

ISSUE 28

WINTER 2025/26

THE
DARVEL
BULLETIN

Lace Anniversary

Winter Curling

Morton Park

River Irvine



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



Another busy year beckons...and a year of anniversaries. 2026 marks the 150th anniversary of the introduction of lace power looms which transformed the weaving industry in the Irvine Valley and led to Darvel becoming the world's leading lace producer by the start of the twentieth century. Sadly those days are now gone and the last Darvel textile mill closed in 2007. This year there will be a range of lace related activities in the Valley, including a major exhibition in the autumn organised by DART in conjunction with Ayrshire Leisure. We want to ensure that the history and heritage of our town is retained and celebrated.

There are also two important anniversaries of prominent Darvel organisations this year. The Darvel Improvement Group (DIG) and the Darvel Music Company both celebrate their 25th anniversaries having been established in 2001. These two groups have made significant contributions to the life, wellbeing and environment of the town and to its reputation as a Scottish music town.

The publication of the 2026-2031 Darvel & Priestland Community Action Plan presents a new set of challenges for the town and for the local authority to continue improving our town's environment for the benefit of all our residents. A summary of the key issues and the priorities for the town are presented in this bulletin.

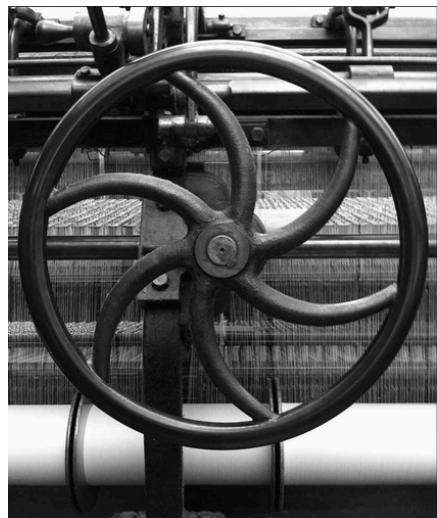
This is our third Community Action Plan, and if we can replicate the successes that followed in the wake of the first two publications, then we can look forward to making further progress as a community in the next five years. The Action Plan with its updated Local Place Plan will be published later this month with its formal launch in early March but our Bulletin contains comment on the key priorities which have been identified.

So seat belts on as we enter this rollercoaster of a year...

*for further information on anything within the Bulletin just email:
info@discoverdarvel.com*

Contents

| | |
|---|---------|
| Valley Lace Festival 2026 Let's celebrate our 150 year heritage | Page 4 |
| The Lace Industry The Irvine Valley's textile history | Page 5 |
| The Last Loom Once upon a time | Page 6 |
| Darvel's Voice Our Community Action Plan | Page 8 |
| Every Town Should Have a "Corner" Can Kilmarnock learn from Darvel? | Page 10 |
| Photographic Success More from Hugh Maxwell | Page 11 |
| The Morton Park Update on progress | Page 12 |
| Darvel's Historic Voice The significance of the year 1840 | Page 14 |
| A Sweep Through Time History of Curling in Darvel | Page 16 |
| The River Irvine Exploring the river locally from its source | Page 18 |
| DART AGM Achievements so far | Page 23 |
| Mucho Nacho The new man at the helm of Darvel FC | Page 24 |
| Darvel Music Company 2025 Music Highlights | Page 26 |
| Cycle Station Celebrating local success | Page 27 |
| Christmas Time Where were you? | Page 28 |
| Darvel Snippets Loads of Stuff | Page 32 |
| Community Calendar What's on in 2026 | Page 35 |



Cover photo - Beech Tree at Bryson's Farm...taken by Hugh Maxwell



LACE FESTIVAL 2026

This year marks the **150th anniversary** of mechanised lace production in the Irvine Valley. A milestone highlighting our community's remarkable transformation from humble beginnings to global renown. Darvel in association with Newmilns and Galston are planning an exciting Valley wide festival to celebrate our united heritage.

Some of the events we are planning in Darvel are as follows:

24 April: **Born in Kyle** - an evening of local stories from journalist and broadcaster Billy Kay on his recent book publication along with traditional music celebrating growing up in the Valley in the 1960's mixed with reflections on the lace industry. Readings and stories by Billy Kay and music from Robyn Stapleton. Hosted in Darvel Town Hall.

11 May: **The Lace Trail** - this year's Walkfest, for the first time, will feature a lace themed Valley walk, taking in many of the key historic features of the lace industry culminating with a visit to MYB Textiles working mill in Newmilns.

20 June: **Darvel Gala Day** - will turn the clock back to the halcyon days of the Darvel Lace Queen celebrations, with the crowning of a Darvel Lace Queen ...and King.

7-10 October: **Lace Exhibition** - The highlight of the year will be a Lace Exhibition held in Darvel Town Hall supported by East Ayrshire Leisure. The hall will be bedecked in lace providing an appropriate atmosphere for a wide range of material including information boards, photographic collages, films, artefacts and pamphlets. Material produced as part of a school project by Darvel Primary School is also planned. Workshops and school visits will be arranged during the four day exhibition.

10 October: **The Warp and the Weft** - The culmination of our Lace Exhibition is an evening "conversation" - The Warp and the Weft - all about the lace industry in the Valley and the current work still going on at MYB Textiles and Haddow, Aird & Crerar. Chaired by local celebrity, Billy Kay this will feature a number of local characters sharing memories, anecdotes and insight.

In addition a range of printed and online materials will be produced commemorating this important anniversary. We plan to augment real life lace stories with a few imagined tales by the Darvel Scribblers.

There will also be a special Darvel Bulletin packed with stories, facts, figures and memories all relating to Darvel lace and other textiles.

A dedicated **Lace 150** channel is being developed for the Discover Darvel website.

our 150 year heritage

A BRIEF HISTORY

Advent of Mechanisation: 1875-1876

The story begins in Darvel, where Alexander Morton, a local hand loom weaver and textile agent, visited the Industrial Exhibition at Kensington, London in 1874. There, he witnessed the innovative "Nottingham" power loom, a machine capable of producing large quantities of curtains far more efficiently than traditional handlooms. In October 1875, the first power loom arrived in kit form by horse and cart drawn from Newmilns Railway Station. The challenging assembly process ensued, culminating in the commencement of mechanised lace production in February 1876.

Expansion and Industry Boom: 1876-1927

Following this pivotal moment, the lace industry in the Irvine Valley experienced rapid expansion over the next three decades. The success of the new technology spurred the construction of 40 factories, primarily in Darvel and Newmilns, with a few in Galston. This booming industry also encouraged the development of other textiles including madras, carpets, chenille curtains and tapestries.

Creative Collaboration and Artistic Influence

As the industry's reputation grew, fabric quality and innovative design became critical. This led to collaborations with distinguished artists, architects, and designers, including renowned Arts and Crafts designer C. F. A. Voysey, Harrison Townsend, Mary Margaret McDonald, Jessie M. King, Sidney Mawson, Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, and Hans Tisdall. Their creative input helped elevate local textiles to works of art, blending traditional techniques with contemporary aesthetics.

Industrial Evolution

The growing demand for these sought-after textiles eventually outpaced the available local workforce. This challenge spurred the emergence of new enterprises including Morton Sundour, Edinburgh Weavers, BMK Carpets, and Donegal Carpets—all tracing their origins back to Alexander Morton & Co. Upon Morton's death in 1923, the community honoured his legacy with a stone monument at Gowanbank, designed by renowned architect Sir Robert Lorimer.

Challenges, Decline, and Prospects

Although the lace industry continued to flourish for many years, the late 1970's brought significant challenges. Shifting fashion trends and competition from cheaper imports led to a gradual decline and the closure. Factories shut down one by one as the industry contracted in response to global market pressures. Today, only two factories remain - MYB Textiles and Haddow, Aird & Crerar, both in Newmilns.

These continue to produce traditional lace, madras and other textiles for export worldwide. The continued operation of these two factories not only preserves local heritage but also demonstrates how traditional craftsmanship can thrive in a globalised market. Through the dedication of skilled artisans and the use of historic machinery, the legacy of the Irvine Valley's lace production endures - remaining both an economic asset and a cultural touchstone for the community and beyond.

THE LAST LOOM

It might appear a bit odd to approach the year celebrating the 150th anniversary of the introduction of mechanised looms to Darvel by going to the final chapter in the proud history of lace and madras manufacturing in Darvel. However it provides the backdrop to our focus on lace during the coming year, reminding us that sadly all good things sometimes come to an end.

Dreich weather accompanied early morning of Thursday 11 October 2007 - cloudy and wet with a biting breeze. The weather matched the occasion. The removal of the very last loom from Darvel marked the end of an era for the town. Its days as one of the world's most famous lace producing towns had come to an end - 131 years of lace making in Darvel – and the making of the town.

