

ISSUE 27

AUTUMN 2025

THE  
**DARVEL**  
BULLETIN

Times Past

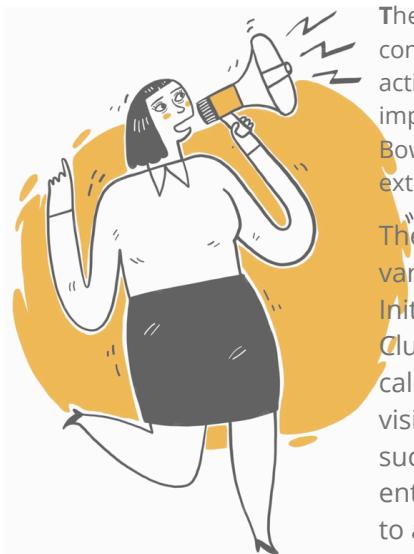
Darvel Improvement Group

The Corner Club



[WWW.DISCOVERDARVEL.COM](http://WWW.DISCOVERDARVEL.COM)

# We've been telt tae tell ye...



## Reflecting on 2025

The year 2025 has so far brought vibrancy and engagement to the Darvel community. Our three previous bulletins have covered a diverse range of activities that have taken place throughout the year. The town has enjoyed an impressive array of music events at The Corner, local pubs, and the Darvel Bowling Club. Anticipation is high for the Darvel Music Company's annual music extravaganza at the town hall, set for the end of November.

The 2020-2025 Community Action Plan emphasised the need for more varied activities, a goal that has certainly been achieved this year. Initiatives by groups such as the Darvel Dinner Ladies, DIG, the Masonic Club, and the Darvel Horticultural Society have enriched the local social calendar. Monthly markets have continued to draw residents and visitors alike, while the Darvelo event was once again a standout success. Walkfest, too, benefited from excellent weather and enthusiastic participation, further demonstrating Darvel's commitment to a thriving community life.

## Looking Forward to 2026

Attention is now turning to the opportunities and milestones that 2026 will bring. The upcoming 2026-2031 Community Action Plan, with publication before the end of 2025 followed by a formal launch early in the new year, will help shape future development and improvements for our town.

### *Commemorating Local Heritage*

A major highlight of 2026 will be the 150th anniversary of the introduction of mechanised looms to Darvel by Alexander Morton. This was an era that transformed the Irvine Valley into a world leader in lace production. Next year is a timely opportunity to celebrate and honour our rich industrial heritage.

### *Celebrating Community Achievements*

Next year also marks the 25th anniversary of both the Darvel Improvement Group (DIG) and the Darvel Music Company. This milestone is a testament to the dedication and resilience of those involved in each of these major initiatives which characterise the resilience and inventiveness of our town.

### *Anticipation for Another Eventful Year*

With so many important anniversaries and ongoing projects, 2026 promises to be action packed. A schedule of confirmed events is included in this bulletin, reflecting our community's ongoing enthusiasm and commitment.

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*Cover photo of the Gowenbank Maple ...taken by Hugh Maxwell*

# DARVEL IMPROVEMENT GROUP

*It's what we do...*



**DIG** has been busy this year...

## VALENTINES QUIZ NIGHT

In February, DIG organised their annual quiz at the Masonic Club.

## THE BIG DIG CLEAN UPS

In April, approximately 30 participants, including members of the local Guide/Brownie group, took part in a town and local park clean-up. Over 20 bags of rubbish were collected. Following the event, attendees gathered at the local church hall for refreshments. As a result, the town is looking much tidier.

## EASTER EGG HUNT

On Easter Sunday, the annual Easter egg hunt was held in Lanfine Estate with permission from the Sasse family. Nearly 200 children participated in games along the avenue, concluding at the courtyard where each child received an Easter Egg and snacks. A Tombola stall was also featured. Donations collected will support next year's event.

## DARVEL IN BLOOM

Hanging baskets on the Town Hall and Hastings Square were organised by DIG and are being maintained over the summer by volunteers using a new watering system. Funding for the baskets was provided by Darvel Lottery. Volunteers planted around 1,000 bedding plants across various locations in Darvel, including Burn Green tubs, planters on Main Street, East and West end gardens, Millennium and Rose garden, plus Hastings Square. This work was completed just in time for our annual Café Day.



*Sir Alexander Fleming, the Scottish physician and microbiologist who discovered penicillin, is presented with the Freedom of the Burgh of Darvel in October 1946*

If you would like to get involved in any of our activities, you will be made most welcome.

*Contact can be made through:*

Maureen Ross - [ross31@btinternet.com](mailto:ross31@btinternet.com)  
Joyce Morton - [aljomorton@msn.com](mailto:aljomorton@msn.com)

## **HASTINGS SQUARE CAFÉ DAY**

Due to inclement weather, the annual Café Day, typically held outdoors in Hastings Square, was relocated indoors to the Town Hall. At least everybody was dry! Entertainment was provided by local groups Loudoun Friends and Crossroads Community Hub Choir.

## **PLANTERS**

Following a request for volunteers to "adopt a planter," community members, including pupils (like Jasper) from Darvel primary school, have been assigned planters to maintain during the summer.

## **QUIZ NIGHTS**

Quiz nights are scheduled to take place in the coming months.

## **CHRISTMAS FAYRE**

The Christmas Fayre is planned for November 15th in Darvel Town Hall with more than 30 stalls offering a variety of goods. Come along and enjoy food and entertainment while browsing your pre-Christmas shopping experience.

## **ALEXANDER FLEMING MEMORIAL**

The project to develop a memorial for Alexander Fleming is progressing, with land acquisition expected soon. Upon completion of the purchase, renovation work will commence under the direction of appointed architects. One of the more striking and poignant aspects of the renovation will be the repositioning of Fleming's bronze bust to face towards his birthplace at Lochfield Farm above Darvel.

With **2028** marking the centenary of Penicillin's discovery by Alexander Fleming, DIG plans to begin commemorations with the renovation and unveiling of the memorial in Hastings Square. The new Fleming mural at the "The Corner" has been widely praised and it is anticipated that the new Memorial will contribute positively to Darvel's profile as a destination for visitors.

