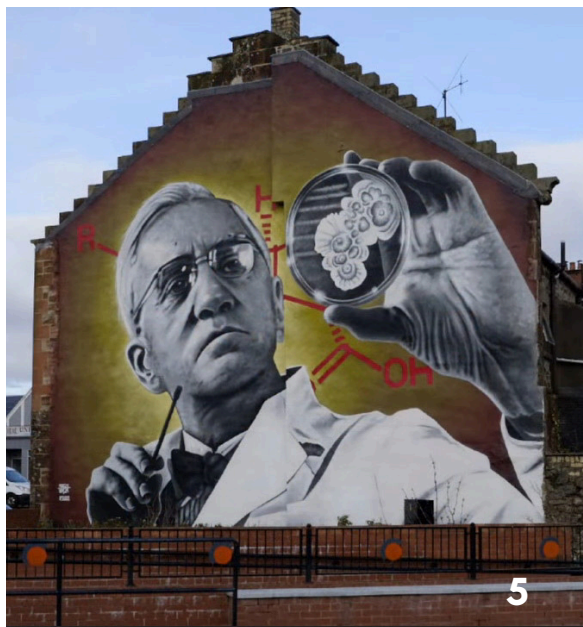
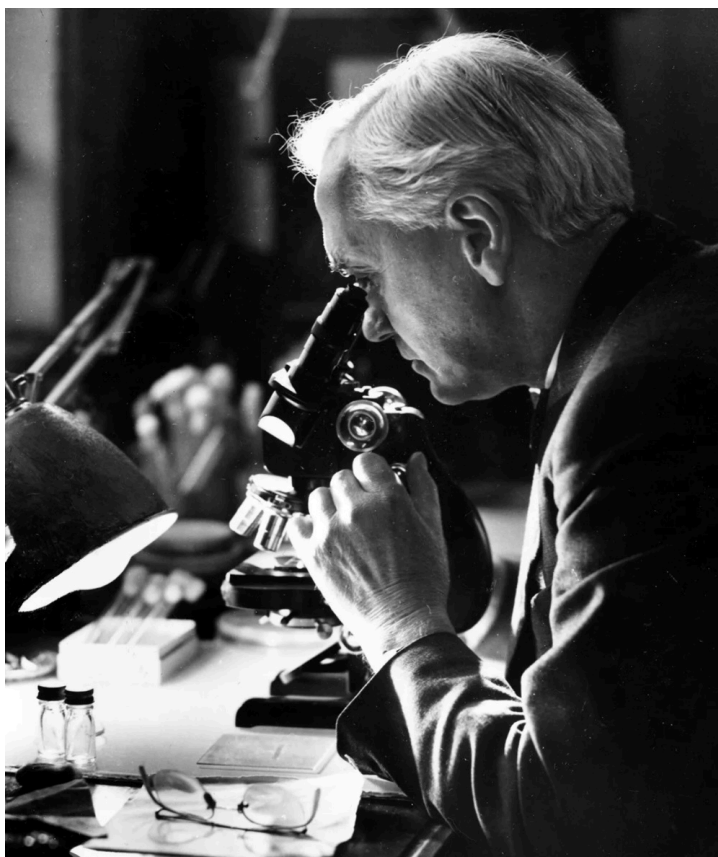
The landscape of his childhood left a lasting mark. The wide moors, quiet hills, and rural rhythms nurtured his natural curiosity, shaping the keen observational skills that would later lead to one of the greatest medical breakthroughs in history – the discovery of penicillin.

Despite building a world-renowned career in London, Fleming remained deeply connected to Darvel and to Scotland. He was a regular visitor throughout his life, and his presence in the town was always met with excitement and pride.

In 1952, he returned to present the Darvel School Dux Medal to Frank Donnelly, a gesture fondly remembered by the community. Locals still recall his visits with great affection.

The Fleming family later purchased Loudoun Moor School, converting it into a family holiday home. According to local lore, Fleming would phone ahead of his visits to ask for a fire to be lit – a small but telling detail that reflects his enduring bond with the place he called home.

Sir Alexander Fleming may have changed the world, but his roots in Darvel run deep – a quiet, powerful connection between a small Scottish town and a global legacy.



The Artist...

RogueOne aka Bobby McNamara, the renowned Street Artist from Glasgow was unanimously selected from a number of artists. His final sketch proposal for the mural was overwhelmingly approved. To prepare for the mural, Bobby drew a grid on the source photograph, each grid contained one section of the original image. A base coat of white masonry paint was applied to the gable onto which the artist transposed an enlarged version of the grid from the source picture.

The contents of each grid section from the photo were then recreated in exact proportion on the wall. The work was not done one grid at a time, but rather as a complete piece of work with the grids ensuring the artist was able to paint each element of the original photograph accurately in terms of size and location relative to the other grids. Thereafter the entire mural was completed using spray can paint.



The Finance...

Over the past two years DART has established an excellent working relationship with ARIA - Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition Fund. A successful application for funding the mural was approved by ARIA in early 2025 but had to be spent by 1st of April. The race was on.



The Reaction...

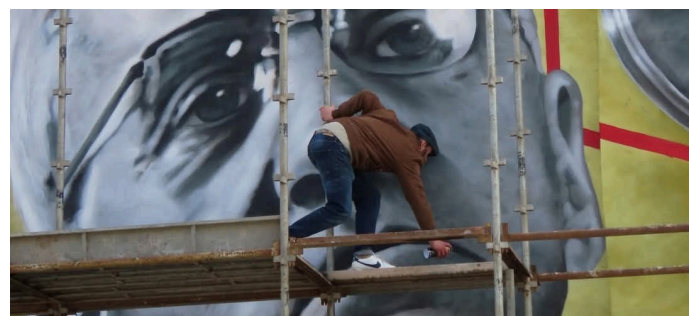
Response to the Fleming mural has been incredible, with comments like - stunning, amazing, fabulous, and a masterpiece. RogueOne and the Mural Team have received much appreciation for making this happen. this amazing addition to Darvel happen. There is a palpable sense of pride locally.

Locals shared personal memories and emotional connections with Fleming, while others commented on the mural's attention to detail and visual impact. There was also recognition of the transformation it has made contributing to our vibrant community.

Media attention, far and wide has been fantastic including the Scotsman, The Times and the BBC.

Good Morning Scotland featured an interview with Steve Gillies from the Mural Team. The BBC also featured the mural on its website news channel along with a feature on Reporting Scotland including interviews with Frank Donnelly and Colin Allan.