This sombre event was captured by two articles that appeared in the Kilmarnock Standard in consecutive weeks on the 19th and 26th October, accompanied with photographs supplied by our prominent photographer Hugh Maxwell.

A giant crane that towered above the surrounding buildings hauled the loom through an opening that had been made in the wall in the Smith and Archibald factory in West Donnington Street. The 11 metre long loom was then loaded on to a huge truck, which despite its robustness, sagged and creaked as the weight of the loom was placed upon its flatbed. The loom was then transported to its new home in premises provided by Morton, Young and Borland, where it joined six other looms which had previously been moved from the Darvel factory. The manufacture of specialist gauze screens for the theatrical trade was therefore able to be continued.





The removal of the looms was far from a simple process. A great deal of care and attention had to be given to the procedure in moving these 11 metre looms, which had been built in Nottingham over 100 years ago. Nottingham was the other main lace manufacturing centre in the UK.

The photograph taken just before its long journey to Newmilns simply highlights the size of the machine. This was indeed a sad sight for the once famous lace town.

At the time Brian Hill, the managing director, commented ...

"It's a very sad day. It always is when an industry is forced to close in a particular town. The town has such a proud history in lace production and now that the last room has been removed it is really the end of an era. The reason for the closure is because the entire trade is now a fraction of what it used to be, but we have moved into a space in the Morton, Young and Borland building in Newmilns and will still be manufacturing the specialist products that we have been making for years."

Darvel's Voice

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Our place, our say, our way - What is community action planning?

Firstly a reminder: Community Action Plans (CAPs) have been around now for fifteen years in Scotland and are growing in importance. Local and national governments are now giving increasing attention to the views of communities, as expressed through CAPs. There is clear evidence of this in our new CAP with important changes in the Place Plan.

The 2026-2031 Darvel & Priestland Community Action Plan is our third and builds upon the successes of the previous two plans and the priorities and actions contained within them. To remind you, it involved extensive consultation through online questionnaires, ballots, surveys, public meetings and paper versions of the questionnaires. The Steering Group which managed the process comprised representatives of community groups and organisations. The analysis of the information was undertaken by East Ayrshire's Vibrant Communities, now part of Ayrshire Leisure. The aim has been to review and update the Place Plan for our community.

The work on compiling the new CAP commenced last year when the Steering Group met to draw up a timetable of action. There was discussion about the headings that would be used to gather together the views of the community. It was agreed after some intensive debate the five headings now being used by the Scottish Government would be applied to our information gathering namely: Movement, Spaces, Resources, Civic and Stewardship.

This did present a difficulty in determining where the various comments from residents about issues, developments and challenges should be placed, but following the voting event in September, Vibrant Communities, with the assistance of members of the Steering Group were able to create a chart with comments and issues placed under one of the five headings. This forms the major section of the community action plan.

Since the publication of the previous plan in 2020, the Darvel Strategy Group has conducted annual reviews of the plan, which will continue following the publication of the new plan.

Copies of the full plan will be available, but more importantly a summary pamphlet will be widely available from a range of outlets. In addition there are plans to have a formal launch of the 2026-2031 Community Action Plan in late February.

Let's have a quick look through the priority issues which were identified:

Movement: The main concern was the very poor condition of pavements especially for the infirm in moving safely around the town. The second issue related to public transport. Whilst it was acknowledged that the weekday bus service to Kilmarnock was excellent, the Sunday service was poor presenting real difficulties for residents. There was also a strong call for the introduction of speed cameras in the town.

Spaces: Strong calls for continued regeneration of Main Street, particularly the condition of some of the properties, both commercial & public / private housing. Concern was expressed about the deterioration of the facades around Hastings Square following fairly recent refurbishment. Concern over the lack of litter bins together with the need for further improvements in our local parks.

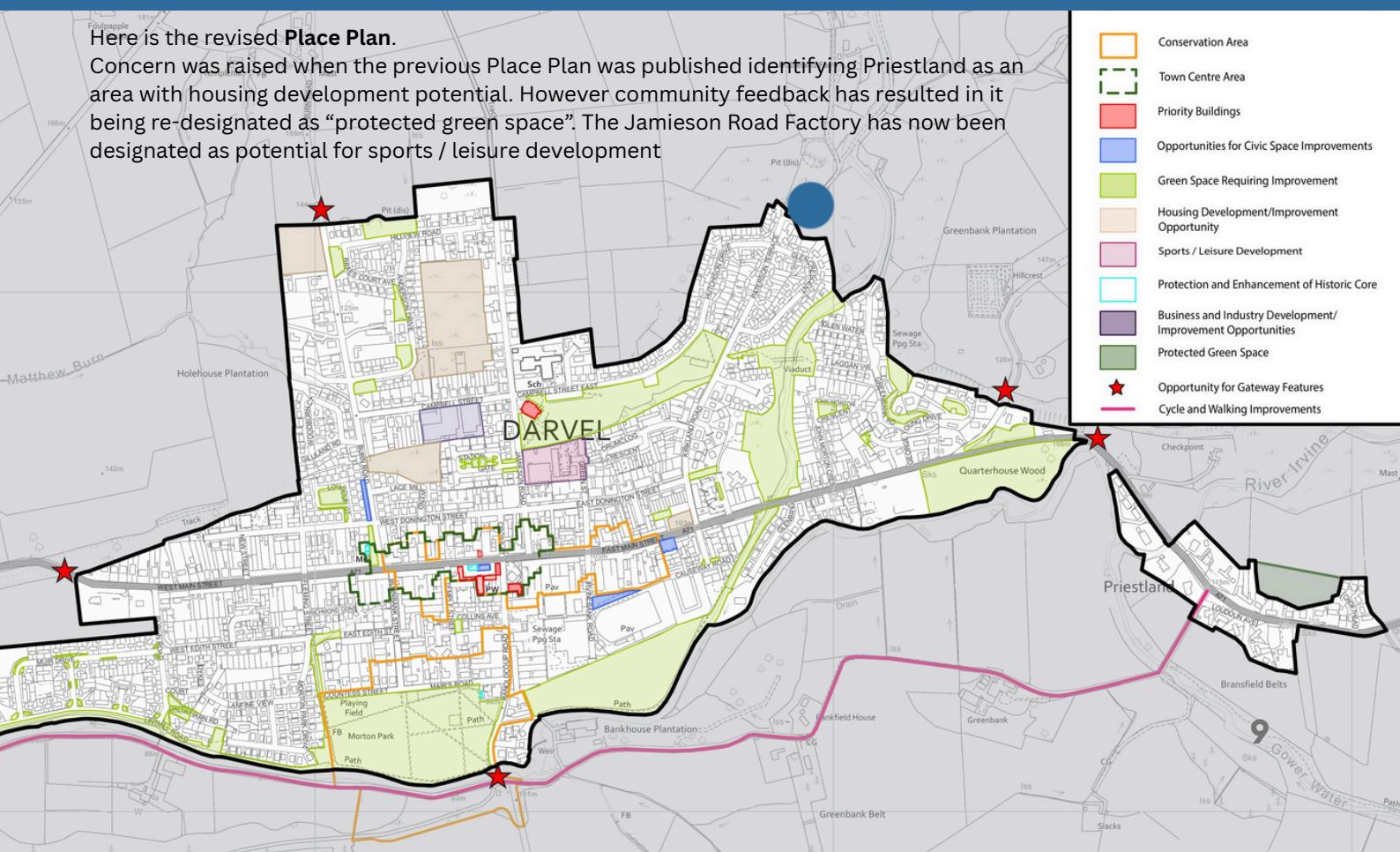
Resources: The reintroduction of public toilets was identified as a key priority although it is recognised that financial and maintenance issues are associated with this. It was no surprise there were requests for additional shops in the town, but recognition that local shops require local support, something which has sadly not always been forthcoming in recent years. A specific request was made for the creation of a community hub. Darvel unlike many other towns in East Ayrshire is lacking one.

Civic: Call for more respect to be given to the local area, echoing the views earlier about reducing the level of litter evident in the town. There is also a very strong call for the heritage and history of the town to be more widely promoted. Plans are being taken forward by DART and DIG to do just that. This Bulletin highlights the steps being taken to commemorate 150 years of lace production in the Valley. The Spring bulletin will feature propose work to commemorate Sir Alexander Fleming.

Stewardship: A reiteration here of calls to regenerate buildings in need of repair. Whilst recognising the range of events already at The Corner, there is a call to provide more activity for young people, particularly teenagers. Reference was also made to the benefits of a Valley wide effort across the three valley towns.

Here is the revised Place Plan.