# DARVEL IMPROVEMENT GROUP

## Where did it start?



In the year 2000 a group of very active and forward thinking Community Councillors decided to play on the success of Darvel's Millennium Celebrations. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000 saw groups of people gather in Hastings Square to welcome in the New Year. As this event was so successful the Community Council decided to form a group whose purpose was to make the town a more attractive place to live. To that end three sub-groups were formed under the Chairmanship of Reid Ross.

Heritage, Environmental and Millennium groups led by Frank Donnelly, Les Pittams and Mike Duffy were created with assistance by Neil McKenna who was employed by EAC as a funding officer. Darvel Improvement Group was formed and fully constituted in 2001.

Since 2001 the town has seen major improvements, not least with the provision of floral displays along Main Street and Hastings Square. These are all planted and maintained by DIG volunteers. Welcome gardens at the West and East ends of Darvel provide much needed colour and are a prime example of a town proud of its appearance.

DIG managed to acquire funding to have new railings, to replace broken fencing, installed at the "Dervel Dam" corner with plaques attached telling the story of the area and how the water source was used to drive the first Lace power loom in the town.

Lace production, of course, was the main source of employment for over 125 years. An exhibition of lace production was organised by DIG in the last remaining lace producing factory, Smith & Archibald where a lace panel depicting the battle of Britain was on display along with a number of lace queen dresses. The last working loom was in operation that day and former lace workers were on hand to describe their work in the factories.

The Toll Gate garden in Ranoldcoup Road houses the original town Toll Gates. An official opening ceremony by Provost James Boyd was held by DIG in 2001 with further celebrations held in the Town Hall. The garden continues to be maintained by DIG volunteers.

In 2001 the Heritage Committee unveiled a memorial cairn, in association with the Blair Mayne Association of Northern Ireland, to commemorate the Special Air Service soldiers who were based in Darvel in 1944. These troops, under the command of Lt. Col. Blair "Paddy" Mayne, were housed in Lanfine House and the Town Hall during that time.

The renovation of the Rose garden in Morton Park was an idea discussed in the first community action plan for Darvel. The planning and sourcing of funding was undertaken by Maureen Ross, another DIG volunteer, with work completed in 2017. Volunteers continue to maintain this beautiful addition to Morton Park.

Daffodil bulbs have been planted in Morton Park providing much needed colour in the Spring. Now annual activities include the ever popular Easter Egg hunt in Lanfine Estate, Litter Picks, Quiz nights, Outdoor Café days and of course, our Christmas Fayre.

Another exciting project undertaken by DIG volunteers is the replacement of the now, almost derelict, Sir Alexander Fleming Memorial in Hastings Square. As 2028 marks the 100th anniversary of the discovery of Penicillin by Darvel's most famous son, a more fitting memorial will be in position.

Frank Donnelly's much anticipated museum, showcasing the history of Darvel, was opened in 2015 in Darvel Town Hall. The museum houses photos and memorabilia of the lace industry across the years. The life of Darvel's most famous son, Sir Alexander Fleming, is also featured in the museum. He came from humble beginnings in Lochfield Farm to being the world famous micro-biologist whose discovery has saved millions of lives worldwide.

As 2026 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this amazing group, a number of celebratory activities have been planned.



