

FREE

eyemouthliving

Your local community magazine

May 2026



<https://www.eyemouth.org/magazine>

welcome

It is time to welcome you to the May issue of *Eyemouth Living*. Time rarely has the habit of standing still and maybe you feel like Abi & Kathy despairing, not just about the buses, but the world around us! Yet despite the worries of the world, or the speed that time seems to move at, hopefully you managed to get some reading done over the Easter break, but if not there is plenty to read in our May magazine.

Whether it is hearing about the history of our local area, the good and the bad, witch hunts and forts, or even discovering about the first Eyemouth lifeboat which marks its 150th anniversary this year, or genning up on the latest wildlife and gardening notes, or finding ways to beat the stress of exams for our young people, once again there's plenty to sink your reading teeth into. I hope you enjoy the many articles and if there's anything you think we could be featuring in the magazine don't hesitate to get in touch at livingmagazine@eyemouth.org.



Andy Haddow
Chair, Eyemouth Development Trust

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Please contact us at: livingmagazine@eyemouth.org



volunteering

james hutton

Volunteering with the National Trust for Scotland

I am Gary McBride and I am one of a small team of volunteers supporting the full-time rangers at the St Abbs National Nature Reserve. This is my fourth season, although I have connections going back a lot longer. I am usually found in the small visitor centre at Northfield on a Sunday morning providing 'meet and greet' to a wide range of visitors. There are other volunteers who also cover other days at weekends.



I needed something to get me out of the house which I could enjoy doing while putting something back into the community. It is great to welcome visitors and find out what brings them to this part of Scotland. There are locals who I know by name or sight, folk here on holiday who love to chat and many tourists from abroad. I also try to help with the Thursday work parties where the work is more physically demanding, helping to cut back the undergrowth and keep the paths clear along with beach cleans.

On top of that I help out at our special events which take place throughout the summer. These are mostly based at the visitor centre and with the NTS stall at local events such as supporting lifeboat days etc.

It is great to have first-hand experience of watching the local wildlife, from the masses of breeding seabirds on the cliff to the passing dolphins and occasional whale. All brilliant for my hobby of photography. The highlight of the year is always the seal pups being born on our local beaches in November and December. I am proud to be helping show this off to our visitors.

Celebrating the 300th anniversary of the birth of **James Hutton** (1726 - 1797)

Cockburnspath Village Hall

Saturday 30th May 10.30 - 4.00

& Sunday 31st May 11.00 - 3.30

A free exhibition exploring Deep Time, including the opening of the James Hutton Cycle Trail on Saturday 30th May

Hayloft Gallery, Paxton House

Wednesday 3rd June to Sunday 26th July

James Hutton 300 - Landscape, Rocks and Time

A free exhibition which tells of the life of a Berwickshire farmer who became known as the 'founder of modern geology'.



Cockburnspath & Cove Community Council





look after yourself



Shine Bright

Brighter days, more sunlight and the first colours in the garden can only mean one thing – the shorts and T-shirts are suddenly out and proud. Whilst I might sound like I'm mocking, I'm genuinely not! (Ok, well maybe a little bit.) However, it can really improve our health.

The body needs certain vitamins and minerals to be able to regulate itself effectively and efficiently. One of these is vitamin D. This vitamin is actually made in the body but it does need one crucial outside ingredient – sunlight. It regulates the levels of calcium phosphate in the body, which can protect you against brittle bones, rickets and a decrease in tooth health. Vitamin D also has brain-acting antioxidant properties that influence mood as well as reduce the risk of anxiety and depression. Ignoring the sciencey bit, it basically means it's very important.

It can't be stored in the body, so supplementation (or a sunlight lamp if you want) is still highly recommended in the darker months. In the last 5 years the government has recommended that we all take a vitamin D capsule during the autumn and winter to ensure there is enough for the body and mind to function. So, apart from supplementation, how can we naturally maximize our production? Well, let there be light!

Sunlight is absorbed through the skin and undergoes a chemical reaction with other components in the body to make vitamin D, which then influences the production of other chemicals, as already mentioned. As we live in a part of the world where we get, on average, less sunlight than most of the rest of the country I'm recommending 'getting leggy with it'. If it's warm enough and you feel comfortable to do so, wear a T-shirt, shorts, or both and just sit in the sun (or the light) for 30 minutes a day. Even if you're fully clothed, it will be absorbed through the face and thinner layers of clothing.

So go on, change over your wardrobe, embrace the sun and shine bright. We will all feel so much better for the next 6 months and you'll save money on supplements.