Two years after the triumph of Darvel FC over Aberdeen, Darvel again hits the high spot with the production of the Fleming mural. Its impact has sparked interest at local, national and international level.





The Big Reveal...

On Friday evening of 11th April 2025, DART organised an informal floodlit “reveal” of the mural.

It was a tremendous success. We had music from Kevin and his friends from the Black Bull and refreshments provided by the Railway Inn.

Councillor John McGhee, the deputy Provost provided an inspirational opening speech about the impact our work has made on the town. His opening speech was warmly received by the very large turnout of local residents.

How appropriate it was then for Frank Donnelly to tell the audience about his and his twin brother’s links to Sir Alexander Fleming. His insight was extremely interesting, not only to Fleming but also to his twin – Frank being yellow carded at football for a sliding tackle which his brother had actually made when they were at school!

Finally **RogueOne** our amazing mural artist, spoke passionately about the privilege it had been to be asked to create the Fleming mural – one of his most satisfying.

The mural now stands not only as a tribute to Fleming, but as a symbol of local pride — a highly visible landmark for Darvel.

What’s Next...

In the short time since the opening of the mural, DART has had an online meeting with Kevin Brown – the curator of the Fleming Museum in London, to discuss the possibility of arranging an international conference and exhibition in London in 2028. Plans are in place to establish a “virtual steering group” which would have representatives of the Darvel community, the Fleming Museum, medical interests, pharmaceutical companies and most importantly representatives of the Fleming family. To that end DART has been in contact with Alexander Fleming’s grandchildren – Sarah Whitlow and Andrew Fleming.

At a local level there will be opportunities to mark the 100th anniversary of the discovery of penicillin. DIG have exciting plans for the renovation of the memorial in Hastings Square, and we would like to examine the possibility of a permanent exhibition not only to celebrate Alexander Fleming, but to reflect upon the heritage of the town. Initial ideas include a “Fleming Trail” and creating a mould based “Fleming Gin”!



Despite a grim weather forecast **Darvélo '25** went ahead on Saturday 14th June and what a day it was! The rain threatened and apart from a few pelters it was generally dry with the sun poking out briefly in the afternoon.

At 7:30am our amazing team of volunteers began erecting our "cycle village" at The Corner. At 9:30am Provost Leitch formally opened the festival. At 10:00am, Lillian Jones our local MP announced the start of our showcase event - **The Big 90km Ride** with local piper, Jimmy Struthers giving them a great send-off. Nearly 120 riders had registered online - our best response to date. Shortly thereafter Councillor McGregor sporting a splendid Tour de France tee-shirt waved off **The Short 25km Ride**. Half an hour later an impressive group of 45 youngsters and parents on various wheeled contraptions set off on **The Riverside Family Ride** to Galston. They were flagged off enthusiastically by Councillor Cogley. During all this time the Newmilns & Galston Brass Band were playing inspirational tunes.

With all the cyclists off on their rides things got a bit quieter nearer lunchtime, but not for long as the kids' entertainment was about to start. This included Uncle Billy's Puppet Theatre, Hook-a-Duck, the Reflex Challenge, Face Painting, Magic Tricks, Ballooning and Dorothy Baird's fun-filled table of cycle themed activities. These took place sheltered under The Canopy which was just as well, as the entertainment coincided with an almighty downpour.

Early afternoon saw the more bendy cyclists join in a Yoga session whilst the majority returning from the rides carb depleted, tucked into some marvellous Street Food, Burgers, Coffee and Cakes. The rain stopped and we enjoyed a spot of sunshine.

The entire afternoon was filled with music excellently performed by local bands - **The Aboriginal** (Callum) and **The Railwaymen**. This culminated late afternoon with the headliner band - **The Oasis Story** - a tribute band to you know who. They were amazing!

Liquid refreshments from The Handle Bar - run by the Railway Inn assisted the crowd's confidence in singing along heartily, if a tad out of tune to some well know Oasis classics. When the rain started again we even had a group of revellers, young and old getting soaked doing a Ring-a-Ring-a-Roses alfresco. Everyone was having a ball!

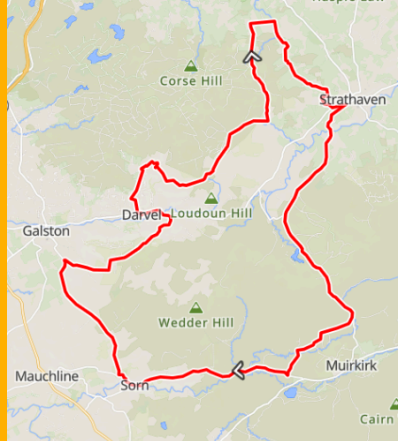
The crowd didn't want to leave but come 7pm it was time to finish off and pack up.

The feedback so far has been incredibly positive despite the weather which has encouraged us to consider another **Darvelo Festival** next year if funds permit.

Watch this space.



The Big 90km Ride was the most challenging ride yet, the longest, hilliest and wettest! It started with a lung busting climb all the way up Burn Road. Thereafter an endless series of ups and downs skirting Strathaven, Muirkirk, and Sorn with the final spicy climb up the Mast Road...just for fun! Despite all this, the feedback has been extremely positive complimenting the varied route, outstanding scenery and quiet roads - showcasing some of central Scotland's finest cycling. First riders home in just under an incredible 3 hours were Oliver Newton, James Watson and Barry Clarkson (pictured), however congratulations must go to everyone who completed the ride with some over 70 years old! A major triumph by all accounts!



In addition to the cycle rides, Darvelo* also included amongst others the Watt Bike challenge from Sports Darvel, All Ability Cycles from East Ayrshire Council, Dr Bike, E-bikes, Go-carts and Cube bikes from Cycle Station Verve's kinetic "Zoetrope", HES Smoothie Bike, Wheelie Wheels art project from Loudoun Academy and St Sophia's Primary School, The Hungry Caterpillar by Darvel Primary School, CHAT health checks, Yoga with Carmite, Kids entertainment by Uncle Billy and Dorothy Baird. Street food, burgers, coffee, cakes and ice-cream were provided by Reggaelicious, Dexter Beef,, Espresso Kart and Frank's Ices. The Handle Bar, organised by the Railway Inn provided alcoholic refreshments all afternoon. Music courtesy of the Newmilns and Galston Pipe Band, Jimmy Struthers the Piper, The Aborigines, The Railwaymen and The Oasis Story...and Damien, our Sound Engineer.