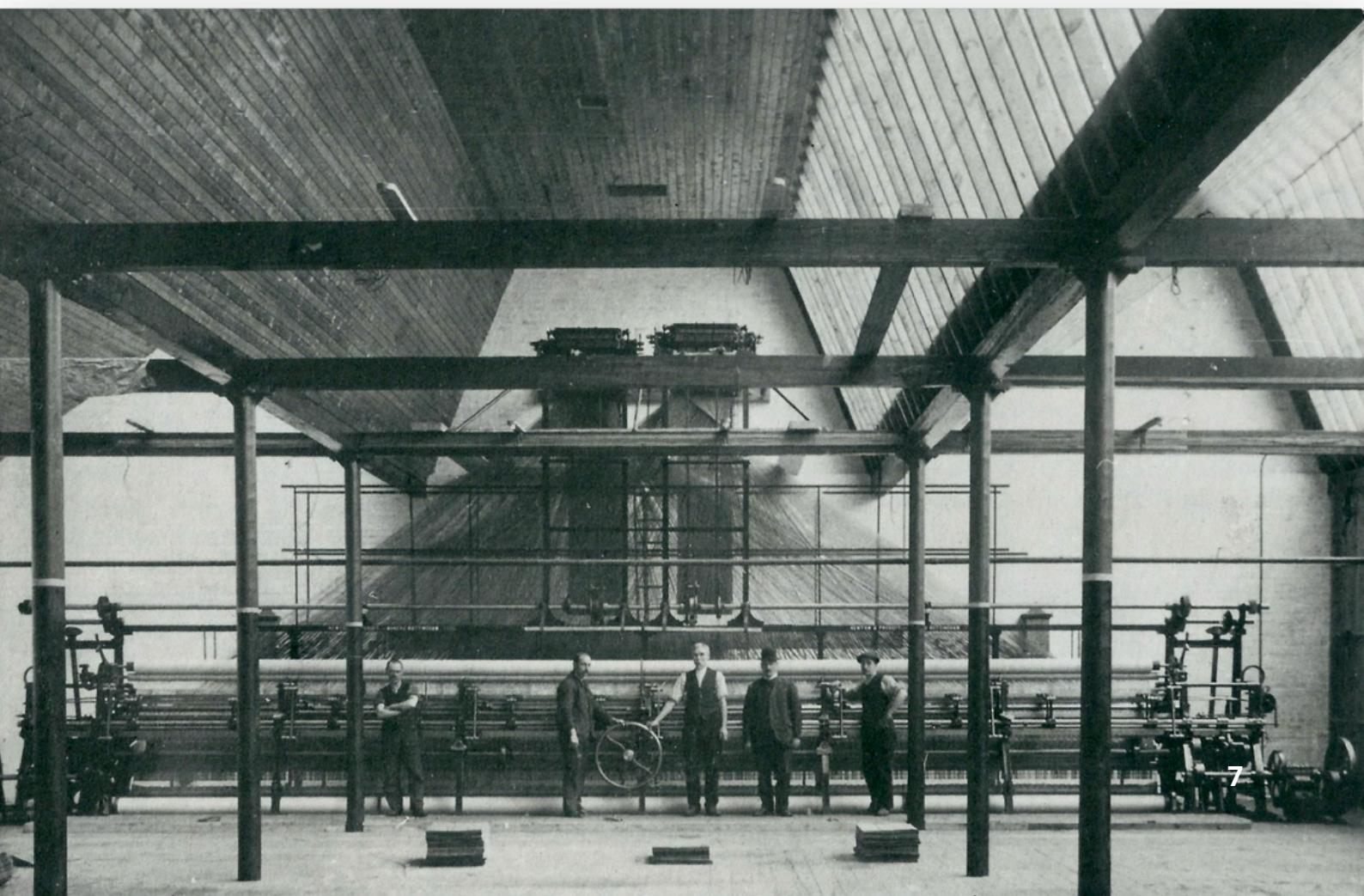
# VALLEY LACE

There is an amazing story to be told of the Irvine Valley's international status as a major producer of lace furnishings and other textiles... for generations.

Next year will mark 150 years producing machine made lace in the Valley. The very first "power loom" was introduced by Alexander Morton to Darvel in 1875 with production of lace commencing in February 1876.

We have big plans to celebrate this in a series of activities and events throughout 2026.

Watch out for more information coming soon...



# Darvel's Rogue Heroes

This is the third in our series of articles charting the history of the 1st SAS and their connection with Darvel.



As Darvel was the centre of the SAS training in Ayrshire, it was not so unusual for some of the men to have met their future wives whilst training.  
Two examples are on the following pages...





**L/Cpl Douglas (Dougie) "Monty" Monteith (1917- 2003)**

**Born** in Wigtownshire in 1917, his father was noted as being a 'grieve' (gamekeeper) At the outbreak of war, Douglas joined 8th Devonshire Territorial Unit. He was later selected for No.8 Commando Unit, having served under the commands of David Stirling and Paddy Mayne in previous units. It had now become the SAS and after intensive training in Arran, he was sent to Egypt and Cape of Good Hope with the Special Raiding Squadron.

Their billet at the Suez, was Ulster Monarch, a ferry which previously sailed from Belfast to Liverpool before on war duty. Gen. Montgomery arrived at the Ulster Monarch to pay the Special Raiding Squadron a visit and give them a pep talk. When he reached the end of his speech, he wished them the best of luck before taking his leave. The call for 'three cheers for Monty', fell on deaf ears but Douglas, seized the opportunity and immediately jumped up onto one of the ship's capstans, taking a very theatrical bow. When asked why, he said "he was called Monty as well you know". Gen. Montgomerie had made it clear he was opposed to the guerilla antics of the SAS so left without making an impression, but it was Douglas's antics that had captured the cheering from his comrades.

Having been trained to be self sufficient in the field and having been brought up in farming life, it fell to Douglas to prepare the day's catch for their meal. As he was skinning and gutting a sheep, but was aware of being watched. It turned out to be the shepherd belonging to the unfortunate captured sheep. An agreement was struck and the shepherd went off quite happy with the head, feet and fleece!

Douglas witnessed the carnage of human life, in both military and civilians and he himself had been injured in action. He was invalided out of the raiding unit in 1944 and became a dispatch rider in 1945.

He met and married **Jessie Cameron** in **Priestland** in 1945. After the war he returned to **Darvel** and worked in a quarry before settling down to a well earned retirement.



**Lt Col John James (Jack) Nixon (1924-2002)**

*Jack Nixon aged 19 on his wedding day*

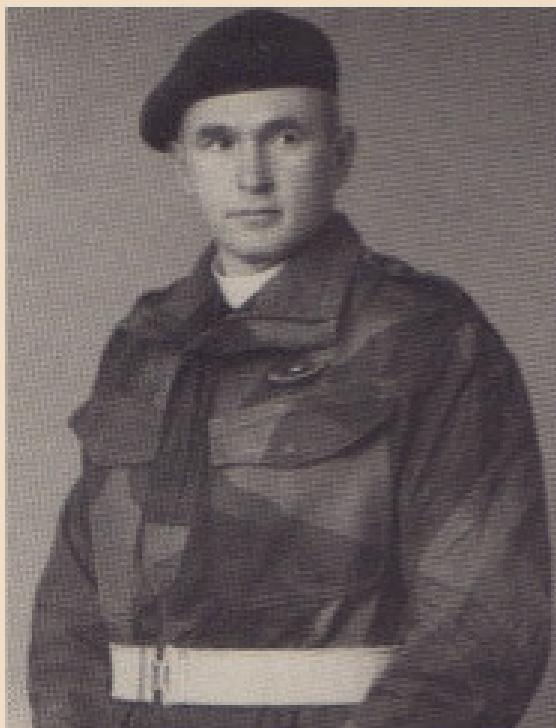
**Jack Nixon** Born in Newcastle had moved to the borders when he was five years old. Lying about his age, he joined the Kings Own Scottish Borderers at the age of 15 when war broke out. He volunteered for special service in No.7 Commando Group, based in Girvan.

Having served in various raids in North Africa, he became one of the founder commandos serving under David Stirling and Paddy Mayne. By 1944 he was moved to Mauchline then Darvel for more intensive training.

Jack Nixon had a habit of keeping his finger on the trigger of a Bren gun for too long and Paddy Mayne constantly shouted at him that it should only be two bursts in quick succession. Jack was known to have said under his breath, "That man is the bane of my life." Nixon's skill with the Bren was well known and his prowess would be heavily tested throughout the coming months. Douglas Monteith stated "Jack was incredible with that thing and I was just glad that he was on our side and not shooting at us." [1]

Jack Nixon married **Molly Auld** from **Priestland** in 1944 and remained in Darvel after the war. He was demobbed in 1946 and on returning to civilian life, worked as a farm labourer at Heads Farm, Newmilns then became the Co-op coalman in Darvel before joining Spray & Burgess, a lace finishing firm.

He moved several times before settling back in **Darvel** for his retirement.



**Rev. James Fraser McLuskey. (1914-2005)**

Chaplain to the 1st SAS, he was also based for some time in **Darvel**. He was chaplain to Edinburgh University when he decided to join the parachute regiment. It was the same rigorous training as everyone else and once he got his wings, it was suggested that he should join the SAS.