Concern was raised when the previous Place Plan was published identifying Priestland as an area with housing development potential. However community feedback has resulted in it being re-designated as "protected green space". The Jamieson Road Factory has now been designated as potential for sports / leisure development



Every Town Should Have A...



*How **The Corner** in Darvel is perhaps inspiring a New Vision for Kilmarnock's Town Centre*



Darvel's award-winning community space, The Corner, continues to make an impact far beyond our own town. Its success as a covered, weather-proof outdoor venue has attracted the attention of neighbouring communities—most recently in Kilmarnock, where local planners and community groups are exploring a similar concept for the redevelopment of the former multi-storey car park site.

Last December, Kilmarnock's Urban Planning team met with award-winning designers to consider alternatives to the large open concrete amphitheatre proposed by the Council. The initial plan had raised concerns among residents, particularly around its exposure to the West of Scotland's infamously wet climate. Questions were also raised about value for money and how an open, unsheltered space might become a magnet for antisocial behaviour.

Seeking a more practical and community-focused solution, planners looked to Darvel for inspiration.

Weather-Proofing Community Life

As many in Darvel can attest, the unpredictability of Scottish weather is always a consideration when planning any outdoor gathering. Rain or high winds can easily disrupt the best-laid plans, often leading to cancelled events and disappointed attendees. By providing a permanently covered space, The Corner has enabled organisers to plan with greater certainty; their time, energy, and resources are no longer at the mercy of the forecast. This shelter doesn't just protect against the elements—it symbolises a commitment to community resilience, ensuring that life in the town continues to flourish...come rain or shine.

Kilmarnock's emerging design proposal mirrors this philosophy, aiming to create a similar concept in its own town centre. Such a space would offer numerous benefits: a safer, more welcoming environment for families and visitors, greater opportunities for legitimate use throughout the day, and a tangible sense of community ownership. This approach has been crucial to The Corner's ongoing success, making it a model worth emulating.

A More Viable Vision?

For many residents in Kilmarnock, this alternative proposal feels both realistic and relevant to the local context—addressing climate challenges while providing a practical, inclusive, and economically sound solution. It promises a lively focal point in the heart of town, where people can gather, celebrate, and connect regardless of the season. Should this plan go ahead, it would reflect a growing trend across Ayrshire: towns learning from one another, sharing successes, and working together to create spaces that foster a genuine sense of belonging.

As discussions progress, Darvel can quietly take pride in knowing that The Corner has not only revitalised its own community but could soon inspire positive transformation in neighbouring towns as well.

More Photographic Success

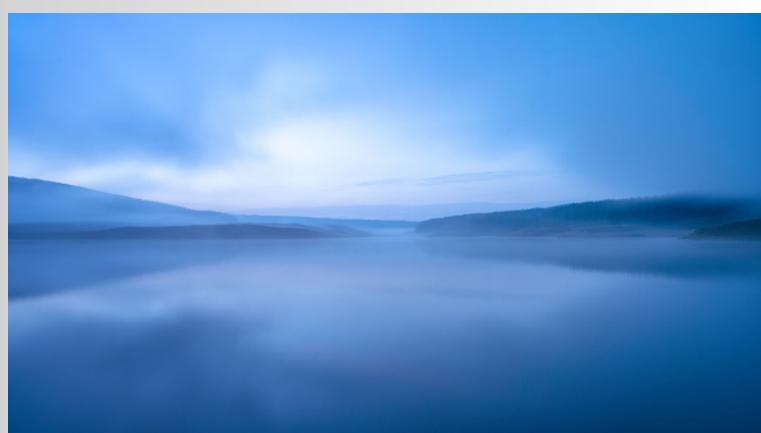
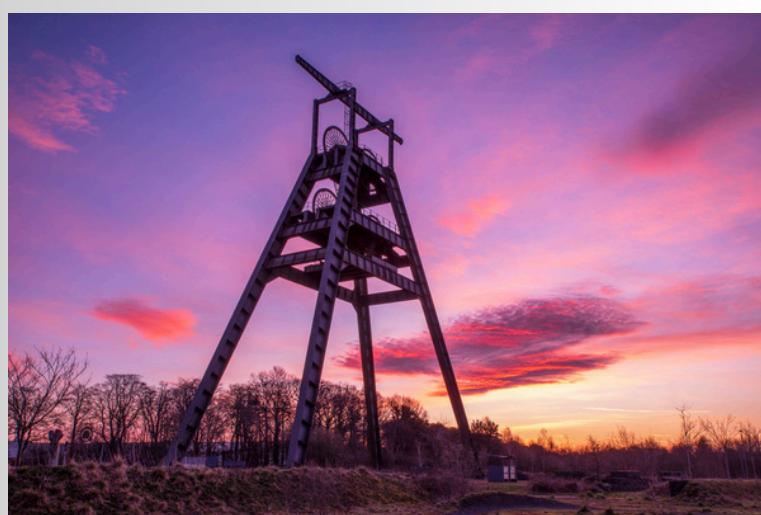
The Darvel Bulletin is again delighted to be able to report on further success for one of our expert photographers. But let's allow Hugh Maxwell to speak for himself.



"I entered the **Ayrshire Hospice Calendar Competition** in April with the theme being 'Secret Ayrshire'. I received a congratulations email to say that not just one but two of my images would be used in the 2026 calendar for the months of February and May. I was further delighted to discover that one is a local view of Loudoun Hill with the Spirit of Scotland Monument and the other being the Barony "A" Frame near Auchinleck. I'm so happy to contribute towards such a good cause with my photography and the calendar will go on sale in the Hospice shops to raise much needed funds.

I was also excited to discover that another one of my photographs – a local view of Glengavel Reservoir in the early morning mist – was shortlisted by the expert judge in the landscape round of **Amateur Photographer of the Year 2025**. That's the hat-trick – three years in a row I've had an image shortlisted in this international competition. The standard is exceptional and it's a great achievement when you consider I'm up against the best amateur photographers from not just the UK but around the world.

And the good news keeps on coming, as an interview and portfolio of my best work to date is scheduled to be featured in the New Year issue of **Amateur Photography Magazine**. They will be using between 8 and 12 of my images over four pages with information about myself and my photographyso I can't wait!"



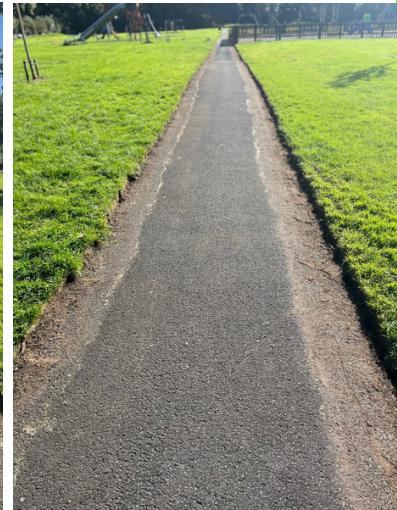
Many congratulations Hugh and may your photographic skills continue to be recognised at both national and international levels. We will of course continue to feature his photographs in future Bulletins.

What's the latest on Morton Park

Widening the Paths

There has been a range of activity at Morton Park in the Autumn. For a number of years residents have become increasingly concerned about the encroachment of grass over the verges of the paths in the park, reducing the width of the path by up to one foot on either side of the paths.

A request was made to East Ayrshire Council about the possibility of tackling this issue and in October work began on clearing the edges by the Community Payback Team. And what an excellent job they have made as can be seen in the photographs.



The Mattha Burn Path

Attention of the the condition of the path adjacent to Mattha Burn at the western edge of the park was also drawn to representatives of Greener Communities. The path was virtually unwalkable from the top of the path to where it meets Countess Street.

Steps were taken almost immediately to make the necessary clearance of the encroaching vegetation from the banks of the burn



Riverbank Clearance

Attention was also drawn to the vegetation growth along the banks of the river Irvine. Several years ago viewing gaps were created along the river bank to enable walkers to catch a glimpse of the water as it tumbled over the rocky river bed.

Since then the vegetation has largely grown back and again the Council took steps to clear some of this overgrown vegetation. We can see, as well as hear the river again through these gaps.



And Further Improvements?

In 2021 there was an extensive consultation on the changes and the improvements that residents would like to see in Morton Park. A detailed report was produced in 2022 and that led to a number of improvements – the replacement of the sand pit with the toddlers soft play area, the replacement of worn rubber matting, additional trees and shrubs, the creation of viewing gaps along the riverside path and additional picnic benches. Earlier this year there were further surveys as part of the consultation for the Community Action Plan.



Both consultations asked for improvements to the children's play area, including the provision of additional inclusive play equipment. There was a further call for more trees planted in the park and the matter of lighting to provide a degree of safety, especially on dark mornings and evenings and during the winter months. DART is working with the Council's Greener Communities to secure external funding for some further improvements.

