

THE DARVEL

BULLETIN

Battles of Loudoun Hill

Rogue Heroes

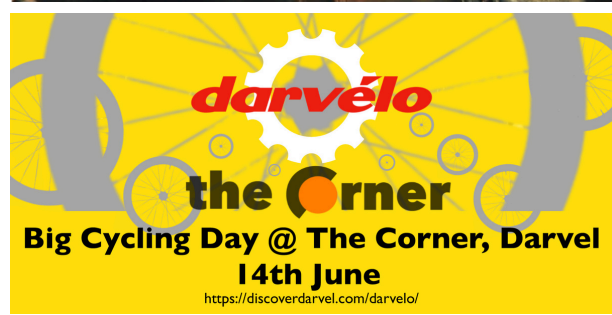
Darvel's Voice



Contents

Darvel's Voice	Page 4
Darvel embarks on its next Community Action Plan.	
The Battles of Loudoun Hill	Page 6
Our iconic landmark with outstanding historical significance.	
The Darvel Chair	Page 10
Let's get comfortable with another "History in little bits"	
Darvel's Rogue Heroes	Page 11
Darvel's contribution in training the SAS during World War II	
Get Active This Summer	Page 14
Walkfest, Darvelo and much much more...	
Darvélo 25	Page 15
Celebrating our third annual cycling extravaganza	
Sports Darvel	Page 16
Plans being developed for Jamieson Road.	
Morton Park - The Mattha Burn	Page 18
Storm Eowyn Tore Through Darvel	Page 19
Darvel Music Night	Page 20
The Day the Circus Came to Town	Page 21
Darvel Snippets	Page 23
What's On In Darvel	Page 27
Raymie's Ramblings	Page 28

Cover Photograph - Springtime Lambs



We've been telt tae tell ye.



Darvel is located in one of the most attractive valleys in Central Scotland and is surrounded by lush greenery, farmland and moorland. Many folks in the town and community organisations do much to provide a floral presence within the town with community gardens, private gardens and street features. However there is always scope for encouraging greater interest in gardening amongst our residents.

The benefits of gardening, be they in private or public spaces are widely recognised Helping us to keep fit and healthy Improving our physical, social and mental health Reducing anxiety and social isolation Contributing home grown fruit and vegetables to support a healthy diet Providing a sense of achievement Contributing to the health of our planet.

Over the coming year, the Darvel Bulletin plans to have a focus on gardening and its benefits. It is however worth just reminding ourselves of what is already in place or about to be implemented.

The calming effect of floral displays is well recognised and improving the look of our main street has been at the heart of the work of the Darvel Improvement Group over the past 20 years. A look ahead for the coming year by DIG is included in this Bulletin and highlights the extent to which the volunteers have worked diligently to ensure that the town's floral displays are well maintained.

The Darvel Horticultural Society has a healthy membership and has been a mainstay of residents in the town for many years. This has been complemented in recent years by voluntary groups such as Verve and Monday Masonic Madness growing their own vegetables and flowers. The Darvel Brownies have worked hard to establish their own garden behind the Town Hall

Looking to improve the look of the town, and contributing to protecting the plant life, DART has introduced wildflowering areas in Priestland and Morton Park where, with the support of the Council's Greener Communities, additional trees have been planned. The development of the Corner has included the provision of several raised beds with flowers, shrubs and trees. Gardener's Corner is now an established feature of the Corner Markets.

There is therefore much in place but the Darvel Community might think about what further can be done to develop Darvel as a Garden Village. The consultation for the 2026-2031 Community Action Plan is underway and provides the opportunity for residents to make comments and suggestions about how we can make Darvel and Priestland even more attractive.

Darvel's Voice

Your Community - Your Vision

We have now started the consultation on the 2026-2031 Darvel & District Community Action Plan. A steering group - Darvel's Voice - has been established to oversee the consultation process and the compilation of the final plan. The Steering Group is made up of representatives of a number of active community groups, including Darvel Strategy Group, Sports Darvel, Darvel Music Company, Verve, the Dinner Ladies, the Brownies, Darvel Masonic groups, Darvel FC, DART, DIG, the Community Council and the Food Locker together with some additional members. This will be our third action plan

The action plan will be set out in response to the needs, challenges and gaps in a community and identified by the community itself during the consultation which commenced at the beginning of March. 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.



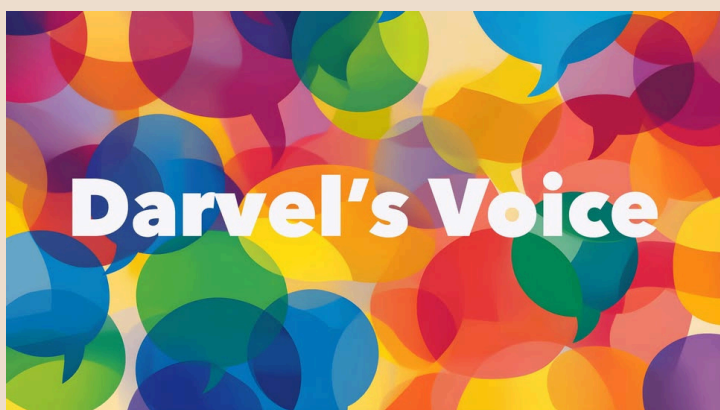
So why is an action plan important? The strength of our locally led Community Action Plan is that it belongs to the Darvel community and is informed by the extensive community engagement prior to the publication of the plan. In East Ayrshire a plan is not active until at least 40% of households respond,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

Many organisations and groups 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. A Darvel plan can be used by any voluntary group within the town seeking external funding for their projects.

The consultation period started in March and will run through to the end of June, giving plenty of time and opportunity for the everyone in community to make their views and ideas known and their voice heard. The consultation is making use of a range of approaches

- ***On line questionnaire available on various social media platforms***
- ***Printed versions available from Darvel Library, the Universal, Co-op, Railway Inn, the Black Bull 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** in the autumn at which there will be the opportunity for folks to vote on what they think are the key priorities for action which have emerged during the consultation.



The Darvel's Voice Facebook page contains all the information about the consultation.