He almost missed the opportunity of training for a parachute regiment. McLuskey wore false teeth and anyone with false teeth wasn't allowed to train for parachute jumps. Fortunately rules had changed and at the start of the war, the army provided boxes for false teeth thus allowing the men to take part.

Writer of several books, he was one of the early to record their army exploits in his book 'The Parachuting Padre' which was released in 1951 and wary of security of saying too much, Fraser changed the names of places frequently to preserve his own security as much as the army's.

He was a tall, jovial character, well suited for a chaplain's life in the army. He travelled everywhere, armed only with a Bible, altar cloth and wooden cross, and often with Malcolm James Pleydell, first medical officer and supported the injured and their families as well as holding services in the field, he never wavered in his duty to the men. He was awarded a Military Cross in recognition of his services.

It was good fortune that the padre was a Scot and the HQ was in Ayrshire. Whilst training at Chesterfield, there were others from different religious backgrounds. He said "that while one denomination or another might be held most efficacious for man's upward accent, Church and Chapel, Protestant or Roman, bow all alike to gravity and fall with equal force".

Rev. McLuskey conducted **Paddy Mayne's** funeral service.

*Agnes Wilson*

# the Corner

## Summer Sessions



**Saturday 19 July:** the Corner summer session kicked off at 6pm amid uncertainty about the weather. Weather forecast was not particularly good but the rain that was forecast did not arrive and indeed there were glimmers of sunshine which added to what was a huge success.

What an evening it was - superb performances from the **Railwaymen**, **77 Affair** and the headliners, the **Kinks Experience**. The attendance was the biggest yet for our evening events - 200 folks seated under the canopy and in the gazebos and a similar number occupying the amphitheatre. We were treated to an array of songs and the dancing, especially to our headliners, was something to behold. There was a complete range of ages in attendance from the very young to the more mature residents.

**Saturday 23 August:** our monthly Corner Market was complemented by a most enjoyable evening ceilidh, with lots of super Scottish reels and waltzes, provided by the legendary **Tattiehowkers**. Yet again the evening event proved to be a great success. An excellent community evening event, blessed by some fine late summer weather, and we were treated to some impressive Scottish dancing under the canopy. DART is delighted to be able to mount these events and keep them free of charge, but we do depend on community support by way of donations, bucket collections and the forthcoming Corner club.



## YABBA DABBA DOO!

What an evening it proved to be! Despite the somewhat cool weather, a record crowd of over 400 fans gathered and enjoyed an incredible evening of music and dancing on Friday 12th September.

The event began with an energetic opening set from **Sasquatch**, setting the tone for the evening. Next up was the amazing **77 Affair**, returning by popular demand. Tasty street food was provided by **The Big Dawg**. But the highlight of the evening was undoubtedly **Abba Voyage**, who certainly lived up to their billing as one of **OK! Magazine's** best ABBA tribute bands. One of the special moments was the band being joined on stage by some of our very young ABBA fans to dance alongside "Agnetha" and "Anni-Frid".

The finale, clearly indicated how much the crowd had enjoyed an incredible evening.



# the Corner

## The Corner Club – why not join?

Since opening, The Corner has hosted more than 40 free events for the people of Darvel, including:

- Kid's Days
- Community Gatherings
- Live Music
- Markets
- Local Talent Showcases
- Darvéló
- Qigong
- Halloween Celebrations
- Christmas Events

All these events are open to everyone and completely free to attend. Help Us Keep the Spirit Alive.

We want to continue offering these fantastic events for all ages, but we need your support.

By joining **The Corner Club** for just **£5.00** per month, you can help us preserve Darvel's vibrant community atmosphere.

### Membership Benefits

- Regular newsletters with updates and information about upcoming events
- Automatic entry into our quarterly prize draw, with cash prizes
- The satisfaction of knowing you're supporting your community

Join **The Corner Club** today and help us keep bringing free, inclusive events to Darvel.



[www.discoverdarvel.com](http://www.discoverdarvel.com)

**The Corner** – A community space for all, at the heart of Darvel.

# the Corner



**Doors Open Days** is Scotland's largest free festival that celebrates places, history and culture. It offers free access to hundreds of venues and events across the country throughout September...every year!

This year, for the first time, **The Corner** has been included as one of the Ayrshire venues which feature in the programme. Now you might ask - how does The Corner meet the criteria - we have no doors to open (well apart from the store!)?

We may have no doors, but there are stories to tell about the Battles of Loudoun Hill, our Lace Heritage, Sir Alexander Fleming and the SAS time in Darvel during World War 2.

Therefore for our event held on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September, the focus was on celebrating the history and heritage of the town with audio visual presentations, information sessions, booklets and displays.

Especially popular was the Darvel Timeline illustrating the town's history and surrounding area.



# the Corner

3 More Great Markets!



## Autumn Market Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September 10am-2pm



Join us in Darvel for our vibrant Autumn market, featuring local traders and new faces. Enjoy unique handmade crafts, seasonal treats, and charming artisan products in a cozy atmosphere. It's the perfect opportunity to find gifts and support local businesses while embracing the Hygge of the season!

## Killoween Market Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October 4pm-8pm



As the clock ticks towards the witching hour, The Corner transforms into a spine-chilling spectacle where market traders become masters of fright. Their bargain offers are as enticing as they are eerie, drawing in brave souls who dare to venture into this realm of the unknown. At the heart of this spooky scene lies the Tunnel of Terror, a passage that beckons the curious and the courageous alike. Each step within this dimly lit corridor is accompanied by the thrill of the unknown, as shadows dance and whispers echo, challenging even the bravest of hearts to conquer their fears. Will you dare to enter and face the spine-tingling surprises that await?

## Christmas Market Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November 4pm-8pm



The magic is set to illuminate Darvel as the festive season kicks off at The Corner. This event promises to enchant with its splendid display of Christmas lights, scheduled to switch on at 5 PM, bathing the town in a warm, festive glow. Local traders are gearing up to offer an array of fabulous gifts, perfect for those seeking unique and thoughtful presents for loved ones. As the community gathers, the air will be filled with joy and anticipation, along with the delightful smells of all things Christmassy to keep us warm. Whether you're shopping for gifts or simply soaking in the atmosphere, this event is sure to create cherished memories for all who attend.