[click on this link to our **Darvélo '25** Video on YouTube](#)

Thanks to our sponsors: National Lottery Community Fund, East Ayrshire Leisure & Urquhart Opticians

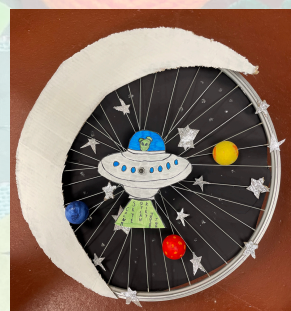
*Our **Darvélo Planning Team** is made up of volunteers from Loudoun Road Club, Cycle Station, Darvel Primary School, Cycle Ayrshire and DART. The Team are determined to make Darvelo a genuine community event providing interest for everyone, not only with all things cycling but also kids entertainment, street food and live music.

What's not to enjoy?









WHEELIE GOOD FUN...

A Big Thank You to St Sophia's Primary, Loudoun Academy and Darvel Primary Schools whose young learners participated in our "Wheelie Good Fun" challenge.

All of the entrants decorated wheels are illustrated. They made an amazing Art Mobile when hung together and suspended from the canopy at The Corner for the Darvelo Festival.

The range of materials, colours and topics showed amazing creativity and all skilfully put together.

Well done everyone!



The Very Hungry Caterpillar



As part of their involvement in community events, Primary 1-7 pupils at Darvel Primary School took on a creative upcycling project using old bike wheels, transforming them into a vibrant display inspired by The Very Hungry Caterpillar. Each wheel was decorated to represent one of the days of the week, showing what the caterpillar ate on that day, with colourful materials and imaginative artwork.

The project not only promoted environmental awareness through upcycling but also encouraged teamwork, literacy, and artistic expression.

The final display was a joyful celebration of learning and creativity, proudly shared with the wider community at Darvelo 25.

Well done to all at Darvel Primary School.



CYCLISTATION

Cycle Station Rolls Into Darvel

There's a new energy rolling through the streets of Darvel, and it's powered by two wheels, a whole lot of heart, and a passion for making a difference. Cycle Station Bike Hire Ltd, a not-for-profit cycling social enterprise, has found its new home in the town's former fire station at 43 West Donington Street. But this is far more than just a bike shop — it's a community hub that's already transforming how Darvel moves, connects, and thrives.

Cycle Station is on a mission to make cycling accessible, affordable, and enjoyable for everyone. Whether you're a curious beginner, a seasoned cyclist, or someone who simply wants to reconnect with nature and community, Cycle Station has something for you. Their focus isn't only on the wheels beneath us, but on building a healthier, more active, and more inclusive way of life in Darvel and beyond.

Pedal Power for All Ages

At the heart of Cycle Station's work is a deep commitment to young people — helping them build confidence, independence, and valuable life skills through the power of cycling.

One of their standout programs, Balance Buddies, taught over 350 children how to ride bikes last year alone. Delivered in schools and community spaces, these engaging and friendly sessions focus on balance, coordination, and confidence — often giving children their first-ever cycling experience in a safe and encouraging environment. It's about more than just learning to ride; it's about unlocking a lifelong sense of freedom and joy.

For older children, the fun continues with guided mountain biking skills sessions. These take young riders out into the local landscape, where they develop bike handling techniques, learn trail etiquette, and build physical fitness — all under the guidance of qualified instructors. These sessions are as thrilling as they are muddy, and they've become a firm favourite with kids and parents alike. It's adventure, exercise, and education all rolled into one.



Meet the Darvel Bike Bus

One of the most innovative new initiatives on Darvel's streets is the Darvel Primary School Bike Bus. Organised by Cycle Station in partnership with the local school, this "bike bus" helps children get to school safely and actively by riding together in a group led by adult volunteers.

Just like a walking bus, the bike bus offers a safe, social, and sustainable way to travel — reducing car use, easing congestion at school gates, and giving kids a great start to their day. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with parents, pupils, and teachers all recognising the benefits of active travel for physical health, mental wellbeing, and independence.

More Than a Bike Shop

Cycle Station's new base in Darvel is now a vibrant, fully equipped cycling hub offering a wide range of services. From affordable bike rentals and full-service repairs to new and refurbished bikes for sale, the team is making it easier than ever for people to get pedalling.

With a growing range of stock including popular brands like Cube, Squish, Dawes, and Claude Butler — and new arrivals on the way from Frog and Hoy — there's something to suit every age and ability. Whether you're looking for a child's first bike, a cargo bike for family rides, or an electric bike to conquer the hills, Cycle Station has you covered.

Their friendly team also provides expert advice, free safety checks, and flexible repair services, making sure everyone can ride with confidence. For those passing through, the hub also features a community meeting space complete with teas and coffees, as well as toilet and locker facilities — perfect for local cyclists and visitors alike.

And if you've got an old bike gathering dust in the garage? Bring it in! Their bike recycling programme gives donated bikes a second life, refurbishing them for resale or donation to individuals and families in need. It's a brilliant way to support sustainability and social inclusion at the same time.



Cycle Station is open Mondays and Wednesday through Saturday, from 9:30am to 4:30pm, and the team is always happy to welcome new faces. Whether you're looking to buy or rent a bike, need help with a repair, or want to volunteer or support their work, there's a place for you at Cycle Station.

43 West Donnington Street, Darvel, KA17 0AW

☎ 07543 782541

*Cycle Station is not just about bikes ...
it's about building a better, more connected future for Darvel and the Irvine Valley*

What a Wonderful Weekend of Walking

Yet again Walkfest was blessed with superb weather throughout the whole weekend, May 9th to the 11th.

Darvel Primary pupils had lots of fun on a nature walk *Roon The Bankers* with Howie, an EALT Countryside Ranger (Photo 1). Meanwhile Whitelee Rangers Kate & Fiona led a group from Fenwick Church (Photo 2) on the newly signposted Lochgoin Covenanters Trail finishing at the museum. Lochgoin Museum is open to the public & well worth a visit (Photo 3). One walker had travelled from the Netherlands to spend the weekend in Scotland at Valley WalkFest.

The NRA CHAT Hub in the Old Newmilns Post Office was the base start point for Friday afternoon walks, Newmilns Town Trail & CHAT Health Walk. (Photo 4) The CHAT Team from Vibrant Communities was also offering free health checks. Ian Pollock has been working with the NRA Team sharing his wealth of local history knowledge which you can find on the new Love Newmilns App. Great for anyone who would like to explore the area.