[Darvel's Voice](#) | [Facebook](#)

Here you can find the links to the questionnaire together with surveys of key themes including

- Jamieson Road Factory Site
- Morton Park
- Sir Alexander Fleming Memorial
- Traffic Issues in Darvel and Priestland
- Darvel Town Hall

PRINTED COPIES OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

You can also obtain a printed copy of the short questionnaire from various outlets in the town - Darvel Library, the Coop, Universal, the Railway Inn and the Black Bull. You can return the completed questionnaires to any of these locations.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED DURING THE PREVIOUS COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Since the previous Action Plan was published in 2020 there has been a significant number of improvements that we have seen in the town. Many reflect the priorities that were identified in the plan. Here is a sample

- The upgrade and extension of facilities at Sports Darvel
- Extensive community support during the Covid shutdown
- Play area improvements in Morton Park
- Resurfacing and fence replacement along Waterlip
- Shop front improvements at 5 premises in East Main Street
- The replacement of the derelict co-operative buildings with The Corner
- The continued programme of music events by Darvel Music Company
- Refurbishment and repurposing of the Turf Hotel and Horseshoe Bar
- Improved communications: introduction of the Darvel Bulletin and creation of additional social media platforms
- Monthly Corner markets, open air music and annual Darvelo cycling events
- Demolition of the vacant tenement blocks in East Main Street
- Upgrade of the Loudoun Hill walking trail
- New community support groups – Verve, Food Locker, Warm Welcome, Masonic Madness
- Reinstatement of the 4 buses per hour service
- Relocation of the Cycle Station from Newmilns to Darvel
- Creation of wild flower beds in Priestland
- Continued maintenance of floral displays along Main Street
- Digitisation of materials held in the Darvel Heritage Museum



THE BATTLES OF LOUDOUN HILL

FIRST THERE WAS ...THE WALLACE

The battle of Loudoun Hill normally refers to the battle fought by Robert the Bruce against the English on 10 May 1307 and that is the battle which is shown on ordnance survey maps. However, before that there is recorded a battle between Wallace and English forces in 1297.

A number of places in Loudoun and Galston parishes are associated with William Wallace, but Blind Harry in his epic poem "The Wallace" tells the story of Wallace's ambush of the English at Loudoun Hill. The poem also tells how somewhere within the parish a hospitable innkeeper supplied the party of Scots as they prepared to intercept a convoy on route westward to Ayr.

The actual battle site was probably at the eastern entrance to the narrow pass known as the Winny Wizen, its strategic position at the head of the valley meant it was often passed by armies making their way inland or out to the coast. Wallace concealed his men behind the banks and ditches of the long abandoned Roman fort. The poem tells how the Scots made the way even narrower with the construction of stone dykes.

Wallace had only 50 men against 200 enemy soldiers but still managed to win the day, killing over 100 English troops including Fenwick (the English general who had killed Wallace's father), the rest scattered and the baggage train, with all the supplies including a large amount of useful armour, weapons and horses intended to relieve the garrison at Ayr, now fell into Scottish hands.

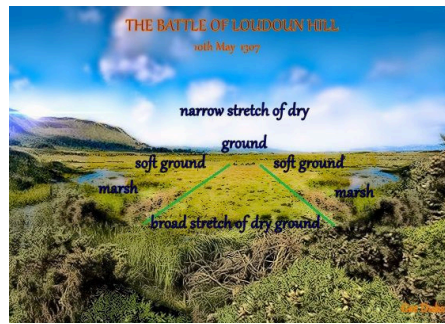
THEN THERE WAS ...THE BRUCE

The 1307 Battle of Loudoun Hill is significant as one of the first victories of King Robert I (the Bruce) against the English forces, then under Aymer de Valence (the Earl of Pembroke), following his inauguration as King. Following on from a brief skirmish at Glentrool, where Bruce had caused de Valence's army to flee when they attempted to attack his camp, Bruce and de Valence met again at Loudoun Hill. As the battle was arranged following a challenge by the English commander, Bruce was able to arrive first and prepare the ground before his enemy reached the area.





The Challenge is made



...the Scene is set



...the ground is prepared

The Scots with a force thought to be around 600 infantrymen were greatly outnumbered by 3000 mounted knights and so Bruce reduced their numerical superiority by choosing where the battle was to be fought. This was an area bounded by peat moss on the east and marshy ground to the west, and by digging ditches with dykes, Bruce narrowed the battlefield even further providing a narrow channel for the attack by the knights.

It is possible that King Robert had taken inspiration for the ditch digging from Flemish foot soldiers who had also gained an unlikely victory. King Robert had studied reports of the Flemish victory at Courtrai five years earlier in July 1302. Basically, the foot soldiers, merchants, craftsmen of the great Flemish cities of Bruges, Ghent and Ypres – took on the French cavalry, digging ditches and using the terrain and won an astounding victory.



...the English Approach



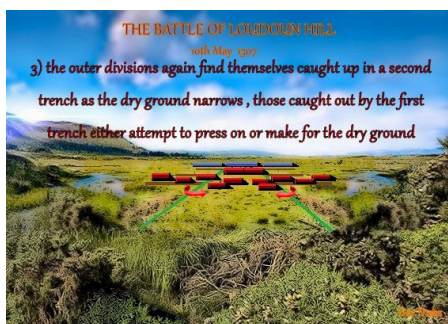
...and move forward



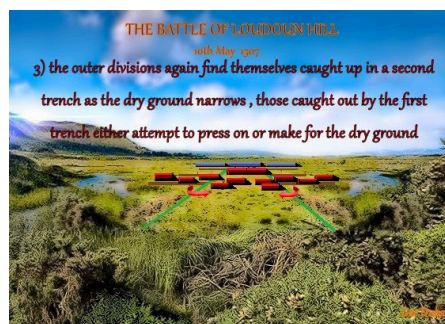
...into the Zone

THE SCENE WAS SET...LET BATTLE COMMENCE

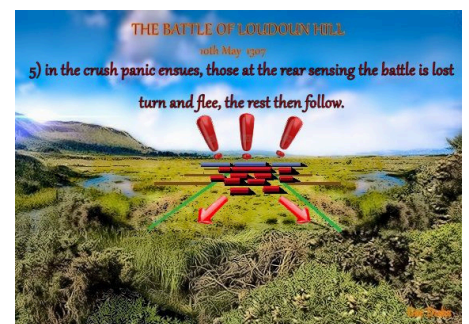
With ditches restricting the ground available for manoeuvre, Bruce was able to overcome the much larger English army of 3000 men. Bruce's schiltrons (massed spearmen) proved to be more than a match for Pembroke's heavy cavalymen and inflicted heavy casualties on them. The enemy fell back in disarray and Pembroke fled the field leaving his men to the mercy of the Scots.