- An inclusive Wheelspin that would be located centrally in the Children's Play Area
- Solar uplighting studs would be located along the Mattha Burn Path and the Riverside Pathway, and the eastern perimeter of the Park.
- An avenue of trees native to Scotland planted along the path from the Rose Garden to the Riverside Path.

The application form was submitted to the Scottish Action Fund in November and we now await the decision likely to be in March. Fingers crossed, and we'll keep you informed

1840



1840

The Year Darvel Began to Find its Voice

In his definitive book, *A History of Darvel*, published in 1967, local historian John Woodburn described 1840 as... "the most important year in Darvel's history."

Why 1840?

Across the world it was a year of great change:

Queen Victoria married Prince Albert, New Zealand became a British colony, Napoleon's remains were returned to Paris, and the first photographic process the daguerreotype was unveiled in France.

Yet here in the hidden vale, life seemed untouched by these grand events. Handlooms clattered in cottages, smoke rose from peat fires and the gentle rhythm of village life in Darvel carried on.

So what made 1840 so special for Darvel?

"An amiable abode with an intellectual populace."
Quotation from the Darvel Parish Minister, 1840

The Co-op...

1840 saw the birth of Darvel's Co-operative movement, founded by a group of weavers who opened a small community-run shop in Hastings Square. It was one of Scotland's earliest co-ops... a bold experiment in self-help and shared prosperity, long before such ideas became widespread.

The Post Office...

That same year brought Darvel's first Sub-Post Office, replacing the hand-carried letters from Newmilns. For the first time, villagers could correspond directly with the outside world — a small but vital step towards connection and independence.

The Courier...

1840 also marked the beginning of the Kilmarnock carrying business, run by the colourful "Jamie the Delver" Baird. Armed with two hand-barrows, Jamie carried goods between Darvel and Kilmarnock — the town's first organised delivery service, built on grit and good humour. No sign of Amazon then.

Community Life

At the time, Darvel's population stood at around 1,400, mostly handloom weavers. Visitors described it as "an amiable abode with an intellectual populace" — a reflection of its industrious people and the guidance of Rev. Archibald Milligan Rogerson, minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

His influence helped preserve Darvel's Covenanting values of faith, hard work and mutual care — traits that remain at the heart of the town's character.

A Turning Point

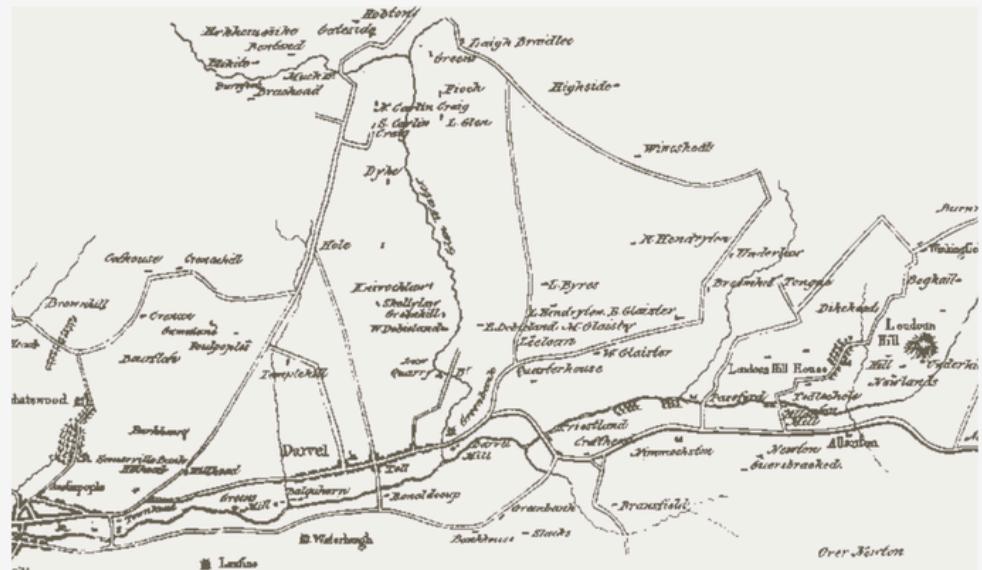
Woodburn believed that 1840 marked the year Darvel found its footing: a time when industry met organisation, when communication widened, and when the town began to act together as a true community.

From that foundation grew the prosperity of the following century — the lace mills, the co-ops, and the civic pride that still define Darvel today.

Echoes in the Present

Nearly two centuries later, those same principles still matter.

Community, communication and collaboration remain the cornerstones of Darvel's success. In 2025, just as in 1840, the town's future depends on the same spirit of self-help, creativity and cooperation that once made this "hidden vale" a beacon of industrious pride.



Darvel in the early 19th Century

A SWEEP THROUGH TIME

The Story of Darvel Curling Club

In 2005, Darvel Curling Club celebrated its 150th anniversary, marking a proud chapter in one of Scotland's oldest sporting traditions. Though some early records were lost in a fire, surviving minutes from 1887 offer a fascinating glimpse into curling "in days gone by."

Two Clubs, One Valley

In the beginning, Darvel was home to two curling clubs - Darvel Curling Club and Glen Water Curling Club, named after the river that winds through the valley. Farmers made up most of the Glen Water membership, while townsfolk filled the ranks of Darvel. The friendly rivalry between "Townies" and "Country" players continues to this day, played out for two historic medals:

- The Darvel Club Medal (dated 1855)
- The Glen Water or "Peewit" Medal (dated 1870)

In the 19th century, winners would proudly display these medals on their pocket watch chains. Today, they're presented symbolically at the annual prize dinner - a nod to a heritage still honoured.

Curling, Concerts and Community

Minutes from an 1887 meeting at Loudoun Moor School record the presence of Hugh Fleming of Lochfield, father of the famed Sir Alexander Fleming. These records reveal more than just curling scores - they paint a vivid picture of rural camaraderie.

The Glen Water Club's annual Soiree, Concert and Ball, first held in 1888, drew around ninety guests for tea, song and dancing until the early hours. Despite occasional "stormy evenings," these gatherings became a beloved local tradition until the mid-1890s.

Curling on the Loch

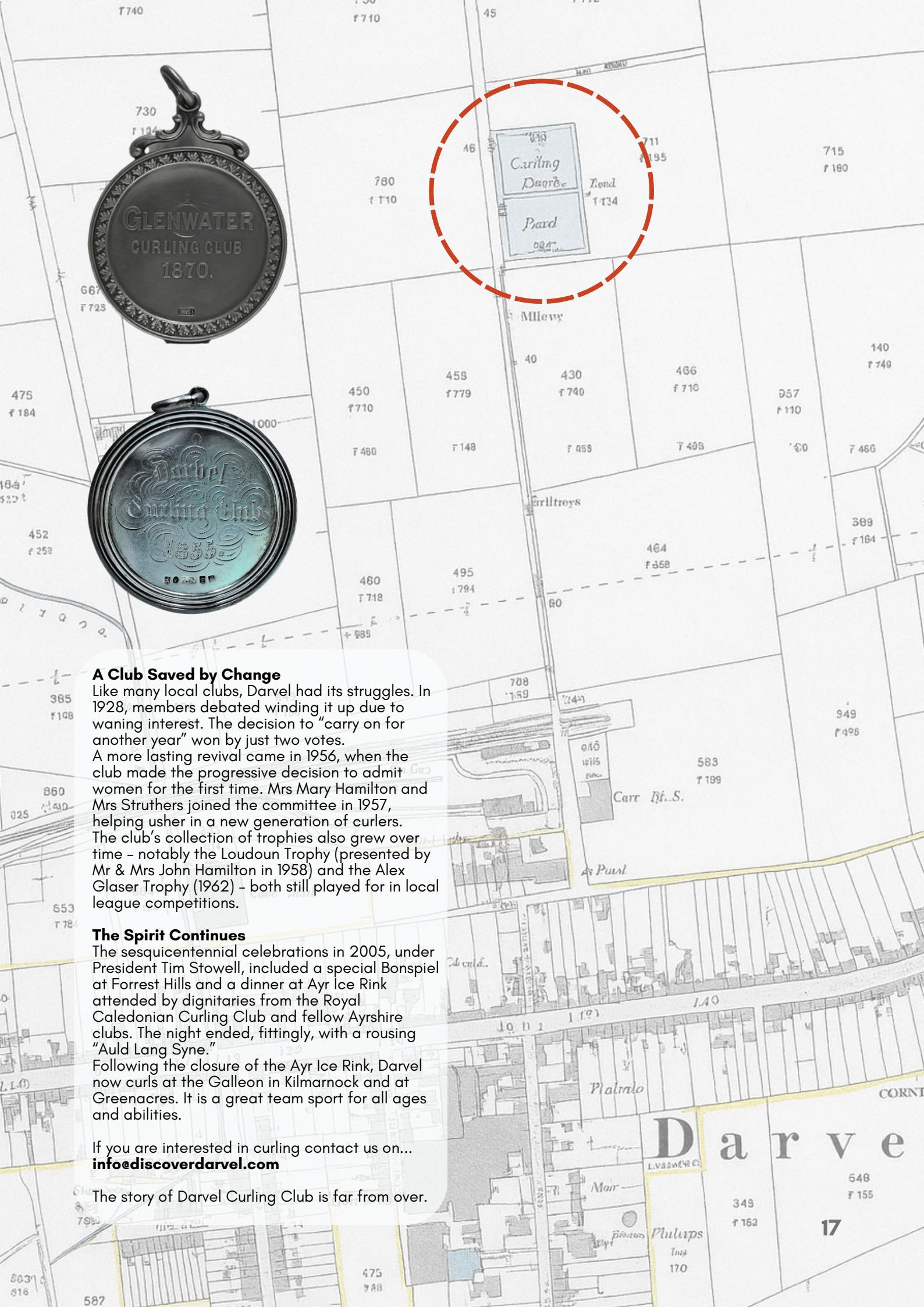
Before indoor ice rinks, curling depended entirely on the weather. Matches took place only when Darvel Loch froze hard enough to hold the stones. The early club accounts show the practicalities involved - from paying a "bellman" to cry through the streets announcing "ice suitable for curling," to maintaining the pond, clubhouse and lamps. Locals could buy skaters' cards to use the frozen loch, and the club even telegrammed nearby towns like Galston and Newmilns when play was possible - an early version of today's group text!