A large group of walkers met at the Heron Café (Photo 5) for a new route into a woodland which was unknown to most of the walkers who joined Beth, Elaine & Liz (Photo 6), then treated themselves after to coffee & scones.

Friday evening events based from Sports Darvel, who hosted Family Fun Sessions at the regular Youth Club, and the start point for Down The Valley Festival Bike Ride (Photo 7) which attracted lots of cyclists from near & far, a forerunner for DarVelo 25 in June. Lots of local walkers gathered for the walk around Lanfine & Browns Road with the Pharmacy Girls (Photo 8), and later the Twilight Bat Walk with Countryside Ranger, Christine successfully found bats feeding on midges attracted to the river.





2025 VALLEY WALKFEST 2025

The first Saturday walk left Darvel Church Hall on Tom & Stevie's new route up through Lanfine to the Gallowlaw Cairn where walkers enjoyed lunch with panoramic views over Ayrshire & the Firth of Clyde, before continuing on some lesser used 'paths' to the mast before descending into Darvel to enjoy music outside in the Black Bull beer garden. Darvel's Heritage Walk was led by Steve Gillies who stepped in at short notice to assist Frank Donnelly sharing their knowledge of Darvel's heritage sites & the new mural of Sir Alexander Fleming at The Corner.

The other Saturday events all were focussed from the BB Mission Hall in Galston where David Richmond, a great WalkFest supporter, kindly hosted providing teas & coffees to the assembled masses. The largest crowd was drawn to the Loudoun Castle Walk where Marie & Roy did a great job of leading a huge group around Loudoun Kirk & the castle where they were met by Friends of Loudoun Kirk reps & Henk Bembom, who generously shared their time & provided access.

Gillian's Walks offered a new event this year which was supported by The Outdoor Partnership Ayrshire allowing Gillian to be able to deliver two sessions of Digital Navigation Introduction at a discounted cost. Another nature walk was led by our friends Harry & Lindsay from EnRich on the Ladyton Loch Loop on peaceful lanes & paths just a short distance from Galston & the busy A71. Anne & Raymie led Three Woods Walk, another longer walk through the woods out of Galston to The Monks Strip & up to the top of the Mast Road and then down through the Lanfine woodlands.

On Sunday morning the weather was a bit cooler on the higher elevations. The Weavers Trail Walk set off from Carrot Farm on the north of Whitelee Windfarm on tracks & part of the historic route over the moors used by weavers or their agents in the 18th century. Stevie & Tom took another group of walkers up the Changue & over sections of moor which was relatively dry after weeks of fine weather. The route followed sections of the Long Cairn & passing Spirit of Scotland & Loudoun Hill. This year's TWALK walk with Rachael & Bobby drew a good crowd, walking up the Dyke Walk to Darvel Transmitter. The final walking event was Family Footsteps with Mindfuel led by Gavin who started regular running groups to encourage health & wellbeing. He & Liz took the group up through Lanfine with lots of activities for the children & parents to enjoy and to see the wild boar piglets.

Newmilns Snow & Sports Complex were celebrating their 50th Birthday on WalkFest weekend but they still took time to support Valley WalkFest with discounted Taster Ski & Tubing sessions. And last but not least Cycle Station, the not-for-profit Social Enterprise set off from their impressive new premises on Donington Street, Darvel for the 48 mile Whitelee E-Bike with Derek & the CycleStation Team being supported by Alan in the van.

All events were well attended with 397 participants, and donations of £595 towards running next years events. Valley WalkFest were sponsored by McConnell Pharmacy who donated first aid supplies and received a generous donation of £500 from Loudoun Valley Trust. However without the goodwill of our volunteer guides & hall hosts from The Valley community & all the volunteers & supporters named above we could not do this.

Explore the Irvine Valley this Summer



The valley of the River Irvine is full of delights and surprises. In recent years a whole range of paths and cycleways have been developed by East Ayrshire Leisure and have opened up the delights of the valley for local walkers and visitors. The annual Walkfest is a highlight and you might have taken part in some of the organised walks in May, but why not treat yourself by enjoying some of these walks this summer.

The map below shows the network of trails. Many of them link up to make longer walks and as the seasons change, so do the trees, plants, birds, animals and other wildlife you can see and enjoy. You'll also discover how people have adapted nature for farming and industry.



The Irvine Valley Trails

- 1 Grougar Walk
- 2 Armsheugh Woodland
- 3 Sir Chriss Hoy Cycleway
- 4 Strath Path
- 5 Cessnock Woods
- 6 Burn Anne Walk
- 7 Big Wood
- 8 Dyke Walk
- 9 Th Five Mile
- 10 Up the Bankers
- 11 The Weavers Trail to Eaglesham
- 12 Up the Line to Loudoun Hill
- 13 Quiet Road to Strathaven
- 14 Long Cairn Walk

The upper valley of the River Irvine is indeed a walkers paradise and the annual Walkfest confirms that. Take time, enjoy the moment and absorb the wonderful scenery that our valley provides. The Darvel Bulletin is intent in promoting not only the scenery and history that the trails highlight, but also the health benefits that come from participating in walking, not only in improving your physical health but also your mental health.

In our future Bulletins there will be a focus on the walks, especially in our neck of the woods (and fields!). But we would also love to hear your stories about the trails. Have you had a difficult time on the 5 mile, what about the new path to Loudoun Hill. Let's have your memories that can be included in our bulletins.

We have many superb photographers and talented storytellers in our community. So here is the opportunity to add your voice and your photographic prowess to our Bulletin. Please take time and make a telling contribution.

The Walk Highlands website include a full description of the Dyke Walk
<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/glasgow/dyke-darvel.shtml>

Profile



Alan Chow, owner of the **Universal** Chinese Takeaway, has been at the heart of Darvel's culinary scene for over four decades. His journey began in 1984 when his family opened their first Chinese takeaway in the town. Born in Glasgow, Chow grew up in the city's tenements and followed his father, who had always been in the restaurant business, to Darvel. A chance encounter with a shop on their way back from Newmilns led to the family purchasing the property, which became the foundation of their business.

In 1991, Chow took over the takeaway after his father retired, dedicating himself fully to its success. However, the future of the business remains uncertain as younger generations show little interest in taking over family-run takeaways. Chow commented on this shift, noting the demanding nature of the job, which often requires working six to seven days a week for 12 to 13 hours a day. "Our kids, who we call *takeaway* kids, grew up in the takeaways and no longer want to be part of it. They're forging different career paths," he explained.