...and problems emerge



...Scottish tactics work



...the English flee in disarray

John Barbour, the fourteenth century Scottish poet describes the actions by Bruce in his rhyming chronicle:

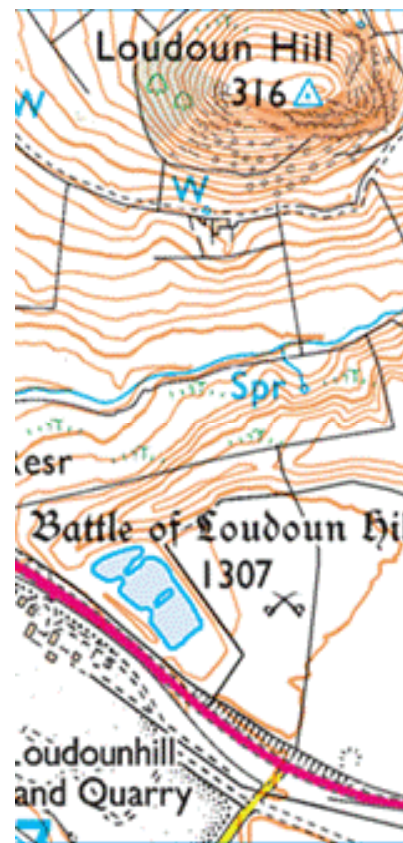
*The king upon the other side, Whose prudence was his valour's guide,
Rode out to see and chose his ground. The highway took its course, he found,
Upon a meadow, smooth and dry. But close on either side therby
A bog extended, deep and broad, That from the highway, where men rode,
Was full a bowshot either side.*

The lines in Barbour also indicate that King Robert dug three ditches in front of his men which the English would have to struggle past.

*He had three deep ditches made there For if he could not well prevail
at meeting them at the first,
He would have the second under his control, Or finally the third.*

Valence's only approach was over the highway through the bog, where the parallel ditches the king's men dug outwards from the marsh restricted his room for deployment, with the ditches in front of the Scots impeding him still further, effectively neutralising his advantage in numbers. Valence was forced to attack along a narrowly constricted front upwards towards the waiting enemy spears.

*The king's men met them at the dyke. So stoutly that the most warlike
And strongest of them fell to the ground. Then could be heard a dreadful
sound
As spears on armour rudely shattered, And cries and groans the wounded
uttered.
For those that first engaged in fight. Battled and fought with all their might.
Their shouts and cries rose loud and clear; A grievous noise it was to hear.*



The site of the battle
(The ponds, now gone, would have been deep marshes at the time of the battle)

Triumph and Momentum

The Battle of Loudoun Hill was a much-needed triumph for Bruce and his men. Though figures for the sizes of the armies are unavailable, the English may have had around 3,000 men, mostly cavalry, while Bruce had perhaps 600–800 infantry. Casualties are similarly difficult to calculate, but English losses may have numbered in the hundreds, with some estimates suggesting up to 1,000 killed.

As important as the physical victory was the psychological impact. Loudoun Hill showed that the English were not invincible, and that Bruce was a force to be reckoned with. More and more Scots flocked to his cause in the weeks and months that followed. As historian Michael Brown has written, "the victory at Loudoun Hill in 1307 was a turning-point in Bruce's struggle to establish himself as undisputed king."

The Road to Bannockburn

Despite the success at Loudoun Hill, Bruce remained cautious. He continued to rely on guerrilla tactics, gradually wearing down the English while gathering strength. It would be another seven years before he again faced the English in a major, pitched battle.

That clash came in June 1314 at the Battle of Bannockburn, where Bruce won a overwhelming victory against the forces of Edward II of England. The English defeat was so decisive that Edward II barely escaped the field. Bannockburn cemented Bruce's control of Scotland and paved the way for a formal peace treaty recognising Scotland's independence.

Bruce's Legacy

Robert the Bruce's military successes were all the more remarkable given the challenges he faced. When he claimed the kingship in 1306, he was excommunicated by Pope Clement V for his murder of John Comyn and much of Scotland was under firm English control. By the time of his death in 1329, Bruce had secured Scotland's independence, a status that was formalized in the 1328 Treaty of Edinburgh–Northampton.

Though the treaty proved short-lived, with war resuming in the 1330s, Bruce's legacy was secure. As the late medieval Scottish historian John of Fordun wrote in the 1380s, "through Robert, the kingdom of Scotland was recovered from the power of the English." Bruce came to be celebrated as a national hero, the "Good King Robert" who had liberated his country.

The Battle of Loudoun Hill was a key step in that journey. It showcased Bruce's military genius, his ability to outfox a stronger foe through cunning rather than brute force. As historian Colm McNamee puts it, Loudoun Hill exemplified Bruce's ability "to make very effective use of small forces of men in broken, difficult country — luring his enemies into ambush, surprising them in their camps, attacking them on ground where cavalry could not operate."

Conclusion

In many ways, the Battle of Loudoun Hill encapsulated the story of Scotland's long fight for independence. It was a David vs. Goliath encounter, with a smaller Scottish force overcoming the odds through grit, determination, and clever tactics. And it showcased the military and leadership abilities of Robert the Bruce, the man who took Scotland's cause on his shoulders and waged a remarkably successful campaign against a formidable enemy.

Though not as famous as Bannockburn, Loudoun Hill was a crucial turning point in the Scottish Wars of Independence. It renewed Scottish hopes after years of defeat and occupation, proving that the English could be beaten. And it established Robert the Bruce as a true king and national leader, setting him on the path to his eventual triumph.

Today, a monument stands near the site of the battle, testament to its enduring significance. It is a reminder of the courage and resilience of those Scots who fought for their freedom, and of the king who led them to victory against the odds. In the story of Scotland's struggle for independence, Loudoun Hill stands as a shining moment, a triumph of will and wits that still resonates seven centuries later.

The sections on Triumph and Momentum, Road to Bannockburn, Bruce's Legacy and Conclusion have been reprinted with the kind permission of History Tools.

For more information you can go to:

<https://www.historytools.org/stories/robert-the-bruces-triumph-at-loudoun-hill-a-turning-point-in-the-scottish-wars-of-independence>



HISTORY IN LITTLE BITS

It is not widely known that during the 19th Century the town of Darvel was a centre for country chair making. Little evidence can be found of this industry other than the chairs themselves.

There are no monuments, factories or even folk-memory. Little has been written, however these chairs were well made, popular and comfortable.

The number of chairs made over the years is open to conjecture, but a recent survey shows nearly one hundred chairs still remain.

Those that remain are jealously guarded family heirlooms. They have been traced worldwide including several to the USA, Canada and New Zealand. At least four chairmakers or wrights have left their marks on the Darvel Chair, namely John McMath, J.K.Black, Hugh Shields and R Mair.

Materials for the chairs typically included American Birch for the seat, local Elm and Ash for the legs and stretchers and Ash or Oak for the bowed arms.



THE DARVEL CHAIR

DARVEL'S ROGUE HEROES

Who Dares Wins



1st Special Air Service Regiment Memorial, Burn Road, Darvel



Paddy Maine ...fiction & ...fact

Darvel's Rogue Heroes

"Who Dares Wins"

I'm sure many of our Darvel residents have been watching the excellent series on the SAS - Rogue Heroes. What you may not be aware of is the strong connection of the SAS with Darvel. This is the first of a series of articles charting the history of the SAS and the connections with Darvel

Frustrated at the thought of losing the war, 'Jock' Lewes (1) had come up with the idea of element of surprise by using parachutes and dropping men in the desert where it would be the least expected place for enemy raids. Suggesting his plan initially to Lt Col David Stirling (2), their next approach was to get permission from the Army.