From Frost to Fluorescent Light

By the mid-20th century, reliable outdoor ice had become rare. The final payment for "cutting the pond" appears in the 1952 accounts, and soon after, the loch gave way to housing. Fortunately, the spirit of curling survived indoors.

The club's first recorded indoor match took place at Glasgow's Crossmyloof rink in 1932, marking the start of a new era.





A Club Saved by Change

Like many local clubs, Darvel had its struggles. In 1928, members debated winding it up due to waning interest. The decision to "carry on for another year" won by just two votes.

A more lasting revival came in 1956, when the club made the progressive decision to admit women for the first time. Mrs Mary Hamilton and Mrs Struthers joined the committee in 1957, helping usher in a new generation of curlers. The club's collection of trophies also grew over time – notably the Loudoun Trophy (presented by Mr & Mrs John Hamilton in 1958) and the Alex Glaser Trophy (1962) – both still played for in local league competitions.

The Spirit Continues

The sesquicentennial celebrations in 2005, under President Tim Stowell, included a special Bonspiel at Forrest Hills and a dinner at Ayr Ice Rink attended by dignitaries from the Royal Caledonian Curling Club and fellow Ayrshire clubs. The night ended, fittingly, with a rousing "Auld Lang Syne."

Following the closure of the Ayr Ice Rink, Darvel now curls at the Galleon in Kilmarnock and at Greenacres. It is a great team sport for all ages and abilities.

If you are interested in curling contact us on...
info@discoverdarvel.com

The story of Darvel Curling Club is far from over.

The River Irvine

In this 28th issue, we focus on the upper course of the River Irvine, tracing its journey from Loudoun Hill to Newmilns. Using previous Bulletin articles, we review the Upper Valley streams and historic river pools that highlight past uses of the river.



Origins of the River Irvine

The River Irvine has two principal headwaters. The first originates in a moss at Meadowhead, situated on the eastern boundary of the parish of Loudoun. The second source is found in the parish of Avondale in South Lanarkshire, close to the historic battlefield of Drumclog.

The Role of Glen Water

Technically, Glen Water should be considered the parent stream, as it is both longer and carries more water than the other headwaters. Glen Water rises at Crosshill in East Renfrewshire, approximately a mile north of the East Ayrshire boundary, and flows six miles southwards. Along its course, it is joined by five rills—small streams—and a number of minor burns and sykes*, before ultimately meeting the River Irvine.

Burns and Sykes of the Irvine Catchment

Numerous burns and sykes feed into the various waters that eventually converge with the Irvine. Many of these burns remain unnamed or their names have not been recorded. In some cases, a single stream or burn may have more than one name. These watercourses are notable in their own right, either as sources of local history revealed through their names or as sites of historical events.

The following list of burns and sykes, originally identified in Wikipedia, is not exhaustive. Readers are encouraged to contribute any additional small burns or sykes that may be missing. The list was initially in alphabetical order but has been reorganised to reflect the main streams and their tributaries.



Key Tributaries Along the Irvine

Following the course of the River Irvine, the first notable tributary is the Tongue Burn, which joins the river between Passford Bridge and Priestland. Continuing westward into Priestland, the Gower Water flows into the Irvine from the hills south of the valley. The Gower Water is formed by the confluence of two burns: the Changue Burn and the Tulloch Burn. The Changue Burn itself is fed by several smaller burns and streams, including Slateford Burn, the Logan Burn (with its tributary the Rowantree Burn), and the Glenoul Burn (with its tributary, Cleckle Burn). The Tulloch Burn is created by the merging of the Mule Burn and the Dubs Burn, the latter of which rises on the slopes of Distinkhorn.



Upon entering Darvel, the Irvine is joined by Glen Water, which has a relatively large catchment area and is fed by numerous streams. The Glen Water originates on the slopes of Corse Hill in East Renfrewshire and flows southward. Along its upper course on Corse Hill, it is joined by Loudoun Water, Bull Burn, Snab Burn, and Threap Syke. Further downstream, Glen Water is joined by the Wise Burn before the Pogiven Burn enters from the west.

*A syke – is an old English name for a small stream or rill, especially one that dries up in summer.



Upstream from the junction of Pogiven Burn and Glen Water lies an interesting stretch of river, featuring the Gowk Stane*, a waterfall, and Cuddy's Cairn. Before reaching the Glen Water, the Pogiven Burn is joined by a number of smaller streams. Way to the west the Westburn, with its two small streams, the Heather Syke and Hazel Syke forms the upper part of the Pogiven. It is then joined by Rough Syke and the Auldhouse Burn from the north, before it is joined by the Stagmire Burn from



Before it flows under Braidley Bridge, on Darvel's famous 5 mile walk (more like 7 miles!) the Glen Water has three small burns, the Loch Burn, Jangle Burn and Rab's Burn. The Loch burn is located close to Lochfield Farm, the birthplace of Sir Alexander Fleming, and has a wee stream- the Potespy Burn to the east. After Braidley Bridge Glen Water is joined by Muck's Water, which is formed when three smaller burns join together - Brocklees Burn, Bareshaw Burn and Wallacegill Burn.



Between Braidley Bridge and its entry into Darvel, the valley is narrow with steep sides as can be seen from the closeness of the contour lines.

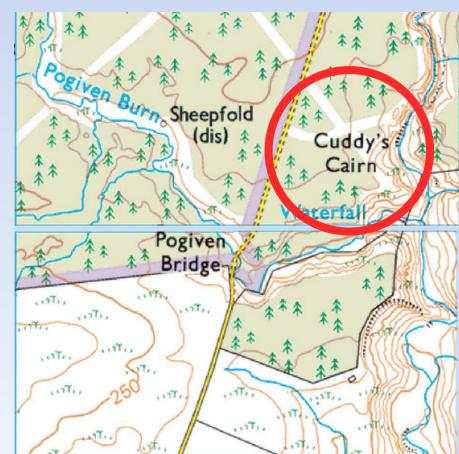


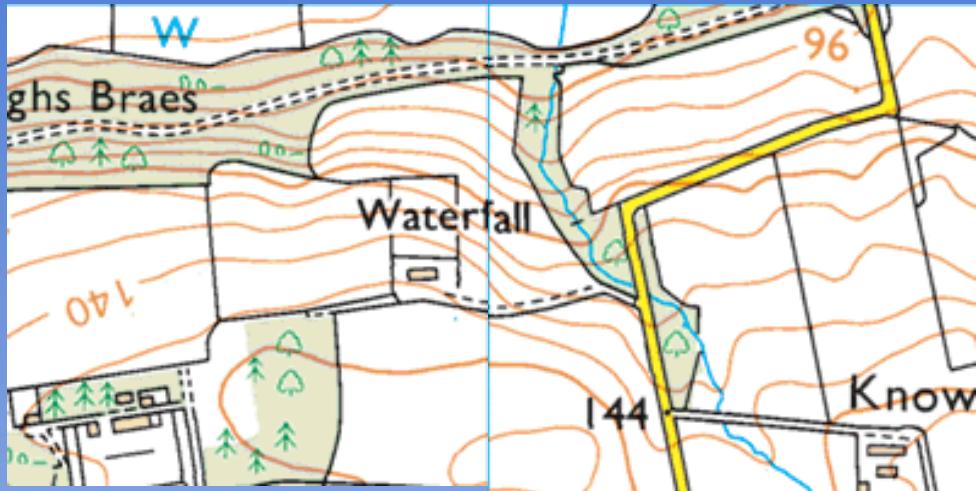
The steep sided valley is one of the results of the aftermath of the Ice Age. The final tributary of Glen Water is Glen Burn, which flows in from the east and the water then flows into Darvel. From its confluence with Glen Water, the River Irvine then enters a fairly calm stretch before it is joined by the Matthew (Mattha) Burn which forms the western boundary of Morton Park.