# Darvel Music Company

October + November

**Darvel Bowling Club**  
Ranoldcoup Road, Darvel, East Ayrshire, KA17 0JU  
**SATURDAY 11 OCTOBER 2025**



**ALL TICKETS £12.50**  
DOORS 7PM

**TICKET OUTLETS:**  
Thistle Du Florist 8 West Main Street Darvel KA17 0AQ - 01560 428021  
or reserve and receive payment instruction by contacting [darvelmusiccompany@icloud.com](mailto:darvelmusiccompany@icloud.com)

[www.darvelmusiccompany.com](http://www.darvelmusiccompany.com) for ticket sales outlets

East Ayrshire Council WEST SPLENDS DART



**Darvel Bowling Club**  
Ranoldcoup Road, Darvel, East Ayrshire, KA17 0JU  
**FRIDAY 17 OCTOBER 2025**

**DAVE SINGS THE CLASSICS**  
From Sinatra to Show Patrol and much more!



Doors 7pm - Tickets £10 Thistle Du Florist 8 West Main Street Darvel KA17 0AQ  
or reserve and pay by emailing [darvelmusiccompany@icloud.com](mailto:darvelmusiccompany@icloud.com)

So far this year Darvel Music Company has put on three successful concerts at the bowling club and also helped DART source bands for a town hall gig in February and several concerts at The Corner.

The remaining DMC shows are as follows:

## DARVEL BOWLING CLUB

Saturday 11 October- Bison Hip plus The Last Resort  
Friday 17 October- Darvel Music Fundraiser- David Paterson

## DARVEL TOWN HALL

Friday 28 November - The Rising (Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band) plus Desperados (The Eagles)  
Saturday 29 November - Blazin' Fiddles plus special guests Gnooss  
Sunday 30 November- Simple Minded (Simple Minds) and Deacon Blues (Deacon Blue)

**Darvel Town Hall**  
10-12 West Main Street, Darvel, KA17 0AQ  
**FRIDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2025**

**THE RISING**  
**DESPERADOS** CELEBRATING THE MUSIC & LEGACY OF THE EAGLES



**ALL TICKETS £25.00**  
DOORS 7PM

**TICKET OUTLETS:**  
Thistle Du Florist 8 West Main Street Darvel KA17 0AQ - 01560 428021  
Tickets Scotland Ltd, 239 Argyle St, Glasgow G2 8QH - 041 204 5151

[www.darvelmusiccompany.com](http://www.darvelmusiccompany.com) for ticket sales outlets

East Ayrshire Council WEST SPLENDS DART

**Darvel Town Hall**  
10-12 West Main Street, Darvel, KA17 0AQ  
**SATURDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2025**

**blazin' FIDDLIES**



**ALL TICKETS £25.00**  
DOORS 7PM

**TICKET OUTLETS:**  
Thistle Du Florist 8 West Main Street Darvel KA17 0AQ - 01560 428021  
Tickets Scotland Ltd, 239 Argyle St, Glasgow G2 8QH - 041 204 5151

[www.darvelmusiccompany.com](http://www.darvelmusiccompany.com) for ticket sales outlets

**Darvel Town Hall**  
10-12 West Main Street, Darvel, KA17 0AQ  
**SUNDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2025**

**SIMPLE MINDED**  
**DEACON BLUE'S**



**ALL TICKETS £25.00**  
DOORS 7PM

**TICKET OUTLETS:**  
Thistle Du Florist 8 West Main Street Darvel KA17 0AQ - 01560 428021  
Tickets Scotland Ltd, 239 Argyle St, Glasgow G2 8QH - 041 204 5151

[www.darvelmusiccompany.com](http://www.darvelmusiccompany.com) for ticket sales outlets

East Ayrshire Council WEST SPLENDS DART



## RED ADMIRALS...

It was a forlorn little thing – a forgotten plant tucked behind an old shed, leaning against a fence that needed fixing. Barely two feet tall, it looked destined to wither away unnoticed. No one would have cared if it did. No one human, at least.

I rarely have cause to wander into that corner of the garden, but one warm, humid afternoon in mid-August 2025, I did – and stopped dead in my tracks. The scruffy buddleia was alive. Covered. Seething. Cloaked in a happy hug. A kaleidoscope of Red Admirals jostled for space on its nectar-rich flowers. I couldn't count them – though I was tempted to order them to line up – but there were easily hundreds, each trying to stake the best feeding spot.

They formed a living tapestry, a restless carpet of wings, their velvety black broken by vivid orange-red bands and edged in flickers of blue and white. Despite their delicate appearance, these bold little creatures were fearless, settling on my hands and arms as I stood, transfixed by their hypnotic dance.

And here it was – in my own garden in Darvel, at 56° north, the same latitude as Juneau, Alaska, and Kaliningrad, Russia – a riot of colour and joy miraculously carried here on a soft summer breeze from southern Europe.

That was yesterday. Today the last of my new friends sits alone. Tomorrow, a new southerly wind will bring hope for next year.

SG

# ...AND OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

## A BLACKBIRD'S STORY...



It was one of those balmy days that we enjoyed during May earlier this year. The temperature on the garden thermometer had just touched 24C. I happened to notice a blackbird flying into my greenhouse which was sitting with the door open. This was nothing unusual since garden birds do venture into the greenhouse but inevitably find their way back out through the door, so I thought no more about it.

Several days later while checking the various sprays located on the middle shelf of the shelving unit in the greenhouse, lo and behold hidden there was a newly built nest, with four pale blue blackbird eggs. I would normally have closed over the greenhouse door at various times during the month but now felt obliged to leave it open to allow the blackbird parents access to the nest and its contents. A few weeks later the eggs had hatched and four fledgling blackbirds with beaks open, craving food now occupied the nest.

The chicks then, when they were able, left the nest. Perhaps they were only waiting for this moment to arrive. Before I could determine what my next step would be, the departed chicks were almost immediately replaced by a further four pale blue eggs. This blackbird pair certainly had found a safe, dry and warm to build their nest. So, the greenhouse door remained open, and my plan was to then close the greenhouse door once this brood had flown the nest. But you underestimate these smart blackbirds at your peril.