Stirling, the son of a brigadier general, initially met with opposition to his scheme and only had the support of Churchill and a few top Generals. With lack of Army funding, they raided the Allied camps and stole what they needed, including a grand piano for the sergeant's mess. Initially there were 60 volunteers, most of them like David Stirling himself, were former commandos. They had been hand picked by Stirling from the now defunct Laycock Unit.

In the end they destroyed more enemy aircraft than the RAF. However, these military mavericks were no ordinary regiment, they were a phantom unit which the Army had turned a blind eye to their unorthodox methods of fighting a war, but were given freedom to do what was necessary. They were now known as the LSAS; David Stirling, together with Jock Lewes and Paddy Mayne (3), had to prove their ideas would work. Their first mission was a disastrous start for them, when they lost a substantial number. Stirling himself was injured but he never gave up and finally in 1941, the regiment was renamed 1 SAS. They answered to no-one but were given instructions by the Army which they would carry out without any further interference

David Stirling had proved his point and more units were formed and spread to various other countries "After their time in North Africa, the SAS would continue to grow in size. They would go on to play a vital role on D-Day and continue to disrupt, destroy and intimidate German forces to great effect throughout France and Germany until the end of the war." (Damien Lewis 4)

They were the elite force and were never much more than about 60 in each unit. David Stirling was captured in 1941 and escaped four times. He was eventually imprisoned in Colditz in 1944 where he set up the Colditz British Intelligence Unit and stayed there until his release in 1947.

[1]Lt. John Steel (Jock) Lewis, inventor of the Lewis Bomb used by the SAS

[2]Lt.Col. Sir Archibald David Stirling DSO, OBE (1915-1990)

[3]Lt. Col. Robert Blair (Paddy) Mayne, DSO 3 bars

[4]Damien Lewis, War correspondent, author, film-maker





Paddy Maine

The military have always been under a cloak of secrecy and more so with the SAS, their lives depended on it. Paddy Mayne set up training camps in various locations, chosen as 'out of the way' places, away from likely enemy targets. Loudoun Castle was used as a training camp for the Belgian 5th SAS with Lt..Col. Eddy Blondeel as commander and 1st Commanding officer of the 1st Regiment of Parachutists at Loudoun Castle. He died 2000 aged 94.

It is unlikely that Lewes or Stirling visited Darvel. David Stirling spent six years as a POW (1941-1947) and Jock Lewis died aged 28 in 1941, in Italian Libya. David's brother, William[5] had been sacked and replaced by Lt. Co Brian Franks.[6]

John Randall was selected by Jakie Astor[7] as radio training officer, and travelled to Kilbirnie to the Tactical Training HQ at Moor Park..Auchinleck House had been opened to the officers, of Canadian, Polish, Free French armies. When Randall met Paddy Mayne there and he was introduced 'to all the rest', that was his first meeting with Rev. James Fraser McLuskey,[8] a presbyterian minister and chaplain to the SAS who was also there.

Returning via Galston, he recognised the name, Loudoun Castle on his map. He had heard about Loudoun from a friend who was friendly with the family, so he decided to drop in and pay the Countess of Loudoun a visit, that was to be one of many.

A new SAS Brigade had also been formed and the HQ set up at Sorn Castle. The 1 SAS, to which Randall and McLuskey had been assigned, was commanded by Paddy Mayne. 2 SAS had been raised by William Stirling, David's brother. However, unlike the TV series, William Stirling did not resign but had been sacked by Lt. Gen. Sir Arthur 'Boy' Browning because of his opposition to an order. 2SAS arrived in Ayrshire under the command of Lt. Col Brian Franks.

Randall describes the officers mess in Darvel being at the end of a long, bumpy ride. The house itself was splendid set in wooded grounds.[9] Paddy had set up a barrel of beer and they all went in to breakfast with tankards in their hands. Both McLuskey and Randall felt at home in the Mess.

The radio signalling office was in Hastings Square and Randall acknowledges his landlady, Aggie Tarbet and her brother Peter in his book. 'The Last Gentleman of the SAS'.

Darvel was no stranger as a training ground for young recruits. The memorial on the left in Hastings Square lists all the regiments.

Article by Agnes Wilson

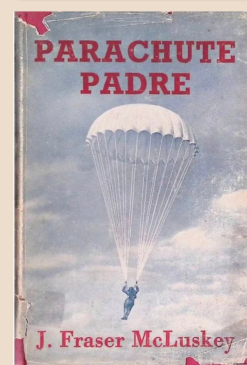
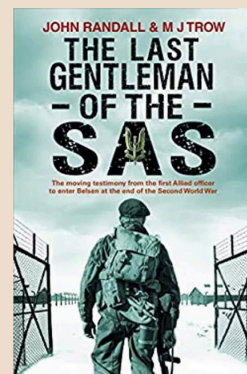
[5] Lt. Col William Joseph (Bill) Stirling of Keir (1911-1983)

[6] Lt.Col Brian Franks, DSO, (2-in-C + C.O.) 1943-44

[7] Maj. John Jacob (the Hon) (Jacie) Astor, OBE, Legion dHonneur (Fr) Croix de Guerre (Fr)

[8] James Fraser McLuskey, MC chaplain to the SAS, author of the book 'The Parachuting Padre'.

[9] This is Lanfine House



GET ACTIVE THIS SUMMER...

In September 2023 a national study found that East Ayrshire was the lowest ranking council area in Scotland in terms of physical activity. In response to this we promoted the month of May 2024 as an "Active May"

This year while not simply focussing on May, we are very keen that residents do get involved again in planned activities, and for those who did not participate last year, now's your chance. We have the **Walfest Festival** on the weekend of 9-11 May and the **Darvelo 25** on Saturday June 14



Active **MAYFEST**



But there are many other opportunities to get more exercise and in doing so improve your health, mental wellbeing, and if this leads to a reduction in the use of public and private transport, improve our environment.

Sports Darvel has a range of activities running through the whole of May, and **TWALK**, our local walking group will be organising a range of walks during the month, as they do for the remainder of the year. Look out for information on social media and why not sign up.