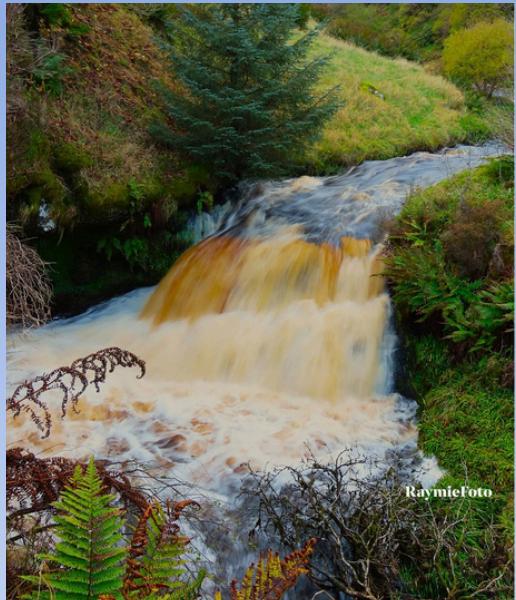
Before it enters Newmilns, the final tributary of the Irvine is the Newlands Burn which flows north into the river from Lanfine Estate. So there you have it, the River Irvine and its main tributary in the Darvel area, the Glen Water. You can quite easily see that although the River Irvine is the "primary" river, it is Glen Water which has the more complex system of burns and streams.

**The Gowk Stane lies just north of Cuddy's Cairn. Gowk Stanes are found in various locations and were used for various purposes, such as boundary markers or meeting places. This Stane may have been used by ministers in Covenanting times as a form for pulpit.*



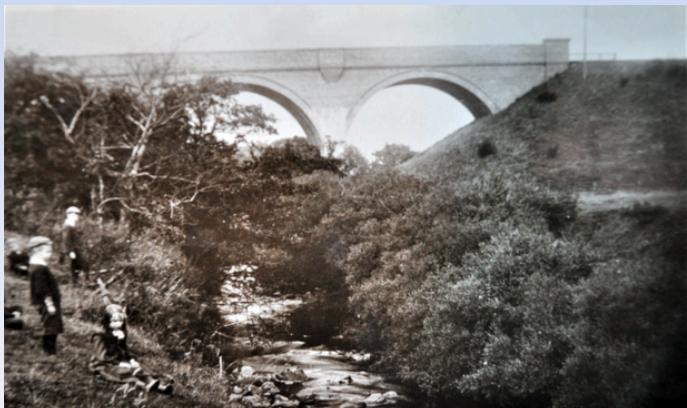


On his photographic adventures, **Ramie Foto** captures many outstanding views of our local area. Here is a lovely wee photograph of the waterfall on the Birkhill Burn as it flows under the farm road leading up to Dyke Farm down towards its junction with the River Irvine.



Here are two “Foto” Views of the Glen Water and its tributary, Mucks Water.

We can also look back to historical photographs below of the railway viaduct over the Glen Water and the long gone footbridge over the Changue Burn, a tributary of the River Irvine.



Poolside



During the past few months there have been a few posts on social media about the pools and the features of the River Irvine in Darvel. There were stories about where kids learned to swim, where salmon were caught and where lives were saved. There were questions about the names of the pools and where these were located and a wee concern that as time went on the names would be forgotten. With the help of Stuart Rankin, this article is an attempt to ensure that does not happen.

The Joinings is where the Glen Water meets the River Irvine. There was also a pool just at this location - the Cemetery or Graveyard pool - but this has now gone. As the Irvine sweeps past the Bankers, there is the Lassucks Pool where in the past the lassies of the town learned to swim. The Sawmill Dam or weir separated the dam flat above the dam and the Wheel pool downstream from the dam. There are some great stories about the happenings at Rabs pool - learning to swim, catching your first salmon, the Duck Race, saving a wee yin from drowning, men going down after work from the factories to wash off the "black leed", jumping off the ledges. and fishing for sookanellies under the stones. Rabs pool is where in the past ladies learned to swim.

Times Gone By



The River Irvine marks the southern boundary of Morton Park. The riverbanks are now covered in vegetation, but this was not always the case. Here we can see two photographs of the riverbank with little vegetation. We have Rab's Pool in the top photograph, but in the lower photograph there are the stepping stones which once provided a crossing point of the river just up from the Irvine's junction with the Mattha Burn.

You can see that the "stepping stones" was obviously a popular spot for residents with its steps down from the park and prominent stones across the river. Unfortunately the stepping stones fell victim to the vagaries of the weather, and were washed away in severe floods which also caused mayhem in Newmilns in October 1954.

Stuart Rankin also tells this wee story...

"There was a lad who moved to Darvel as a newlywed. He hooked a salmon below the Sawmill Dam and played it down the river. Down through the Wheel Pool and under Ranoldcoup Bridge and was up and running along the path beside the river, down through the Rabs and eventually getting it out at the Matta Burn. This young man was with his father-in-law, the postman Matthew Paton Gregg.

The young man would be my dad, Sanny Rankin."

However the River Irvine is now classified as a Category 3 river which means that any salmon caught must be released back into the river. This has resulted in a dramatic reduction in membership of the Angling Club.

There is a story that the "Soldiers' Bridge" also known as the "Iron Brig" was constructed during the 1940's with the help of soldiers who were stationed in Darvel during World War 2. However, we have it on the best authority (Billy Scade) that the bridge was in fact built in the 1950's - sometime after 1953 allegedly using funding from war bonds. Maybe that's where the story came from?

Gradually the steel of the bridge became corroded over time and the bridge was replaced by the new Waterhaughs Bridge.

Here are links to great drone videos of the Upper River Irvine produced by Ricky Rowe:

The River Irvine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOK2h-u4I0w>

Galston to Priestland along the River Irvine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3HPUCaOrUM>



DART Annual General Meeting Chair's Summary Report

At the October AGM, Chair Fiona Anderson reviewed DART's achievements since its founding in September 2019 and outlined upcoming initiatives. She emphasised the group's focus on improving Darvel for all residents, raising so far just over **£950,000** to fund various local projects.

Key Achievements Since 2019

The Corner: Completed first major town centre project after demolishing old co-op buildings.

Town Hall Modernisation: Along with East Ayrshire Leisure planning upgrades to Darvel Town Hall.

Strategy Group: Chaired meetings and led Community Action Plan reviews.

Waterlip Improvements: Managed area upgrades—fences, riverbank, paths, and lighting.

Darvel Bulletin: Launched the community publication online and in print.

Gala Day: Taking responsibility for organising the Town's biennial event.

Darvélo: Co-organising the annual cycling festival, now in its fourth year.

Community Action Plan 2026-31: Led consultations and chaired 'Darvel's Voice' meetings.

The Corner Events: monthly markets, Halloween & Christmas events, music, and children's activities.

Morton Park: Secured funding for a new play area, safety surfacing, trees, and picnic benches.

Darvel Burgh 150: Delivered a large anniversary event and created the Darvel Timeline.

Shop Fronts: Improved several local business exteriors.

Covid-19 Support: Ran a major volunteer programme during the pandemic.

Discover Darvel Website: Developed website with a calendar and digitised heritage archives.

Bee'ing Better: Added wildflower strips to support biodiversity through the town.

Darvel Gin: a limited artisan edition of Darvel Gin

DART continues to deliver projects which enhance Darvel, supporting the town's growth and well-being.



Mucho Nacho

Darvel is going to see a lot of Nacho Novo this year. Rangers FC hero, Nacho Novo says he will use lessons learnt from his legendary 'football father' Walter Smith as he embarks on his journey as a first-time manager with Darvel FC. And for those first steps into management, he is making it a priority to integrate himself into the local community. The Vale appointed the 46-year-old Spaniard as their new boss in November after the team had been struggling under Michael Oliver for much of the season.