Alan Chow

Despite these challenges, Chow's bond with Darvel remains strong, "The community spirit here is incredible," he shared, describing his customers as friends he's known for 40 years. Chow speaks fondly of Darvel, recommending it to anyone seeking a unique and welcoming place to live. In addition to running his business, Chow is actively involved in the Kuloc Chinese Community Association in Kilmarnock, where he serves as chairman. The association provides a space for older community members to meet, socialise, and share meals. "This is our hobby, our job, our living—everything," Chow said of the initiative. Reflecting on his journey, Chow expressed gratitude for Darvel's support. "I've enjoyed my 41 years here and wouldn't change it for anything," he concluded. "Darvel is my family, and so are my staff."

Through dedication and love for his community, Alan Chow who has no plans to retire yet has become a cherished figure in Darvel, embodying its spirit and resilience.

Interview by Eilidh Rowe

Darvel's Rogue Heroes

Paddy Mayne

This is the second of our series of articles charting the history of the SAS and their connection with Darvel

Robert Blair (Paddy) Mayne, whose name appears on the SAS memorial in Burn Road, Darvel. Was born in the family home in High Street, Newtownards, Ireland. The family later moved to Mount Pleasant. One of his sisters was the first female Major in the army and this may have had some influence on him with his later career. He was known as Blair to his family.

At school, he excelled at sports, rugby, golf, shooting and boxing. He later played rugby for Queens University, then Ulster, and Ireland then ultimately the British Lions.

Mayne was not officer material. but joined the Territorial Army supplementary reserve. He then moved to the Royal Artillery then to the Ulster Royal Rifles. He was left behind when Ulster Royal Regiment left for war so joined the newly formed 11th Scottish Commandos. It was extremely tough training but he excelled at it.



Mayne and his best friend were the first to enlist in David Stirling's new SAS/Special Air Service who were planning on creating havoc behind enemy lines, so he became one of the founders. Unlike the Paddy Mayne of the TV series, he was not rescued from a prison, but had resigned his previous post.

His men were always his first consideration and wrote to the families of those who did not return. He received a DSO and 4 bars, and only seven others received as many.

He had been awarded a Victoria Cross but General Montgomery downgraded it a few months later to a bar. The UK Government declined to re-open the case and apparently there is a current campaign to have it reinstated posthumously.

He set up training camps including one at Darvel and by the end of the war, the SAS had 2,000 members and had served in Italy and occupied France before D-Day. Known to be a bit of a 'dare devil' he was capable of disruptions at home or in the field, one of his exploits at a house in Chelmsford where the SAS was billeted, was to take up a challenge by an American to drive a jeep up a staircase. Unfortunately it had to be dismantled to get it down again!

Mayne returned to Newtownards after the war, where he continued to work as a solicitor. Although he was a quiet family man, he found it difficult to settle into civilian life and suffered from a back injury. He continued to drink a lot and suffered from what is now known, PTSD. It's a condition affecting many of the soldiers and working closely as a team and losing comrades on a regular basis is thought to be the cause. Sadly he was killed in a road accident in Newtownards when he was only 40 years old. His funeral cortege was a mile long and he was buried in Movilla Cemetery. His statue is in Conway Square. It was attended by men from the very first SAS unit 'LSAS' and the service conducted by The Rev. Fraser McLuskey (MC). Darvel is proud to share a memorial, with photograph on the contents page of the Bulletin, to him.

Darvel's Rogue Heroes

John Randall

(1920-2014)



Darvel is well known for it being the headquarters of the first SAS regiment, led by Lt. Col, Robert Blair Maine (Paddy). Amongst those billeted, Lt John Randall an SAS officer lodged with Aggie and Peter Tarbet in Hastings Square, Darvel. Like many of the other SAS officers, they were finally able to write about their war experiences and John Randall's book 'The Last Gentleman of the SAS' is a worthy read. It features his time in Darvel and has fond memories of the Tarbets. He paid several visits to Darvel and the Irvine Valley later in his life

Born 1920 in Hampstead, London John Randall, became a 1 SAS (HQ Squadron - Signal Officer) 1944-1945 who served alongside the French Resistance in Europe and is mentioned in dispatches (France 1944). As a young 25 year old Lieutenant, he was the first Allied officer to go into Belsen POW camp when the war ended.



They were faced with a horrific sight when entering the camp but were surprised to see so many prisoners still alive. They were filthy, starving and emancipated, sick and confused and had no idea what would happen to them as the SS had abandoned them. The sight was so bad, the BBC almost rejected David Dimbleby's reports on it. However, amongst the first prisoners Randall encountered was a young, Hungarian Jew, 15 year old Mady Goldgruber.

Sixty years later, after a newspaper interview about his war experiences for the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Belsen, Mady Goldgruber (now Mady Gerrard) read the article and wrote a letter to Randall. On receiving the letter, he paid her a visit at her home. Mady had become a well known clothes designer in Wales and many of her clients were famous personalities in the US and Britain. They became firm friends and for Mady it was a dream come true, to meet the man who saved her life. In her book 'Full Circle' about her wartime experiences, John wrote the foreword.



Mady Goldgruber (Gerrard) & John Randall

Darvel may not have been John Randall's home for very long but I think we can appreciate and be proud that it did play a small part in his life.

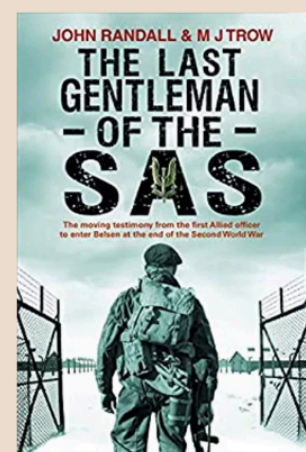
Read more about John Randall including his time in Darvel, in his book 'The Last Gentleman of the SAS'.

Read more about his liberation of Belsen POW in

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2601131/The-man-stumbled-HELL-His-place-history-never-revealed-But-just-published-memoir-SAS-officer-recounts-uncovered-horrors-Belsen.html>

This article from 2014 contains photographs that show without any photoshopping, the horrors of the use of the concentration camps during the Second world War

Agnes Wilson



1865



2025

Darvel Bowling Club

This year marks 160 years of the Darvel Bowling Club.

There was a booklet prepared to mark the 125th anniversary back in 1990 and I'm sure many residents will be interested in reading through some extracts from the booklet.

Let's go right back to the start...

The first bowling green was located at Armour Terrace, Donnington Street.