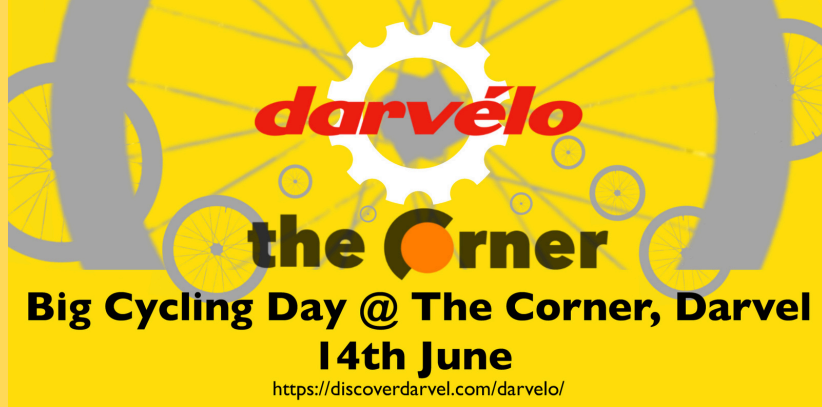
And there's more. Have you tried taking up bowls - why not drop into **Darvel Bowling Club** and give it a try. The Council's CHAT Team will be delivering "**exercise on prescription**" in the Corner on a regular basis during May.



What about trying out a bit of skiing on the **dry ski slope in Newmilns** and Vibrant Communities through its CHAT team will have regular "Exercise on Prescription" sessions as well

Of course you don't need to take part in these organised activities, although there is the added benefit of meeting up with others and having a blether or two, you can trek along the many walking routes in the Valley - **the 5 mile, Lanfine, Loudoun Hail, the Lang Cairn**, and many others. You can jog around **Morton Park** and check out the cycling and walking routes on the information board at The Corner.

Hopefully this will encourage folks to start Active travel.



Hi everybody, we are back for our third year running. **Darvélo 25** promises to be something extra special. Building on the success of the previous two years, our team of volunteers has organised a great line up all things cycling **plus** ...amazing fun stuff for the kids, live music all afternoon, street food and a bar.

Let's take the cycling bit first...

There are three cycle rides in the morning.

1. **Riverside Ride**, 11:00am A short fun filled family ride down the riverside road to Galston and back. This is a guided tour by CycleStation. <https://cyclestation.org.uk/darvlo-family-ride-2025/>
2. **Easy Ride**, 11:00am A leisurely 25km ride up and out of the Irvine Valley. A nice easy pace is guaranteed, led by our Cycle Ayrshire guides. <http://www.cycleayrshire.co.uk/index.php>
3. **Challenging Ride**, 10:00am A more thrilling 90km ride for those who are more energetic. An exciting route devised by John McCracken of Loudoun Road Club takes in lots of stunning scenery.

<https://discoverdarvel.com/darvelo/>

All three rides depart from The Corner, Darvel on Sat 14th June

Free bike maintenance by CycleStation, e-bikes, kids bikes, All Ability Cycles, cycle merchandise, cycle yoga, Spin Bikes and much more.

Kids stuff: face painting, puppet theatre and games.

Street food: tasty hot and cold nosh including Burgers, Wraps, Jerk Chicken, Coffee, Cakes and Ice Cream.

Plus there will be a licensed bar in the afternoon.

Live music: headlined by The Oasis Story, an amazing tribute band for those of you who don't have a ticket for Murrayfield. Music kicks off in the afternoon with two terrific local bands - The Aborigines and The Railwaymen.

See you all on... **Saturday 14th June**

For up to date information go to:

<https://discoverdarvel.com/darvelo/>



SPORTS

DARVEL

Darvel Community Trust ...Jamieson Road Factory Update ... Great News!

At the East Ayrshire Council Cabinet meeting on 4th December 24, Cabinet approved a report from David Mitchell in respect of the Jamieson Road factory site and gave authority for his team to proceed with the proposed demolition of the former factory premises.

David Mitchell stated:

"The headlines are that the site is legally ownerless and therefore, in the absence of any third party owner with responsibility to deal with these premises , and in recognition that if nothing else happens then it is likely the Council will need to continue stepping in as the Building Standards authority , then in order to deliver the best possible outcome we have developed a more ambitious approach.

Rather than continue with a reactive, piecemeal approach we propose to arrange for the demolition of the buildings and clearance of the site , to apply to the Court to acquire title to the site and then to effectively transfer the site to Darvel Community Trust to enable them to proceed with their project to bring the site back into use.

In terms of next steps, we will now progress with the tender for the demolition works , building on the market research we have already undertaken, and which gave comfort we will have sufficient budget to deliver this , and to commence with the application to the Sheriff Court under the Companies Acts seeking an order conferring the title to the site to the Council.

I will be meeting with colleagues shortly to take forward these 2 actions and will thereafter be able to provide a clearer timeline , but in the meantime I just wanted to confirm that we now have Cabinet approval to deliver these proposals, and in doing so to hopefully deliver the successful regeneration of what has been a longstanding brownfield site and blight on Darvel for long enough.

I will keep you all posted as matters progress, but in the meantime just wanted to confirm that we will be proceeding with this project now we have Cabinet approval."

It's expected that this process will be completed within a matter of months with a demolition contractor to be appointed prior to Easter with likely demolition pre-Summer.

Darvel Community Trust is expecting to retain one unit adjacent to Green Street and the Shed closest to Green Street which will then be sublet to a third-party for redevelopment into small industrial units.

Darvel Community Trust will then seek funding to redevelop the cleared site adjacent to Jamieson Road into a Velo track cycling facility as discussed.

Jamieson Rd...Green St Redeveloped



Background

In 2023 Darvel Community Trust secured a Prescriptive Claim on the derelict and dangerous factory units. A community consultation overwhelmingly backed the proposed demolition and redevelopment into a 4G pitch. Subsequently, the Trust has been working with East Ayrshire Council and the building is due to be partially demolished with the site cleared in mid-2025.

Original Proposal: Feasibility

The original plan to redevelop the cleared site into a 4G pitch was financially challenging with planning issues and the decision was taken to focus on upgrading the existing grass pitch at the Centre to a 4G pitch and amend the plan for the cleared factory site.

New Proposal: Mixed Use = Community Asset & Economic Activity

In consultation with Sports Scotland and reviewing expected site development costs and income generation requirements for the Sports Centre, we've pushed forward with plans which will regenerate the site and provide ongoing revenue for the Centre to secure it for the community.

Deliverables:

- Clearance of the majority of the site, all dangerous and dilapidated buildings gone
- Link the existing skatepark to a new Pump Cycling track on the Jamieson Road side
- Redevelopment of an existing shed and standalone unit on Green Street
- Attractive small business units created to generate economic activity and rental income
- Exciting and accessible community space contributing to improved health& wellbeing



Timetable

The demolition of the units that are to be removed will be achieved by mid-2025. Funding will then be sought for the redevelopment of the cleared site for the PumpTrack and the 4G pitch in 2025 to mid- 2026, with the development being undertaken 2026 into 2027. It is expected that the retained factory units will be refurbished and sublet by mid-2026 contributing to ongoing investment into Sport Darvel.