No sooner has the chicks ventured into the wide world, another three pale blue eggs were laid - photo 1 and nurtured by the parents - photo 2. The chicks duly emerged from their shells a couple of weeks later and the feeding frenzy again took place - photo 3. A further two weeks and this third brood flew off into the sunset. I understand that blackbirds very rarely exceed three egg laying episodes, so the greenhouse door could eventually be closed.

So, the question for me will now be....do I leave the greenhouse door open next May to enable the blackbirds to return and build a new nest and keep the blackbird's story alive??





# Darvel Diaspora

Back in December 2019 — just months before the world shut down in the grip of a pandemic — we asked our community a simple question:

Where are your friends and family with close ties to Darvel living now?

The response was fantastic, and we've repeated the exercise every year since. As Christmas approaches, it's become a warm tradition — a way to think of far-flung friends while the town glows with festive lights.

Over the years, the list has grown to 334 locations across every inhabited continent.

- Australia leads the way, with Perth (11 mentions) far ahead, followed by Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, and smaller towns like Nathalia, Cairns, Ballarat, and Mundijong.
- Canada takes a strong second, with Toronto, Calgary, Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Nanaimo among the destinations.
- Asia is well represented: Hong Kong (4), Singapore (3), Tokyo, Busan, Colombo, and Wuxi.
- Europe is a colourful scatter — Spain (Segovia, Madrid, Majorca, Barcelona, Bilbao, Nerja), France (Paris, Deauville, Villemomble, Mandelieu-La Napoule, Caen), and Nordic nations like Sweden and Norway.
- North America beyond Canada includes California, Texas, New York, Boston, Florida, Colorado, and Nevada.
- More far-flung connections stretch to South America (Medellín, Buenos Aires, Lima, Ushuaia), Africa (Cape Town, Johannesburg, Malawi), and Oceania (New Zealand, Cook Islands).

Some in today's Darvel diaspora are first-generation adventurers — moving for work, study, or love. Others are the children and grandchildren of earlier emigrants. Many maintain strong ties, coming back for visits or keeping up through family, social media, and community events.

When the Sir Alexander Fleming mural was unveiled in April 2025, messages poured in from around the world — proof that no matter how far they roam, Darvel folk keep one eye on home.

The map of the Darvel diaspora mirrors Scotland's wider story: a web of connections stretching across the globe, shaped by opportunity, change, and the enduring pull of a small town. Wherever they land — from Perth to Toronto, Hong Kong to Cape Town — Darvel people carry the same blend of Irvine Valley grit, humour, and warmth, leaving their mark on communities far from the Ayrshire hills.

# How Times Have Changed

Several years ago Hendy Pollok on FaceBook posted a list of the shops and businesses on West and East Main Street in the early 1960's that he could remember from his younger days in Darvel. How times have changed when we now have only a handful of shops and businesses along Main St.

*Photographs of the Main Street were taken prior to 1960.*





**SOUTH SIDE ...heading west**

1. Priestland General Store (Durward)
2. Ross's nurseries between Darvel and Priestland
3. Archie Wight's Garage and Filling Station
4. John Ireland's Grocer
5. Lawson's Paper Shop
6. MacLean's Cafe and Tearoom
7. Locky Cox Bookie's Shop
8. The Railway Inn
9. Todd's Hardware (Runcie Todd)
10. TV and Electrical Shop (Jim Donald)
11. Co-op Furniture & Hardware
12. Co-op Chemist and Doctor's surgery
13. Co-op Bakery
14. Coop Butchers
15. Coop Offices (Manager Tom Richmond)
16. Coop Drapery on Ranoldcoup Rd
17. Lee Hairdresser in Old Toll Office
18. Walker and Connell Printer & Stationer (Bobby McBride)
19. Trustee Savings Bank
20. Anderson the Chemist and Optician (Bill Anderson)
21. Dan White Grocer on Temple St Corner
22. Jake Robertson Newsagent (later Ernie Brown)
23. Rex Murray the Fishmonger
24. Wool and drapery shop (Miss Mackie?)
25. Leslie's Shoe Shop
26. Allan the Butcher
27. Pollock's Shoe Shop
28. Jean Simpson's wool and baby shop
29. Lex Barclay's jewellery, electrical and clocks
30. Co-op new self-service grocery store
31. Horseshoe Bar



WEST MAIN STREET, DARVEL

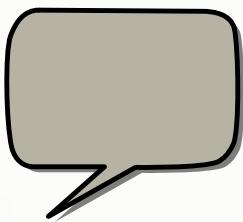
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**NORTH SIDE** ...heading east

1. Jenny Hendry's sweets and groceries.  
(Lucky bags and lucky tatties!)
2. Cafe, firstly Nerlo Penna and then Henry Papini (moving from the "Garden Cafe" in West Donnington Street)
3. Julyan or Hopkins (?) the Bakers on Burn Rd Corner.
4. Sal Reid, later John Reid, in the Paper Shop on other corner
5. Wm Wilson the Butcher
6. The Turf Hotel run by Nettie Young
7. Elliot the Bakers (Len Elliot)
8. The Picture House "The Dale"? (Manager John Donaldson)
9. Jim Paterson's Fruit and Vegetable shop  
Royal Bank of Scotland
10. Wee shop (Vera Wilson?)
11. Black Bull
12. Clydesdale Bank
13. Sammy Houston the Hairdresser
14. Pettigrew the Grocers
15. Harrison Dentist upstairs
16. Gebbie Hardware and Plumbers
17. Coop fruit and vegetable shop
18. Post Office with postmaster Kenneth Mackenzie
19. Coop "Man's Shop" on Jamieson Rd Corner
20. Jean Anderson's shop (home made stuff like toffee balls) on opposite corner.
21. Hughie Morton the men's hairdresser.
22. Gemmell's the grocer (Willie Gemmell)
23. Cafe known as "Ben's"
24. Lawson's Garage
25. Coop, East main Street Branch
26. Allen's electrical shop
27. Blacksmith by Bridge over the Irvine

Hendy's post attracted a large number of comments, many sharing their own memories of the shops and businesses with a few identifying other shops that were not on Hendy's list ...and not just on Main Street.