A story handed down over the years tells the tale of the opening of this green:

"Teams from Galston and Newmilns were invited to attend the opening ceremony. The Galston team travelled to the game by horse and cart and the Newmilns team travelled on foot. After the game the Galston lads decided they would go to a local hostelry for a small refreshment. While they were enjoying their dram the Newmilns team 'borrowed' their "transport" and used it to travel home leaving the Galston team to walk to Newmilns before being reunited with their horse and cart and resuming their journey to Galston. Whether they have ever been forgiven for this is not known."

The war years did impact on the bowling club and its members:

1915 saw a request from the corporation of Glasgow appealing for funds towards the maintenance of Belgian refugees. In October a letter was received from the Soldiers and Sailors Fund and it was decided to form committees to raise funds. In 1916, series of games was arranged with all proceeds to go to the fund with each player participating to pay a fee of 1/6d (7 ½ pence in today's money). In 1917 it was reported that almost £79 was handed over to the various war funds and the following year a further sum of £98 had been handed over to the war effort.

During the interwar years there was the introduction of a Ladies Day in 1922. This would have been for wives and friends of the club members since there were no lady members! This was however rectified two years later. A new green was opened also in 1924.

During the Second World War:

"In 1942, the AGM agreed that all members of the forces home on leave be allowed the privilege of playing free of charge. In September of that year a special meeting was held to discuss the advisability of the military taking over the pavilion (which they did the following month) All members were requested to take home their bowls.

In 1973 a bizarre incident took place:

"It was in this year that while the Ayrshire Cup was being played, the team from Darvel looked to the skies for inspiration and found it in the shape of a paratrooper. A parachuting display was being held in celebration of the Darvel Burgh Centenary and a landing zone had been laid out in Morton Park. Unfortunately one poor chap drifted off course and to the amazement of both players and spectators landed on the bowling green. It is said that he landed only a few feet from the 'head' and he didn't even make a mark on the playing surface, although he did apparently sprain his ankle. A brandy later saw the unexpected visitor amble off and join his colleagues and the game resumed, ensuring that all the players certainly had a story to tell in the years to come."



the Corner

Open Mic



Saturday 26 April was a busy day at the Corner. Following the monthly market, Alexander Fleming's granddaughter Sarah Whitlow, visited The Corner to view the mural of her grandfather.

From 5 until 9pm we enjoyed an excellent open mic session from a range of local musicians featured in the photographs.

Thanks to Kevin McManus and Colin McIlroy for their hard work in putting the musical evening together.

The evening was greatly assisted by the provision of wood fired pizza and the **Railway Out** mobile bar. There was a tremendous crowd of almost 300 fans.

The feedback on various social media platforms was excellent.



The Kinks Experience are coming to The Corner...

Saturday 19th July

Summer vibes are heating up at **The Corner** - and you won't want to miss what's coming!

Get ready for an unforgettable night of pop classics from one of Britain's most iconic bands.

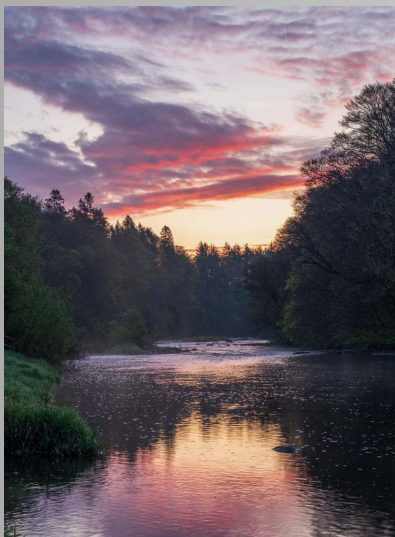
Brought to life by a top tribute act that truly delivers.

It's Him Again Mammy

Hugh Maxwell is a celebrated landscape photographer, who we have featured previously, but it's entirely appropriate to present his photographic skills once again.

Here is Hugh's commentary:

"I never knew it would be so difficult to keep a secret for several weeks but now I'm delighted to finally announce some amazing news. One of my images - Rock Fern - was shortlisted in the Scottish Botanical Category of The Scottish Nature Photography Awards. This is just as good as winning and the first time I've entered my work into Scotland's top nature photography competition. To be there amongst many of the top photographers, people I've often admired and looked up to, is incredible. The image will also be printed in the Portfolio Yearbook 2024 along with some information about myself, which comes out in the summer. It was taken in the River Doon as it flows through the narrow Ness Glen near Dalmellington, East Ayrshire. It's a special photograph, one of my favourites and I hope you also enjoy it."



"It was one of those mornings when a simple task such as putting my jacket on became an epic struggle. We have all experienced them. Everything felt awkward and clumsy as if somehow I was out of sync with the rhythm of life. Perhaps I should have stayed at home instead of venturing out with the camera. As I stumbled towards my viewpoint on the River Ayr at Failford, in East Ayrshire, a stranger would have thought I'd forgotten how to walk.

The dawn chorus immediately lifted my spirit as I waited patiently at the riverside. Nature always cheers the soul and reminds us of who we really are. After several minutes greys became pinks and reds followed by shades of vibrant orange and yellows. The sunrise was simply beautiful and spectacular. There was no layer of mist above the water but we can't always have everything we want all the time."

Enjoy the photographs.

Darvel Improvement Group

DIG

Hello, 'ello, 'ello!

SOUNDS OF SUMMER CAFE DAY

Due to poor weather, DIG's Annual Outdoor Cafe Day was moved to the Town Hall. We were delighted that so many people came along to support us. At

least it was nice and dry to enjoy delicious sandwiches, cakes and a cuppa whilst listening to the music of Loudoun Friends and Crossroads Hub Choir who provided the **Sounds of Summer**.

The Polis were also there providing captive entertainment for young and old.

A big thanks to all our DIG volunteers who helped make the event a success.

Next year's Cafe in the Square will be held on
Saturday 13 June



SPRING DIG

As well as replenishing the hanging baskets, maintaining the East, West, Millenium & Rose Gardens, the Darvel Improvement Group has been busy with the **Big Spring Litter Pick** and the **Easter Egg Hunt**



THE BENEFITS OF GARDENING

Gardening offers a huge range of mental health benefits, from reducing stress and depression to boosting your immune system. When it comes to strengthening our mental health and finding happiness, common suggestions include taking up a creative hobby, meditation, physical activity, and building solid relationships with others. But getting green-fingered with gardening can also play an important role in achieving and maintaining happiness and mental well-being. Indeed, the mental health benefits of gardening are many.