Morton Park: Mattha Burn ...An Update

In 2021 a steering group was established to produce a range of options for improvements to Morton Park. There was extensive consultation and as a result a comprehensive improvement plan was produced. A number of steps have been taken – viewing gaps in the Irvine Riverbank, the replacement of the old sand pit with the soft play area for toddlers, replacement of worn matting below existing play equipment, extension of the railings along Mairs Road from the Rose Garden, the provision of additional picnic benches and the introduction of additional trees, plants and wildflowers.

There remains work to be done. The current consultation on the Community Action Plan – **Darvel's Voice** provides residents with the opportunity to identify further improvements that could be made to the park.

One of the improvements identified in the report was an upgrade of the **Mattha Burn** which forms the western edge of the park and which is now completely overgrown with bank erosion evident in a number of places. DART has taken the opportunity to enlist the assistance of the Ayrshire River Trust (Carlyn Bryce, a biologist) to suggest what steps we can take to make improvements.



The Mattha Burn: western edge of the Park



The overgrown banks of the burn

We certainly have a challenge ahead, but the resilient folks of Darvel have never shied away from one. Ideally, we need to give the burn some "breathing space" to meander naturally 'wiggle space'. The placement of streetlamps and the current footpath location are part of this challenge.

Simply using a strimmer or chainsaw could cause more harm than good, potentially leading to erosion of the riverbank. Instead, developing a plan that incorporates native planting would help stabilize the riverbank and maintain the wildlife corridor along the burn. This approach would be environmentally sensitive and visually appealing.

Carolyn has also provided us with interesting green engineering options and habitat ideas that could enhance the area. Any engineering work will require a "fish rescue" plan as well.

Please be patient with us; it is crucial that we get this right and secure funding to carry out the work safely and with sensitivity to our incredible wildlife.

When Storm Eowyn Tore Through Darvel

On Friday 24 January, the bulk of Ireland and western Scotland braced itself for the arrival of **Storm Eowyn**, heralded by a red warning from the Met Office. Throughout the day we were battered by winds reaching 80mph – not quite as stormy as the west coast of Ireland, but enough to cause damage and loss of power through the town and the surrounding area, as shown in the photos below. The last time there was a red weather warning for Central Scotland was on January 3, 2012 – for a storm known as ‘Cyclone Ulli’, that was broadly similar in scale to Storm Éowyn.

The world's weather and its impact on communities is changing: floods, fires, storms and drought all fuelled by global warming causing the climate to be much more unpredictable and unstable. We live in challenging times!



Photographs courtesy of Pablo Ipince-Braschi

DARVEL MUSIC NIGHT

SATURDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2025

On Saturday immediately after Valentine's Day, Darvel enjoyed a superb evening of music from two of Scotland's best bands - the Deke McGee Band and the McCommitments.

DEKE MCGEE BAND

Mark 'Deke' McGee started playing Saxophone at the age of thirteen, after hearing Bill Doggetts 'Honky Tonk' played by the legendary Clifford Scott. He began studying the sound and the stylings of all the great Swing and Rhythm n' Blues horn men of that classic era.

As a Sideman Deke has performed all over the world at Jazz and Blues Festivals in Montreal, London, Dublin, Paris and numerous other places. This has seen him recording, supporting and sharing the stage with names such as Buddy Guy, Eagles guitarist Joe Walsh, Hamish Stuart, Zoot Money, The Fratellis, The Sensational Alex Harvey Band, and many more.

Deke and his fantastic band have a style all their own, fully exemplified by an outstanding performance at Darvel Hall last night (Saturday 15 February 2025).

McCOMMITMENTS

The McCommitments ARE indeed The Scottish Saviours of Soul!

One of the country's best tribute acts they are a superb 11 piece soul band who celebrated the music from the iconic movie soundtrack *The Commitments*. With a wonderful horn section, amazing backing singers, fantastic musicians and a powerhouse of a lead vocalist at Darvel Town Hall. The McCommitments brought 'real SOUL' to an appreciative audience running through a great set of classics from the likes of Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Al Green and many more 1960's legends?

Thanks go all the acts for appearing at Darvel; the Sound and Lighting Crew (Studio 5), Kevin Kerr Photography, East Ayrshire Leisure Trust, the amazing Darvel Music Company volunteers and last but not least all the Music fans who supported this event.

This concert was organised by the Darvel Music Company on behalf of DART (Darvel Area Regeneration Team). DART would like to thank ARIA (Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition Fund), Newmilns Regeneration Association and Galston Community Development Trust for assisting with finance for this concert.

Watch out for more musical events from the DMC in the Bowling Club and Town Hall and The Corner.



Deke McGee



Deke McGee Band

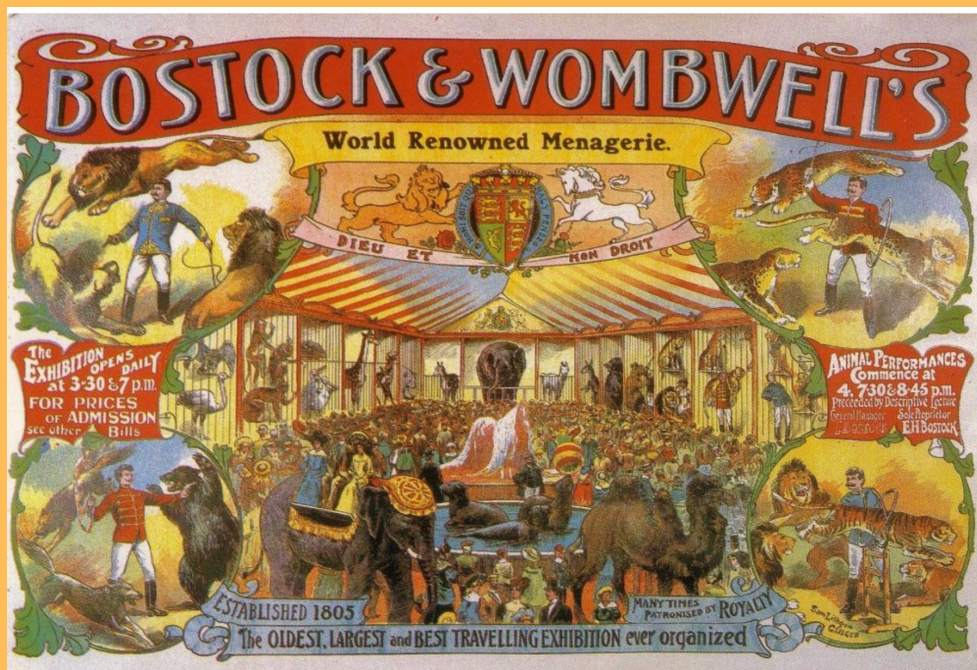


The McCommitments



The McCommitments

The day the Circus came to town



Bostock & Wombwell's Menagerie poster for their travelling Menagerie & Hippodrome

Edward Henry Bostock, owner of the original Scottish Zoo and Glasgow Hippodrome was also the proprietor of Bostock & Wombwell's well-known travelling hippodrome & menagerie. He toured throughout Scotland in the late 19th and early 20th Century, including visits to Darvel. The following newspaper extract reported on one such occasion to our wee town on Monday 2nd March, 1896.