Novo scored 73 goals for the 'Gers in 255 games and also starred for Raith and Dundee during his playing career. A fan favourite at Ibrox, he arrives on the back of a stint as an assistant coach at Drumchapel United last season. His only previous senior managerial experience came in the form of a short stint as caretaker at Lexington Soccer Club in America.

Novo admits he has been desperate for a job in management after finding it difficult to get an interview with clubs across Scotland over the summer. He attributes that to how he was on the park as a player: feisty, intense, and on occasion a bit of a wind-up merchant. But he's now taken time to process the lessons he's learned in man-management from mentors like Smith and Alex McLeish and is ready to repay the faith shown in him by Darvel. Not only that, he understands the value of developing the club's own youth talent - and inspiring the next generation off the pitch.

Novo visited Darvel Primary School in December to the delight of youngsters who were able to ask him questions about his career and the team. He also took time to sign some memorabilia, giving kids invaluable memories and no doubt encouraging a few of them to turn up and support the team.

Novo has already inspired an upturn in form in his own players. Darvel won 6-0 against Ardrossan Winton Rovers in his first game in charge and followed that up with a 2-1 win away to Neilston before a 3-1 victory in his home debut at Recreation Park against Petershill.

“

I've chosen Darvel because, first and foremost, they are the first to give me such an opportunity. They trust me to do a job," he began. I knew coming back to Scotland it would be difficult for me to get a job because of the Celtic and Rangers history and how I was as a player and things that are said about me outside of the pitch. But I've learned that's just how people are. It's made me more hungry to start working as a manager. I need to thank Darvel for having that confidence in me.



Novo was able to recall the historic night when Darvel knocked Aberdeen out of the Scottish Cup back in January 2023. The club won the Scottish Junior Cup under Tony McInally a year later but suffered relegation last season, a bitter blow to all involved at Recreation Park. Novo hopes to bring back those scenes 'doon the brae' and insists that the club's community feel was one of the main reasons why he took the leap with the Ayrshire side.

He continued: *"I love that this is a community club because it means we can only get bigger. It's all about being together, as a family. The players need the fans as well. Like against Aberdeen, how many fans were here? How Darvel won that night, it was great. I remember watching the game. I'm going to try to get as many people on board to support the team. My team is going to play aggressively and with intensity and fight as a team. And then play our football."*

Novo recalled a flashpoint in his playing career that has added significance now he is a manager. He remembers being sent off against Aberdeen in the last league game of the 2007/08 season for what he admits was a deliberate lunge on Stuart Duff, after which he walked along the trackside at Pittodrie kissing the Rangers badge and gesturing towards the supporters. Novo fully expected an earful from gaffer Smith when he got up the tunnel. But his wise old boss knew those actions were borne out of frustration (the 2-0 scoreline meant Rangers' chances of winning the league were wiped out).

"He just put his arm around me and said... "Wee man, these things happen. Just don't do it again", Novo said. "He was my dad in football. He knew how to handle me. I want to get to know my players. I want to help them. You need to have a happy camp. You need to get everyone together and everyone thinking about winning. My players have already shown me that they're being a bit nippy against each other, but that's football. That's what's going to make you successful. They're loving training but that's just the start."



"I'm going to prove it. People can say whatever they want to say, but it's made me even angrier and hungry for this job. Since I've started, I haven't stopped. I don't sleep. I've already taken the team to a new training venue, at the pitches just across from Ibrox. The facilities are better there. We need to look after the players as well. At the end of the day, the manager can have a say, but the players are the ones who are winning."

Predecessor, Michael Oliver was sacked with Darvel, 14th of the 16 teams in the West of Scotland Football League's First Division. Attendances took a hit as the results spiralled. Come the end of the season with the restructuring of the lower divisions, an eighth-placed finish could be enough for the Vale to find themselves back in the Premier Division once again. Novo knows there will be people still out there who doubt him. But those dissenting voices only make him more determined to succeed.



The Rising



Darvel Music Highlights



The Desperados



The Boss

2025 was another good year for live music around Darvel with some great live performances taking place at the Bowling Club, the Town Hall and at 'The Corner'.

January and the first of our concerts featured the Re-Claimers, followed by a joint initiative with DART to bring The McCommitments and the Deke McGee Band to Darvel in February.

In spring there were concerts by The Polis and the Dugoose Ska Band at the bowling club, followed by autumn shows featuring Main Street Blues, Bison Hip and the Last Resort. A special thank you goes out to our friend David Paterson for organising a music fundraiser under the title 'Dave Sings the Classics'.

Live music proceedings were concluded on 28 November with a packed audience at the town hall thoroughly enjoying the classics of the Eagles and Springsteen and the 'E' Street Band courtesy of the Desperados and The Rising*.

Only one show is currently planned for 2026, that being the rescheduled Simple Minds and Deacon Blue tribute concert now taking place on Saturday 18 April. Tickets already purchased for the previous date are valid for the April gig and new tickets are now available to buy at Thistle du Florist and through Tickets Scotland.

The Darvel Music Company would like to thank all of our Volunteers, the Small Town Audio sound and lights team, East Ayrshire Leisure staff and YOU our music fans for supporting us throughout 2025. We are also grateful for grant support and financial assistance received from East Ayrshire Council and Loudoun Valley Trust.

2026 is the **25th Anniversary** of 'Darvel Music' and the DMC hopes to obtain funding and sponsorship to stage some special gigs later this year. A feature highlighting the successful story of 'Darvel Music' will be in either the Spring or Summer Bulletin.

CYCLE STATION

Celebrating Local Success: Siobhan Richardson

We are incredibly proud to celebrate the success of **Siobhan Richardson** Class teacher at Darvel Primary School who has been recognised with highly commended in the **Instructor of the Year** category for **Cycling Scotland's Bikeability Scotland Awards 2025**. Siobhan's dedication and passion have made a remarkable impact in our community and she is quick to highlight that every achievement has been a true team effort:

"We've got a really great charity on our doorstep: Cycle Station, and they've been fantastic, it all started with them. My daughter attended their Balance Buddies class and that's how the conversation first began. It's really difficult to do something like this on your own as a full-time class teacher. Having organisations like Cycle Station, along with the school, supporting the idea has made such a difference. It takes a whole team to make it happen."

Siobhan's success reminds us of the power of local collaboration when passionate people and community-driven organisations come together, amazing things can grow right here in Darvel. We celebrated her success as she received her award from Christopher Johnston, Head of Training at Cycle Scotland at Cycle Station on the 9th of December with some eager Darvel Primary School students learning the ropes of our workshop.

You can read and hear Siobhan's full interview here:

<https://cycling.scot/case-studies/bikeability-scotland-awards-2025-siobhan-richardson>

A Spooktacular Thank You!



A huge thank you to everyone who joined us for this year's Halloween celebrations at Cycle Station, you helped make it an absolutely **Spooktacular** event! From creative costumes to eerie decorations and plenty of laughs along the way, the spirit of Darvel shone through in full spooky style.

We are so grateful to our volunteers, local businesses, families, and friends who supported the event and brought the community together in such a fun and memorable way. We can't wait to see you all again next year for even more tricks, treats, and terrific moments!



DIG Christmas Fayre



DIG Christmas Fayre was another roaring success this year thanks to all the stallholders who attended. Musical entertainment was provided by Loudoun Friends and Darvel Primary School choir to add to the festive atmosphere and, of course, no Christmas Fayre would be complete without a visit from our very own Santa,

John Oliver take a bow.

What better way to spend a cold Saturday morning than being in the company of friends and family enjoying food, entertainment and a Christmas shopping experience.

We, in DIG, really appreciate your continuing support. It was a fine end to the year for DIG and we look forward to another busy year in 2026.

Its quite remarkable that in 2026 DIG will celebrate 25 years of volunteering., but much more about this amazing milestone will be featured in the spring bulletin.

Christmas Celebrations in the Lang Toon



Our Christmas fund raising event wouldn't have been possible without the incredible generosity of our community. To the local businesses who supported our Golden Ticket event by donating prizes, to the small businesses who gifted raffle prizes, to the parents who filled our tombola with bottles and chocolates, and to every member of the community who handed me donations, including cash, thank you! Because of your kindness and support, we are absolutely delighted to be able to give over £2300 back to the school to help enrich our children's experiences. What a response!

Darvel Primary Parent Council



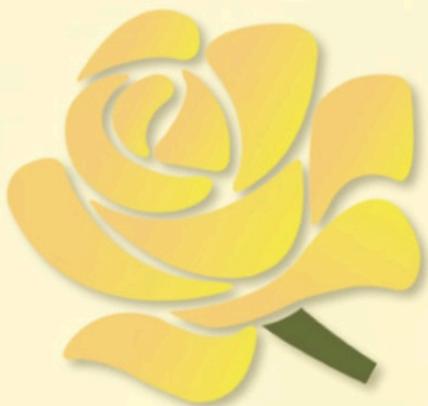
It was a damp windy Sunday afternoon but the lure of Santa, Sleigh and the Bethlehem donkeys ensured that the children and their families enjoyed another lovely community event at... **The Corner**



Once again pupils from Darvel Primary serenaded friends, family and children from the early education centre at The Corner.. The weather was kind and the repertoire outstanding....Well done!



