

More Letters to the Editor

Season's End

President Nancy McLure welcomed members to the final meeting of the session. The afternoon began with coffee, cream scones and chat, followed by the AGM.

Secretary Sheila Little read the minutes of the most recent AGM, held when the group was able to restart last year. The present committee will continue and welcomed one new member Isla Jackson. Various suggestions for the next session were received and the less formal format of the recent Burns Supper was discussed. Also, the need to balance change and new ideas with the fact that we are a Burns Club and need to retain our tradition.

Treasurer Ann Hislop circulated copies of the balance sheet audited by Grace Brown, showing a closing balance of £373.55.

With business complete, four members gave brief talks to entertain the group. Aileen Armstrong spoke of the beautiful carved medieval skeleton gravestone carved in deep relief in an arched stone surround, built

into the outside of the much later wall which surrounds the Thomas Hope Hospital. This is in the old cobbled yard behind the Truly Scrumptious Coffee shop. No one seems to know why this 1650 – 1730 stone is there.



Ella Porteous' talk was called "A small world" about the many co-incidental events that brought her to live in Langholm and the many people with local roots she had met in different settings. She made us smile hearing of eccentric school teachers of her early years and how she too had become a teacher. Ella has been a member of Langholm Ladies Burns Club for many years and said when she first wished to join she had to go on a waiting list as only 50 members were permitted. How times have changed!

Nancy McLure spoke of the origin of the name of "Walkers

Hole", just north of the Sawmill Bridge. Nancy quoted from a paper read at the "Langholm Mutual Improvement Society" which met monthly in the 19th and 20th centuries. It tells of the returning Jacobite army marching north from Carlisle when large groups of Highlanders spent the night in the area of the Castleholm. A notable Jacobite officer Captain Bernard Walker tried to get a pony from Old Jimmy Irvine in his cottage nearby. Old Jimmy refused and a fierce fight broke out between young Jimmy, his grandson and Walker.

Jimmy's granddaughter was injured by Walker who threatened to drown her and old Jimmy for refusing to give up the pony. The sword fight was long and bloody and ended with Walker's death. Walker was buried in an unmarked grave near the swirling waters of the pool. The place received the name of Walkers Hole which may refer to the grave or the pool.

The final offering was from Grace Brown who gave a lovely rendition of a favourite poem "The Bairnies Cuddle Doon" by Alex Anderson and ended a very happy afternoon.

Aileen Armstrong
Langholm Ladies' Burns Club

Hawick's Alchemy Film Festival



The Heart of Hawick venue will be widely used during the festival

Hawick's popular Alchemy Film Festival has published its line-up for this year's event. In its twelfth year the festival features more than 120 films as well as a video-on-demand programme online.

Highlights include an exhibition by Alchemy's artist in residence Jade Montserrat which explores Hawick's under-known Black histories.

Mark Lyken will unveil his Hawick-made feature Notes

from a Low Orbit which is a portrait of the town, its communities and their everyday routines and rituals.

The exhibitions programme, includes a newly commissioned 16mm work called Earthy Body by artist Leah Millar shot in Hawick last year, and a video jukebox of material from the Borders Community Film Archive.

The festival runs from 28th April to 2nd May in various venues in and around Hawick.

IN BRIEF

Longtown fire fighter drive

Longtown fire station is on the look-out for new members to join their busy retained team. An open day is to be held at the station this Saturday, April 9, between 9am-11.30am for anyone interested in a career as an on-call firefighter in the town. If you live or work in Longtown, and can reach the station within five minutes of a call, come down and find out more.

Air Ambulance

Longtown Primary School PTA is organising a clothing collection in aid of the Great North Air Ambulance. They are looking for donations of clothing, bedding, curtains, towels, belts and shoes in pairs, while old mobile phones and used inkjet cartridges are also welcome.

The collection itself will be made on April 29, but local firm Wm Armstrong is providing a drop-off point from April 25, while a second location can be found in the school car park from April 27.

Eagles dare in Copshaw

By Gilly Fraser

When Jim Higgins told people he had saved his tiny dog from being snatched by a golden eagle in the garden of his home near Newcastleton, no-one would believe him.

'They told me it must have been a buzzard,' Jim says. 'But I know what an eagle looks like and this one had made three attempts to snatch my wee black Patterdale dog. Probably thought it was a new-born lamb because it was about the same size.'

That was three years ago, not long after Jim first moved to the area. Now, from the vantage point of his home which sits above the village, he has made several sightings of golden eagles flying along the valley. And this time, he's had them officially confirmed.

'I got in touch with the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project and they were able to check their satellite tagging system and database to confirm that I had indeed seen them.'

The Project has been working since 2018 to protect and increase golden eagle numbers in the south of Scotland where in the past they played an important role in the ecosystem. Last month it was able to



Tarras the golden eagle, one of several birds being monitored

announce that numbers are now at their highest since the early 19th century.

Philip Munro from the Project says several birds have been flying around the Newcastleton area and may even be using it as a kind of highway in the sky on their way to exploring their Northumberland territory.

Jim believes the bird he spotted may be a subadult male called Hecla which was released in the winter or Amelia, a juvenile female which was fledged in the Borders.

Now he's keen to follow the example of Moffat which has been declared the UK's first

Eagle Town. It has adopted one of the birds being monitored by the Project and named it Sinclair in honour of Mountain Rescue Team founding member Hugh Sinclair. In September last year the town even staged an Eagle Festival featuring falconry displays, raptor identification courses and live music.

'I think we should get someone to carve an eagle out of wood and place it at the entrance to the village,' Jim says. 'Knowing there might be a chance to spot such a magnificent bird could prove to be a real tourist attraction for Newcastleton. And if Moffat can do it – so can we.'

The Happy Hour Theatre Company

presents

'Women's Troubles'

by Ben Brinicombe



the Buccleuch Centre
LANGHOLM

Wednesday 13th April at 7.30pm
Tickets £14/£12

Box Office 013873 81196 | www.buccleuchcentre.com

This is the present Happy Hour set of Actors and the cast of the next hilarious play, 'Women's Troubles' which was especially written for the Company by Ben Brinicombe of Maryport.

The play contains Happy Hour's usual blend of silly but adult humour and is guaranteed to raise some laughs