Here are a few of the comments...



I Remember many of those, particularly Wilsons Butcher and Patterson fruit and veg. As a young child my Mum sent me on my own to get her messages. When I returned to the butchers many years later with my own 4 year old daughter, he looked at her and said "that wee lassie reminds me of a wee girl that used to come in here many years ago to get her Mammies meat. His surprise was great when I said that was me!

Julyan's the bakers at the corner of Burn Rd, Ranoldcoup Rd the drapery, opposite there was a painter decorators, also 2 joiners, one going up Jamieson Rd and another on east Donnington St. McCalls, Smith garage (transport ) West Donnington St, also Co-op in Patterson terrace and Allan's electrical shop next to the Smithy.

Lockie Cox the bookie at the top o the fitba club brae.

There was a wee shop that sold paint and wallpaper on the corner down from Papini's.

The Town foot store next to Barclay's before "self service" store was opened. The "old store" was used as a "bookies" office for a short time after self service was opened. Auld Wull Connell and his son "Nell" used to lift the lines for Lochie Cox from there. I think you also could get newspapers from there at one stage. There was also a hairdresser's just down from Barclay's, which at one stage was a shop where you could buy pork, bacon, pigs trotters etc. Some of the "older" generation might remember Alex Smith having his "painters and decorators" shop across from the drapery.

Bob Taylor the bakers between Town Hall and Black Bull.

King painters and decorators at top of Irvinebank Road?

I used to get sent to Gemmell's for shredded gammon for the lunch rolls. Lots of good memories there.

Remember walking to Papini's for ices creams in the summer.

Royal Bank of Scotland next to guide hall, TSB between Walker & Connell and chemist Coop store up Paterson terrace; Drapery on Ranoldcoup Road

I remember that Julyans the bakers sold the best tablet me and my pal used to get thrupence worth then give a bit to Snowy the Elliot's Alsatian so we could take a short cut through the bakers.

Used to be a photographers next to what was Allan's the butchers, it's a house now but that was Leslie's shoe shop long before Grant's Photographers.

Don't forget the Garden Café, West Donnington Street.

Moved to Darvel July 1980 and remember a lot of these shops. My 2 favourites were the red shop and the green shop (Milroys & McLeans) next door to each other on East Main St. Spent all my pocket money on comics and sweeties.

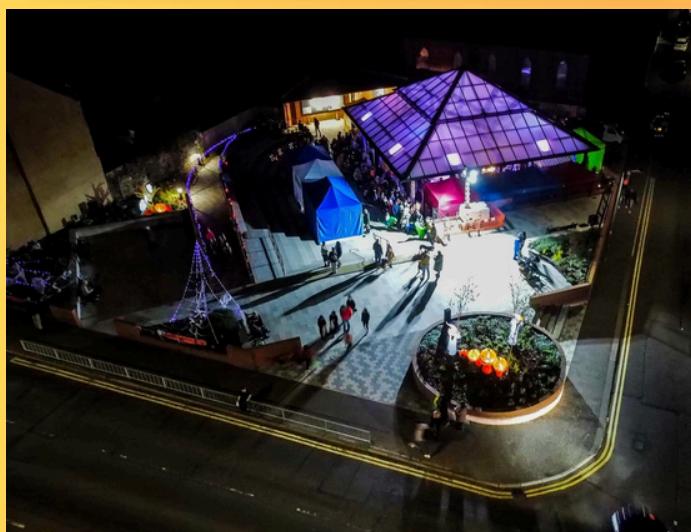
# Darvel Snippets...



In July and August, **The Corner** hosted a number of **Qigong** sessions. These were led by the experienced Qigong instructor - John Strachan.

For those of you who don't know, Qigong (pronounced **(chee-gong)**) is a form of mind/body exercise and meditation. I'm sure all those who participated felt a sense of wellbeing afterwards.

Many thanks to **East Ayrshire Leisure** for arranging these free sessions for the community.



The spookiest night of the year is back - and it's scarier (and more fun) than ever!

Our popular **Halloween Market Special** with all things creepy returns on **Friday 31 October** from 4:00pm - 9:00pm at **The Corner**. Are you brave enough to venture into the...**Tunnel of Terror?**



# Darvel Snippets...



## The Flower Show

The 140th Annual Flower Show was held on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September at the Town Hall.

As ever, this was a popular event with a marvellous display of horticultural exhibits by our green fingered community. An impressive range of flowers, fruit and vegetables were on show.



## The Twalk Group...

has enjoyed a great deal of very interesting walks this summer.

They have included both local and further afield walks.

A few of our favourites have been:

- Loudoun Castle
- Distinkhorn, plane crash site
- Millport
- Greenock Cut
- Blue Bonnet Tam O' Shanter, Alloway
- Loudoun Hill

We have also planned a 4 day walking trip to the Lake District.

Group meets every Monday morning 9.30 at The Corner.

New walkers welcome.



# Darvel Snippets...



## Darvel & Priestland Community Action Plan 2026-2031

The consultation closed in June and there were over 500 responses from members of the community. Our colleagues in Vibrant Communities carried out an analysis at the voting event to identify the key priorities for improvement and development which took place on 13 September. The following week members of the community also had the opportunity to cast their votes online.

Votes are now in and a start has been made by East Ayrshire to draft the Action Plan. There will be a chance for the Darvel Steering Group - **Darvel's Voice** - to consider the draft and propose any changes that reflect the mood of the town.

We expect the final plan to be published before the end of the year with a formal launch of the plan in early 2026. The Winter Bulletin will have a full summary of the plan.

## ANOTHER SUCCESS!

**Thistle Du Florist** won **Best in Ayrshire** award at Rugby Park at the Scottish Business Awards 2025.

This builds upon their previous successes in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

A real feather in the cap for Thistle Du and for Darvel.



# Darvel Snippets...



## Are You Fit For Life?



★★★★★ *A Brilliant Boost for Body and Mind!* ★★★★★

I've been attending the Fit For Life low-impact circuit training sessions at Sport Darvel every Tuesday and Thursday morning from 11:00 to 12:00, and I can't recommend them highly enough. These sessions are thoughtfully designed for older adults, offering gentle yet effective exercises that enhance mobility, strength, and overall well-being—without straining joints or causing discomfort. These sessions are thoughtfully designed for everyone, including older adults and those with lower mobility.