The Darvel Dinner Ladies Senior Citizens' Xmas Lunch
Savouried by all who attended.
Fine food and enjoyable entertainment.



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ADVERTISE YOUR BUSINESS IN THE DARVEL BULLETIN



The Darvel bulletin is an A4 booklet, published quarterly with information on upcoming events, historical information, features on local people, and many more interesting articles about Darvel and surrounding areas.

It has circulation on 5 separate Facebook pages -

The Corner – Discover Darvel – DDCC – Dawn to Dusk - Darvel Chat

There are also 120 paper copies distributed via local shops for those who don't have internet access.

1 off advertising costs for 1 issue are as follows - Annual advertising costs for 4 issues are as follows -

| | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1/4 page - £25 | 1/4 page - £80 |
| 1/2 page - £40 | 1/2 page - £128 |
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Darvel Snippets...



Halloween at The Corner

A frighteningly good time was had by all at our annual fest a the Corner. The weather was not encouraging during the afternoon, but by early evening the rain had gone, and maybe a full moon peeked out behind the clouds.

And of course we were graced and terrorised by Jane's Tunnel of Terror. Here's more unsuspecting victims for the tunnel.



Who's that keeping a close eye on the passers by?



Watch out behind you! The clown with the red eyes.

SUPPORT LOCAL: THE COOP COMMUNITY FUND

Support Local – Choose Darvel Gala Day 2026 or Darvel Improvement Group! If you're a Co-op member, you can make a huge difference to Darvel just by doing your everyday shopping. This year, you can choose Darvel Gala Day 2026 or the Darvel Improvement Group (DIG) as your local cause – two fantastic community projects working hard to make our town even better. Darvel Gala Day is one of our most beloved traditions, and with your help we hope to make 2026 the biggest and most memorable Gala yet.

DIG continues to transform and brighten Darvel through amazing volunteer projects all year round.

It's super simple to support:

Download the Co-op App <https://www.coop.co.uk/coop-app>

Select DART (Gala Day) or DIG as your preferred local cause

Shop as normal – and the Co-op donates!

Every selection, every shop, every penny helps our community thrive.

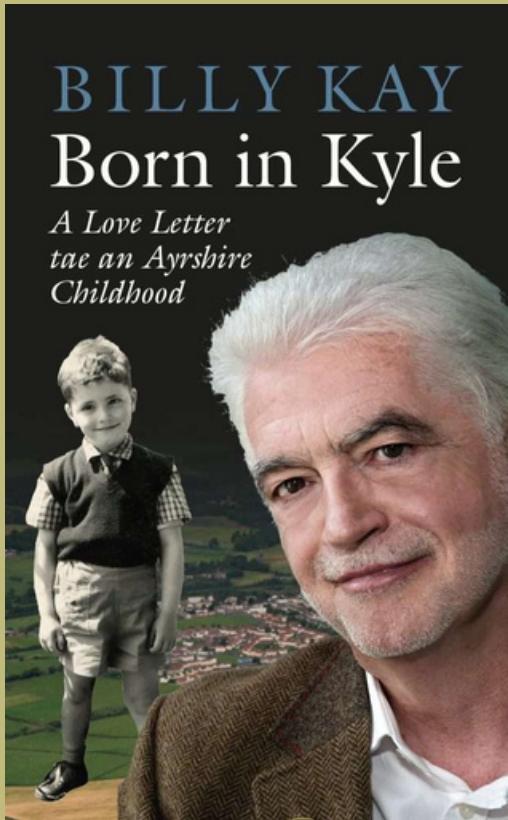
Let's make 2026 a year to remember for Darvel!



Darvel Snippets.....



An evening of Stories and Songs with Billy Kay and Robyn Stapleton
Friday 24th April, Darvel Town Hall



Robyn Stapleton is an award-winning singer and song leader who shares her talent and passion for traditional music with audiences and communities throughout Scotland and internationally.

Billy Kay is a writer, broadcaster, and language activist born in Galston. The sub-title of my book is *A Love Letter tae an Ayrshire Childhood* and, to paraphrase Lewis Grassic Gibbon in *Sunset Song*, it is a fond recalling of the 'far off youngness' of my life. Mine was the last of the pre-television generations and so my first decade was lived in a Scottish, rather than a global, village. My family had belonged to Galston for generations as weavers, stonemasons and miners, so the book became a celebration of their culture, as well as a record of my own personal experiences. My time in life was also important. When you reach three score years and ten, you realise how exotic the past appears to the modern generation, so I was anxious to preserve a perspective on the rich culture I inherited. I hope I have added to the culture with the book.



Valentine's Quiz Night

Friday 13th February 2026,
7.30pm to 10.30pm Darvel Masonic Club,
Max 6 per team - £4 per person including Nibbles,
Cash Bar Service for drinks,
DIG's BIG Raffle.
Raffle prizes gratefully accepted on the night.

DARVEL IMPROVEMENT GROUP



Darvel Snippets...



DARVEL MUSIC COMPANY

Darvel Town Hall
10-12 West Main Street,
Darvel, KA17 0AQ

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Tickets Scotland Ltd, 237 Argyle St, Glasgow G2 8DL - 0141 204 5151

www.darvelmusiccompany.com
for ticket sales outlets

DARVEL
COMMUNITY
CALENDAR

An online Community Calendar is now available on the Discover Darvel website

<https://discoverdarvel.com/community-calendar/>

The Darvel Community Calendar provides the dates of community events along with useful information about each one

the Corner

Spring will soon be sprung and The Corner will host some exciting offerings in April and May

KIDZONE 8 April
APRIL MARKET 25 April
DARVÉLO 16 May
MAY MARKET 23 May

GARDENER'S CORNER

2025 was a good year for plant sales. We are already gearing up for the Spring Markets in April and May at The Corner. Please note advanced sales are in March - at the junction of Burnbank St and Mairs Road. Many thanks for support from the Darvel community with all proceeds going to DART's Community Fund.



For the first time ever DART had to cancel my Xmas Market because of a scary forecast - too stormy for my reindeers. Don't worry, there's always next year.....



What's on in Darvel this year...



| | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Friday 6 February | Valentine Quiz Night, 7-9pm | DIG |
| Friday 20 March | Music & Cake, 2-4pm | Bowling Club |
| Sunday 29 March | Easter Egg Hunt | Lanfine, DIG |
| Wednesday 8 April | Kidzone, 11-2pm | The Corner |
| Saturday 18 April | Simple Minds/Deacon Blue Tribute | Town Hall, DMC |
| Friday 24 April | "Born in Kyle" with Billy Kay | Town Hall, DART |
| Saturday 25 April | Corner Market, 10-2pm | The Corner |
| Friday 8 - Monday 11 May | Walkfest | Valley Walkfest |
| Saturday 16 May | Darvéló Cycling Festival | The Corner |
| Saturday 23 May | Corner Market, 10-2pm | The Corner |
| Saturday 13 June | Café Day in the Square | DIG |
| Saturday 20 June | Darvel Gala | DART |
| Saturday 27 June | Corner Market, 10-2pm | DART |
| Saturday 22 August | Corner Market, 10-2pm | DART |
| Friday 28 August | Music & Cake, 2-4pm | Bowling Club |
| Friday 4 September | Flower Show | Darvel Horticultural Society |
| Friday 25 September | Music & Cake, 2-4pm | Bowling Club |
| Saturday 26 September | Corner Market, 10-2pm | DART |
| Wednesday 7 - Saturday 10 October | Lace Festival Exhibition | Town Hall, DART |
| Saturday 10 October | The Warp & the Weft "Conversation" | Town Hall, DART |
| Wednesday 14 October | Kidzone, 11-2pm | The Corner |
| Friday 23 October | Halloween Market, 4-8pm | The Corner, DART |
| Friday 30 October | Music & Cake, 2-4pm | Bowling Club |
| Saturday 14 November | Christmas Fayre | Town Hall, DIG |
| Friday 27 November | Corner Christmas Market, 5-9pm | The Corner, DART |
| Saturday 28 November | Music & Cake, 2-4pm | Bowling Club |
| Friday 11 December | Music & Cake, 2-4pm | Bowling Club |



Loudoun Hill ...photograph by Hugh Maxwell



WWW.DISCOVERDARVEL.COM