MA CONSCIENCE! INSULT A BAILIE IN HIS AIN TOON!

Darvel's civic dignitaries, at the close of the monthly meeting on Monday night, paid a state visit to Bostock & Wombwell's combined menagerie and hippodrome, stationed for the nonce in the (Hastings) Square. Marching up the gangway while the band blew forth its ear-splitting fanfares, the town's dignitaries made an imposing procession. Once inside, rather an amusing incident, in which a worthy Bailie and a monkey were the principals, took place.

Standing in front of Master Jacko's cage, smoking a reflective, or it may be a fumigative pipe, the worthy Bailie aforesaid turned for a moment to look at something else, when, quicker than the proverbial "Jack Robinson," the monkey's paw shot through the bars, and the pipe was snatched from between the Bailie's teeth. This to a common man would have been bad enough, but to a Bailie - ma conscience! Of course, being a Bailie, the pipe was not a common four-a-penny clay one, a fact which made the indignity all the greater.

the black man, was appealed to in vain, but latterly a little man with a smoky countenance chased the depredator into a corner, where he dropped the Bailie's property, and it was raked out with an iron hook, and restored to its rightful owner, while the band tootled its loudest, and the curtain, metaphorically speaking, that is, dropped gently and gracefully upon a happy and contented Bailie, happy, like the boy in the advertisement, now that he had got it.

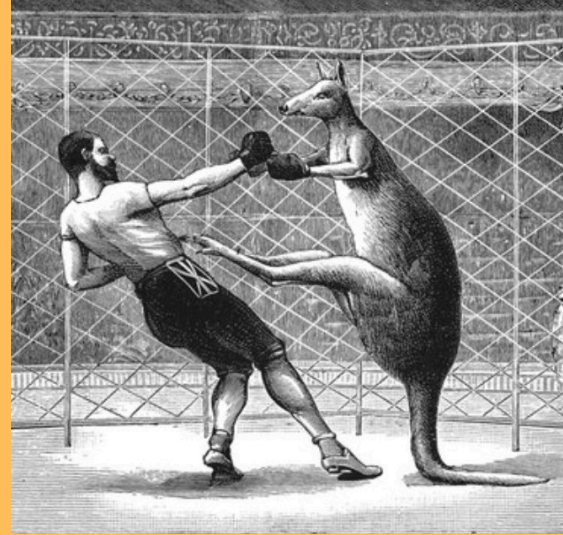
Extract from the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald, Friday 6th March, 1896

Whilst there is no detailed record of the actual Darvel performances of the circus, six days later on Tuesday 25th February 1896 the travelling menagerie visited Saltcoats with the local newspaper reporting the following in advance:

*This celebrated menagerie and circus visits Saltcoats on Tuesday first. The collection of animals is one of the finest in the kingdom, and when, along with it, there is also a first-class circus with skilled artistes, the combination should prove unusually attractive, and draw crowded houses. In this connection, it may be interesting to mention that Bostock & Wombwell's original Boxing Kangaroo is not **dead**, and will appear at every performance. The kangaroo whose death was announced in the papers was one that had been appearing at the Royal Aquarium, London.*

The following is an extract from Walter Mitchell's sketch diary of Darvel c.1905. Walter grew up in Darvel and had fond memories of the travelling menagerie as a boy:

"When Bostock and Wombwell's Travelling Menagerie was coming (to Darvel), this was a sight you don't see now. Huge waggons drawn by team's of six Clydesdale like horses. Here was a display of lions, tigers, monkeys, birds, beasts and reptiles all coloured. Surganie, the lion tamer in a cage of performing lions. To me as a boy this was wonderful. When I grew up to be a young man in my teens. I actually met the artist who drew their posters - John Biggar was his name."



BOSTOCK & WOMBWELL'S
GIGANTIC DOUBLE MENAGERIE AND
CIRCUS OF STARTLING ARTISTES
WILL VISIT
KILWINNING (Abbey Green), MONDAY, Feb. 21th;
SALTCOATS (Fair Park, Raize Street), TUESDAY,
Feb. 25th;
IRVINE (High Street), WEDNESDAY, Feb. 26th.

THE OLD ROYAL No. 1 COLLECTION,
COMPRISING
BEASTS, BIRDS, and REPTILES
From every Forest, Desert, and Jungle in the Known
World.
Four of the Greatest Animal Trainers on Record will,
at each Performance, give exhibitions of their Daring
Courage with groups of ferocious, yet highly-trained,
Lions, Tigers, Wolves, Hyenas, Leopards, Bears, &c.

THE WORLD'S MARVEL,
THE BOXING KANGAROO,
Will appear at each representation in a real Pugilistic
Encounter.

IN THE CIRCUS DEPARTMENT
Will be found Artistes of First-Class Merit, comprising
Trapeze Performers, Wire Walkers, Acrobats, Contor-
tionists, Jugglers, Tumblers, Clowns, &c.,
THE WHOLE FORMING UNDOUBTEDLY
The Greatest Road Show on Earth.

This Magnificent Establishment is Brilliantly
Illuminated with the Electric Light.

PERFORMANCES DAILY AT 3.30 AND 7 P.M.
ADMISSION—AFTERNOON, 1s; CHILDREN, 6d.
EVENING, 6d (ALL CLASSES).
Feeding Time about 9.30 p.m.. 3d extra.
SOLE PROPRIETOR—E. H. BOSTOCK.



M. JOHNSON AND HIS TRAINED ELEPHANT



Darvel Snippets.....



Exciting times for our children in April: **KIDZONE** is back at **The Corner** (and it's free)!! We all enjoyed it so much last year that on **9 April , 11am-2pm** we will do it all again.

Uncle Billy will once again do his magic, Michelle's Magical Faces and her face painting. This year we will be joined by Tolka the miniature pony, Sausage, Ham and Chips the Guinea Pigs from Laigh Hapton farm.

There will be Spring Time arts and crafts, loads of table top games including Smash the Malteser, Higher or Lower and some Feely Boxes too.... All for free!

For a small charge you can also Decorate a Donut with Harley's Donuts, have your caricature drawn by the amazingly talented Scott Wallace. The Wee Crafty Club will also be there.

This is a fantastic free event for our children to enjoy during their school holiday.

THE FOOD LOCKER/WARM WELCOME TEAM

Warm Welcome continues to provide a warm friendly space where people can enjoy the company of others. Thanks to the willing Volunteers, soup and home baking are provided every week for people to enjoy while they chat. It is open every **Saturday afternoon from 2-4pm** at **VERVE** and around 30 people attend each week. All are welcome

The **Food Locker** continues to be very busy with new people coming along every week as more people face financial difficulties. Our thanks have to go to all of our Volunteers who cover the opening hours and do lots of work behind the scenes. Without the support of many generous individuals, businesses and organisations who support The Food Locker we could not keep this much needed facility open.