Rachael Morgan, our qualified rehabilitation trainer, is simply outstanding. She brings a wealth of knowledge, patience, and genuine care to every class. Her guidance is clear, her encouragement is uplifting, and she always tailors movements to suit individual needs. Whether you're recovering from an injury, managing a health condition, or just looking to stay active in a friendly environment, Rachael makes everyone feel welcome and supported.

The atmosphere is relaxed, positive, and full of camaraderie with great tunes. It's not just about fitness—it's about feeling better, moving better, and connecting with others in the community. I leave each session feeling energised, more confident in my body, and grateful for the opportunity to take part.

If you're in or around Darvel and looking for a safe, enjoyable way to stay active, Fit For Life is a fantastic choice. Give it a go—you'll be glad you did! Interested?

*Written by Keith Emery 77 years young!*

**Contact:** Rachael Morgan, Manager  
[sportsdarvel@gmail.com](mailto:sportsdarvel@gmail.com) Tel:01560 322 722

## Darvel Dinner Ladies



Christine Campbell recently popped into **The Railway Inn** to receive £500, from their recent fundraising for our group.

This is an amazing total, and the Darvel Dinner Ladies want to thank sincerely everyone who attended their fundraising events, bought raffle tickets, contributed to the raffle and to all at the Railway for their continued support to our community.

The funds will be used to purchase a self propelled wheelchair for our free wheelchair service, currently all our self propelled wheelchairs are out on long term loans, so this gift will ensure our service will continue for residents from Darvel, Newmilns and Galston.



*We are indebted to the support we continually receive and value everyone for their hard work at The Railway. Pop in and sample their warm hospitality, you won't be disappointed.*



# Darvel Snippets...



## More Masonic Madness

A few September firsts at Manic Monday Club!  
First raspberries, First tatties, First Memory plaque on  
our memory well.



**Manic Monday Group** are holding a Harvest Tabletop sale ! Local crafters and bakers! Wood turners and felters! Jewellery, cards and much more. 27th September 11-2pm

Please come along and show your support to a local group. £2 per person for tea, coffee, and a piece of home baking!

**The Harvest Festival Dance** will be held on 28th September 2-6pm in Darvel Masonic Club A Sunday afternoon filled with music performed by HUNKY DORY ! Snacks provided. £5 per head. Support local clubs and groups.



## Darvel FC Community Links

**Darvel football club** will be focussed on increasing the ties between the club and the local community. The aim is to expand the existing club facilities at Recreation Park. Enhancement to the facilities will include installation of new toilets (Men's, Ladies, Disabled), development of a new permanent club house, replace the existing Portakabin and the installation of a new 3G pitch. The permanent clubhouse will allow the club to obtain a premises licence and open up the clubhouse to be used by local groups for events outside of the football.

A new 3G pitch is to be laid which will allow the ground to be used 7 days a week. This will allow Darvel Football Club to train twice a week at Recreation Park but will allow it to be used by other local clubs including Galston Football Club, Darvel local age group teams (u21, u19, u17), Darvel Victoria (amateur) together with the introduction of a new women's team.

The structure of Darvel FC is also changing as the club is applying to be a registered charity for the benefit of the community.



### Gardner's Delights

Should have exhibited at the flower show....maybe next year. However visitors to the Corner market and the DART Open Day have enjoyed this greenhouse produce.

# Darvel Snippets...



## Here is a sneak preview of the 2026 Community Calendar

This is just the first list of events - there will be more to add.

The Winter Bulletin will have the full list

Month	Corner Events	Community Events
February		DIG Valentine Quiz Night: 6 <sup>th</sup> Feb
March		DIG East Egg Hunt 29 <sup>th</sup> March
April	KidZone: Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup> April Corner Market 25 <sup>th</sup> April	
May	Darvelo 26: 16 <sup>th</sup> May Corner Market 23 <sup>rd</sup> May	Walkfest 8 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> May Darvelo 16 <sup>th</sup> May
June	Corner Market: 27 <sup>th</sup> June	DIG Café in the Square 13 <sup>th</sup> June Darvel Gala 20 <sup>th</sup> June
July	Corner Market 25 <sup>th</sup> July	
August	Corner Market: 22 <sup>nd</sup> Aug	
September	Corner Music Event 14 <sup>th</sup> Sept Corner Market: 26 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Darvel Flower Show 4 <sup>th</sup> Sept DIG Autumn Litter Pick
October	KidZone: Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> Oct. Corner Market: Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> Oct.	DIG Halloween Quiz Night 23 Oct.
November	Corner Market: Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> Nov.	DIG Christmas Fayre 14 <sup>th</sup> Nov. Darvel Music Weekend 27 <sup>th</sup> -29 <sup>th</sup> Nov.
December		DDL Senior Citizens Lunch

There is now an online community calendar which includes these

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

# — What's on in Darvel in 2025....



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
Friday 12 September	ABBA Tribute Band	The Corner
Saturday 13 September	Community Action Plan	Town Hall
Saturday 13 September	Main Street Blues Band	Bowling Club, DMC
Sunday 14 September	Open Day 2025	The Corner
Sunday 21 September	Autumn Litter Pick	Church Hall, DIG
Saturday 27 September	Corner Market	DART
Saturday 11 October	Bison Hip + Last Resort	Bowling Club, DMC
Wednesday 15 October	Kids Zone No2	The Corner
Friday 17 October	Dave sings the Classics	Bowling Club, DMC
Friday 24 October	Hallowe'en Quiz Night	DIG
Friday 31 October	Psychic Night with Sally Buxton	Town Hall, Dinner Ladies
Friday 31 October	Halloween Special + Market	The Corner
Saturday 15 November	Christmas Fayre	Town Hall, DIG
Friday 28 November	Christmas Spectacular + Market	The Corner
Friday 28 November	The Rising & Desperados	Town Hall, DMC
Saturday 29 November	Blazing Fiddles & Gnoss	Town Hall, DMC
Sunday 30 November	Simple Minded & Deacon Blue's	Town Hall, DMC
Saturday 6 December	Seniors Christmas Lunch	Church Hall, Dinner Ladies



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