Stress relief

One of the main benefits of gardening for mental health is its ability to relieve stress. Gardening provides a welcome break from our increasingly tech-dominated lives. A recent study has found there were significant differences in mood when comparing participants' response to two tasks: working on a computer and working in the garden or preparing seed beds

A sense of purpose

Another benefit of gardening for mental health is that you can achieve a sense of worth and purpose. This happens when you get directly involved in something that is hands-on and you can see the end result of your effort. There's a sense of pride and validation in choosing the plants, herbs and flowers that make you happy, and the pride you feel with nurturing them. In fact, studies show that gardening causes an increase in feel-good hormones like dopamine and serotonin, as helping plants grow stimulates our identity as nurturers.

Reduces the risk of Alzheimer's

Gardening is related to better brain function and to improved concentration and memory. Some studies have found that it can even reduce the risk of Alzheimer's and dementia. The factors that cause Alzheimer's and its progression are poorly understood. However, as gardening involves so many of our critical functions, such as learning, strength, endurance, dexterity and problem solving, it could be this combination that contributes to warding off the illness in older adults.

Strengthens your immune system You can strengthen your immune system simply by being exposed to natural light and Vitamin D while you're gardening outdoors. In turn, this helps build resistance against chronic disease. Interestingly, it's also been suggested that the dirt you end up with under your fingernails may help to boost immunity.

Strengthen connections

Gardening fosters a sense of grounding, as it helps us to reconnect with our roots as human beings. People who get involved in gardening often experience a deeper sense of belonging and connection with nature. This is no small feat: think about how disconnected the majority of people are from something as basic as the origin of the food they eat. By contrast, gardening grounds you in the value of growing your own food – even if you're 'only' growing herbs. Gardening can also help strengthen your connection with others and offers an opportunity to meet people with the same interests.

Staying present

Gardening is a way of practising mindfulness as you need to concentrate on what you're doing. Furthermore, you can also take time to enjoy the beauty around you. Indeed, all tasks related to gardening (such as digging, pruning or weeding) force us to focus on the task in hand, and in doing so we're more likely to stay in the present and put aside our worries, even if it's only temporarily.

Helps you to keep in shape

Gardening involves a lot of physical exercise and so is a form of physical therapy. Weeding, digging, and carrying bags and pots around are all a good workout that can help you keep in shape. According to SAGA magazine, just half an hour of these fat-burning gardening activities can help shift a lot of calories: What's more, regular workouts can help you sleep better, and restful sleep is another essential element in achieving good health.

Counting the Cost?

One name shines brightly yet tragically in Darvel's past: **Margaret Cleland**.

Born in Hastings Square, Darvel in 1845 to a master shoemaker, Margaret showed signs of extraordinary mental ability from an early age. According to the writings of historian John Woodburn, she "confounded her contemporaries with the accuracy and speed of her calculations in arithmetic." While she was "undoubtedly a prodigy," he is careful to note that "there was nothing untoward in her make-up," describing her as "a comely lass with chubby features and a forehead that bespoke of intellect and inward brain power."

Her talents were first noticed at Hastings School, where she was taught by Robert Tarbet, a man Woodburn called "a most capable instructor." Even at the age of eight or nine, she displayed an extraordinary grasp of arithmetic. Tarbet tested her with what he thought was a difficult multiplication problem for a child—but "so quickly did she do it that he tried another, much more difficult, but again she astounded him with her ingenuity." Even more astonishing, "although the answers were on paper, it was quite obvious that she had reached them mentally."

These feats weren't isolated. She was once asked to multiply a sum of pounds, shillings, and pence by seventy-two—a complex challenge in pre-decimal currency. Woodburn writes that "she did [this] almost instantly and with no seeming difficulty," despite having only studied multiplication up to the 12x12 table.

Richard, the schoolmaster's son home from college, took it upon himself to investigate further. One challenge involved walking around the schoolhouse garden while mentally calculating the number of minutes in 900 years. She had only taken "a very few steps" before turning around and giving the correct answer.

Her reputation grew, and she was invited to other schools to display her abilities. At Beith, she was publicly quizzed: "How often will the clock strike in June?"—her reply, according to Woodburn, came "almost before the questioner had resumed his seat: '4680 times.'" When asked how many times it would strike in 1855: "56,490." And over a lifespan of 75 years? "4,270,500."

Woodburn's tone conveys both awe and concern. Her teacher once warned classmates to stop posing elaborate challenges like multiplying 123,456,789 by 987,654,321, fearing that "sums like that might damage her brain." Yet Margaret took it all in stride. She once calculated the cost of 313 yards of linen priced at 2 shillings and 9½ pence per yard in "about 86 seconds," carefully breaking down the answer in denominations as if working a routine exercise.

Perhaps most incredible was her ability to cube 795 and then divide the result by 19. She gave the correct cube—502,459,875—and the quotient—24,445,256—without even glancing at the blackboard when offered visual assistance.

Impressed by her abilities, the Marquis of Bute and the Earl of Buchan sponsored her education in Edinburgh. However, the young girl soon became homesick and was later transferred to the Normal Training School in Glasgow. During a holiday to Helensburgh, she unwisely went swimming in the Clyde when the weather was still cold, and developed a lung condition. Despite "every care and attention" at home, she "went into a decline," and died in 1863, not yet eighteen.

Woodburn closes his tribute with a sorrowful reflection: "What a pity she never got the chance to take up her teaching duties." He leaves us with a question we still cannot answer: "Could she have instilled her wonderful gift into her pupils? I would not care to even attempt an answer... we shall leave it at that and pay silent tribute to her memory."

In remembering Margaret Cleland, we not only celebrate a gifted mind, but also mourn the loss of a life that might have transformed others, had time and fate been kinder.

Darvel Snippets.....



A Tale Rooted in Darvel's Imagination

What if history took a different turn right here in Darvel?