Opening hours:

Monday 6-8pm, Wednesday 1-3pm in the Portacabin at The Sports Centre.

Waterlip Resurfacing



Final phase of the Waterlip Improvement Scheme has now been completed with resurfacing of the stretch from East Main Street

Thanks go to Hamilton Tarmac for the quality of the work and to the Place Based Investment Programme and SOLWEC for providing the necessary funding.

Calling All Aspiring Writers



Have you ever wanted to write but never found the time or focus? Do you have stories, poems, or ideas waiting to be put on paper? Or maybe you just love writing and want to connect with like-minded people?

We're looking to start The Valley Scribblers - a creative writing club where we can meet up, share ideas, produce content, learn from each other, and offer support. No writing experience is needed - just a love for words and a willingness to give it a go!

If you're interested in joining watch our for the Valley Scribblers Web Page under [Discover Darvel.com](http://DiscoverDarvel.com)

A71 TRAFFIC CONCERNS

While the traffic through Darvel affects all who live on the Main Street of Darvel the residents of the west of Darvel are particularly tired of the weight and speed of the HGV's entering the town. They start around 3:30 am and the situation is deteriorating. The lack of road markings allows the HGV's to come into the parking bay area when passing one another and are dangerously close to the pavement with their wing mirrors being a threat to pedestrians safety.

After a meeting with the MSP and the Ayrshire Roads Alliance (ARA) it has been confirmed that they have completed the design of the new traffic calming layout for the entrance to West Main Street which will include renewing all road marking and the provision of a new gateway feature upon entry to the 30mph speed limit. The current speed limit signs will also be upgraded to include yellow backing boards making the signs clearer to drivers.

Works are already underway including two new buildouts and upgrading of the existing pedestrian refuge island are nearly complete which will slow the speed of the HGV's.

Darvel's Voice

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

Our consultation for the 2026-2031 Darvel & District Community Action Plan is now underway and we want the views of everyone in the community.

You can complete an on line questionnaire by going to [Darvel and Priestland Survey | Engagement East Ayrshire](#)

Printed questionnaires are available from Darvel Library, the Universal, the Co-op, the Railway Inn and the Black Bull

There is a dedicated Facebook page for Darvel's Voice at [Darvel's Voice | Facebook](#) where there will also be a link to the online questionnaire and regular survey of key themes.

You can also give us your feedback by e mail as well: darvelsvoice@discoverdarvel.com

There will also be a series of online surveys which will appear on the Darvel's Voice Facebook page. These will be featured on a weekly basis and will cover topics including:

- Jamieson Road Factory Site
- Morton Park
- Sir Alexander Fleming Memorial
- Darvel Town Hall
- A71 Traffic issues Darvel and Priestland

The Corner - Events Equipment

DART is delighted that ARIA (Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition Fund) has supported our objective of introducing additional musical and other events in the Upper Irvine Valley. The equipment (sound system, lighting, staging and projection) which has been funded will make a huge difference to the quality and professionalism of what we provide at the Corner and other locations within the valley.

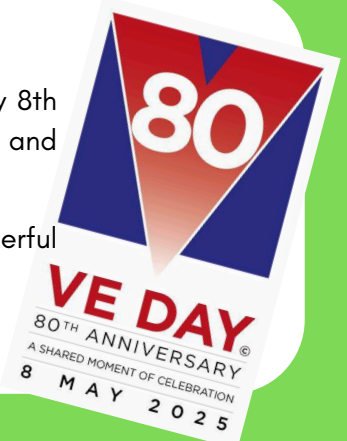


VE Day - indoor street party.

Darvel Dinner Ladies are hosting this special event to mark **VE Day** on Thursday 8th May, 2-4pm in the Darvel Masonic Club. There will be a fine range of food and refreshments. Entertainment will be provided by Scott Dunbar.

There might just be a few spaces remaining, but please be quick as this wonderful event is limited to 50 guests.

Please message our Facebook page for more information.





Wheelchair and mobility aids service

The wheelchair and mobility aid service organised by the **Darvel Dinner Ladies**, is free for residents of the Valley. The maximum loan time is 6 months, this is to ensure we have adequate wheelchairs available for all residents who require our service.

The service is free, we do however ask for a £20 deposit, which is fully refundable when our chair is returned or collected.

Please message our page for more info.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100071989105324>

We will soon have a wider seat wheelchair available for residents, due to the very kind donation from the Coop, this is just wonderful.



the Corner

The Corner ...Events

In addition to the monthly markets and Darvelo cycling, the team has worked hard to respond to requests from the community for more activities.


We have **Kidzone** on Wednesday 9th April and on Friday 11th April, the **Fleming Mural** will be officially "opened" (8pm-9.30pm). There will be refreshments available for those coming along.

After the first market of the year on Saturday 26 April there will be an **Open mic music session** from 5pm to 9pm with food & drinks available while you enjoy listening to our excellent musicians.

**Food, Refreshments, Music
What more could you ask for?**

...and then on Saturday 10th May there will be a celebration of **Victory in Europe (VE Day)** at the Corner and finally we intend to organise another **Table Top** sale this year (after last year's was washed out by torrential rainfall). *Watch out for more on these events on the social media platforms.*

2025 Market Dates

M A R K E T D A Y	the Corner
	2025
	* April 26th - 10 till 2
	* May 24th - 10 till 2
	* June 28th - 10 till 2
	* July 26th - 10 till 2
	* August 23rd - 10 till 2
	* Sept 27th - 10 till 2
	* Oct 31st - Halloween Friday evening special
	* Nov 28th - Christmas Friday evening spectacular
	DART 



THE FLEMING MURAL

Ever since **The Corner** development was taking shape, there has been a great deal of comment and support for the creation of an appropriate mural that would capture the heritage and spirit of the town. There have been a number of suggestions for the mural, but the overwhelming preference was for one of Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin. The painting is now nearing completion and we look forward to this being a game changer in the Main Street landscape. **Rogue-one** (the mural artist) has done a marvellous job.

— *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 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



Birds for Springtime....

Another great walk from Darvel is along the River Irvine with many wild birds feeding and nesting. Along the quiet road passing Waterhaughs, down on to the Browns Road, camera at the ready you might see many of my favourites - Herons, Dippers, Kingfishers (if you have a keen eye), Wagtails, Common Mergansers, Mallards, the odd Cormorant, Moorhen and Coot.

Bird nesting season is approaching with the birds busy finding their mate and building nests. Dippers nest close to the water using cavities in riverbanks, holes in walls or trees. Kingfishers tunnel into high-sided riverbanks, Herons nest high in trees in colonies called 'Heronries'.