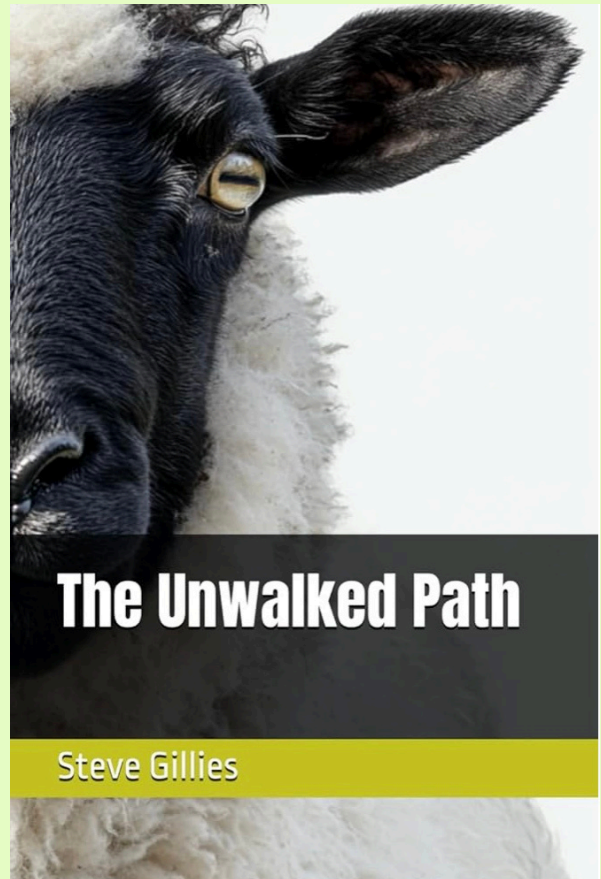
The Unwalked Path is a beautifully crafted short story that reimagines a visit by Alexander Fleming to Darvel in 1923—five years before his discovery of penicillin. In this fictional tale, a "wee wummin fae Derval" unknowingly changes the course of medical history. The first in a series of yarns from the Sheep's Heid. Well researched, well written - carries you along with its might-have-been narrative."

All proceeds go to support local charity and community projects through DART.

Grab your copy, support a great cause, and celebrate a story where imagination meets heritage.

Paperback only available and purchased on Amazon

[#Darvel](#) [#TheUnwalkedPath](#) [#SupportLocal](#)
[#HistoricalFiction](#) [#CommunityFirst](#) [#AlexanderFleming](#)
[#DART](#) [#DarvelScribblers](#)



Gardeners' Corner



Gardeners' Corner with its plant sales has been a very well supported addition to the vendors at the monthly Corner markets. There have also been two additional plant sales at the Gardner residence!! All proceeds from the sales go towards various community projects, so the finances raised benefits our Darvel community.

In addition to plants provided by members of DART, thanks must go towards the many donations of plants (and plant pots) made by members of the community, with a special thanks to go to the Darvel Gardening Club, and to Thompson & Morgan (a commercial nursery) for donating plug plants to be grown on.

Darvel Snippets...



DART had the privilege of meeting Sir Alexander Fleming's only granddaughter, **Sarah Whitlow**, on Saturday 26 April at the Corner. Having been on holiday on the Isle of Mull, she made a special detour on her way back home to have a look at the mural. She was absolutely overwhelmed. She then paid a visit to meet Frank Donnelly, our own local expert on Fleming before travelling home.



DARVEL'S VOICE...the next 5 years

Consultation for the 2026-2031 Community Action Plan has been ongoing and the steering group - **Darvel's Voice** has been encouraging as many residents as possible to complete the questionnaire. Of course the centenary in 2028 of the discovery of penicillin falls into this timescale, and if you have not already done so Darvel's Voice would welcome comments and ideas on how our town can mark this anniversary in a variety of ways.

A draft timetable has been set out for the remainder of this year prior to the publication of the Action Plan:

July 14th: Closure of consultation

August: Analysis of responses - online questionnaires, surveys, paper copies, school visits.

September 13th provisional: Voting Event in Darvel Town Hall with online activity available.

In addition to the Community Action Plan a revised version of the Place Plan will be produced and this is likely to include reference to aspects of Darvel and Priestland's potential for development and improvement. This will certainly have reference to the Town Hall, the Fleming Memorial, the Jamieson Road Factory site, Demolished tenements at East Main Street and the controversial inclusion of a development site in Priestland contained in the current Place Plan.

Darvel Snippets...



The ROTARY CLUB...



Throughout the late winter months and into a glorious spring, the Rotary Club of Loudoun has continued to be very active. From funding Santa gifts at a party for migrant children to assisting the Scout Group in Darvel with their premises in Ranoldcoup Rd.

Our activities have covered schools and voluntary groups in all the valley towns. As part of a worldwide organisation, we also contribute to international projects. These include the eradication of the virus Polio from across the world.

Although we are about service to our community, both locally and internationally, we also have fun and friendship. Such as a Barbecue held just before the weather became a typical Scottish Summer.



Should you like to join us in our activities you will be made very welcome.

For more information on Rotary Clubs please email loudoun.rotary@gmail.com or phone Duncan McNaught on 07933 237769.

COMMUNITY CEILIDH

Another Fantastic Event @ The Corner for your diary.

Ceilidh @ The Corner
Saturday, 23rd August
6:30pm - 9:00pm
The Corner, Darvel

Featuring the famous...

Tattiehowkers

Sat 23rd August
6:30pm to 9pm
Ceilidh at The Corner

the Corner

Get your dancing shoes on - it's time for a Community Ceilidh! with the famous Tattiehowkers.

Join us for a fun-filled evening of boisterous dancing, delicious food, and good cheer at The Corner Bar

Whether you're a seasoned ceilidh-goer or just fancy a whirl on the dance floor, come along and be part of something special in the heart of Darvel

Everyone welcome - bring your friends, neighbours, and that cousin who loves a jig!

[#CeilidhAtTheCorner](#) [#DarvelEvents](#)
[#CommunityVibes](#) [#DARTDarvel](#)
[#TheCornerDarvel](#)

— *What's on in Darvel this Year....*



Sunday 6 April	Spring Litter Pick	DIG
Wednesday 9 April	KidZone	The Corner
Friday 11 April	Fleming Mural - Official Opening	The Corner
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
Thursday 8 May	VE Day Celebration	Masonic Club - Darvel Dinner Ladies
Friday 9 – Sunday 11 May	Walkfest	Loudoun Valley
Saturday 10 May	Victory in Europe event	The Corner
Saturday 24 May	Corner Market	DART
Saturday 14 June	Café Day in the Square	DIG
Saturday 14 June	Darvélo Cycling Festival	The Corner
Wednesday 18 June	Matt Richmond Annual Outing	Darvel Old Folks Trip
Saturday 28 June	Corner Market	DART
Saturday 19 July	Kinks Experience - Tribute Band	The Corner
Saturday 26 July	Corner Market	DART
Saturday 23 August	Corner Market	DART
Saturday 23 August	Corner Ceilidh - Tattiehowkers	The Corner
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
Saturday 6 December	Seniors Christmas Lunch	Town Hall, Dinner Ladies