Maddie Reynolds, Yoga and Pilates Teacher
<https://www.littlenamayogi.com/>

wildlife notes

“In all things of nature, there is something of the marvellous” – Aristotle

Magnificent, majestic, mesmerising – words don’t truly describe how good May is for wildlife. Everywhere you look, there is something happening from the early morning dawn chorus to the incoming of migrants and that’s just the birds. Roadside verges and grasslands will be blossoming with wildflowers, bringing nectar sources for our insects and new life will be born across the mammal kingdom. And it’s not just about the warblers and the red champions – here are a few other things you may well come across during Magical May!



Holly Blue (*above*) is one of the first spring butterflies to show after the Peacocks, Commas and Small Tortoiseshells. Their numbers peak in May and they can be seen in our gardens, flying above bushes. The undersides are pale blue with small black spots. The larvae will feed on flower buds, berries and leaves of holly in the spring and then during the second generation, on ivy, in late summer. A true gem of a butterfly.

Carrying on the lepidoptera theme, May will see the first adult Elephant Hawkmoths (*below*) emerge, flying from dusk and attracted to light sources. They can be found resting during the daytime on honeysuckle and other tubular flowers. They are not confined to gardens, liking rough grasslands, waste grounds and woodlands – anywhere where the caterpillar foodplant is present (willow-herb). It is a medium-sized hawkmoth, olive-green, with pink bars on the wings and body. It gets its name from the caterpillar looking like an elephant’s trunk. Keep your eyes peeled from July onwards for these – they are a sight to behold.



The May Bug, or Cockchafer (*opposite, top*) as it’s more commonly known, is a real beast of a scarab beetle. The larvae develop underground over several years, feeding on roots of plants until they emerge, sometimes

wildlife notes



in huge numbers. You can be quietly enjoying a glass of vino outside during a barmy May evening and suddenly ... beetles everywhere. They survive as adults for up to 6 weeks, feeding and looking for a mate. They have fanned antennae

which allows them to detect food sources and potential suitors. Males have seven ‘feathers’, the females six. Any moth enthusiast will no doubt have experienced a trap full of these – they are attracted to light sources.

The first bumblebees emerge during early spring, as the queens look for potential nest sites after hibernation. They lay their first eggs to produce workers (all female) who will then look after the hive and tend to the growing larvae. Males are born later in the season, with the sole purpose of mating with other queens – they are basically booted out of the nest. There are 24



species of bumblebee in the UK, with Red-tailed (*above*) active from March onwards. They have a medium length tongue, feeding on dandelions, lavenders and knapweeds. One of my favourites.



Finally, a mention for a wildflower whose name ties in with a migratory bird. Cuckoo flower or Lady’s Smock will start to flower in April, but May is when it’s at its finest. Named, when flowering tied in with returning Cuckoos, it is a beautiful flower, growing in clusters along woodland rides and damp meadows. The real joy for me is that as soon as it appears, you know that Orange Tip butterflies are not far behind (*above*). Magical May indeed!

David Lewis, NTS Ranger Team, St. Abb’s Head NNR

gardening notes

Primroses

One of the best signs that spring is here is the appearance of our native primroses. These pale yellow wild flowers may not be as bright and showy as daffodils but I think they are far more beautiful. The name primrose comes from the earlier name of 'prima rosa' meaning the first rose and that sums them up completely.

The primroses found growing wild in Britain are usually yellow but naturally occurring pinkish forms are common too. There are much brighter and more colourful versions of the primrose found in other countries and these have been used to develop a whole range of coloured hybrids ranging from bright red to blue.



The term 'Primula' refers to the whole genus of these plants including the primrose as well as cowslips and oxslips. There is also a naturally occurring hybrid between the primrose and the cowslip and this is what we call a polyanthus primrose or false oxslip. These are the source of all those glorious polyanthus plants found in our garden centres

Primrose flowers have five notched petals on short stems and are an excellent source of food for many insects especially bees and butterflies. An interesting fact is that the flowers come in two different forms.

One, called the 'pin' form has a prominent stigma on a long style to catch the pollen and fertilise the ovule in the ovary. This is called the pin form because the top pokes out of the centre of the flower like a little pin head.

The other form, the 'thrum' form has stamens to produce the pollen and these are higher up allowing the pollen to be easily picked up. This sys-



gardening notes

tem prevents the plant from fertilising itself and encourages a mixing of genetic material.

The flowers not only provide food for insects but also for small mammals such as mice, and birds especially bullfinches. Small deer are also known to eat the flowers.

Spring may be here but the chance of frost is still here too. So don't take the risk of planting out your bedding plants yet and be sure to harden them off before you do so. Plant up your hanging baskets but keep them in the greenhouse or shed for a few weeks yet. Best still, come to the Ayton Gardening Society Plant Sale and coffee morning on Saturday 16th May.

Your lawn will be enjoying the warmth and will be needing cutting. But you could decide to take a break from mowing it to encourage the growth of nectar-rich plants such as clover. Even a small area left 'wild' can help the wildlife and will look amazing if tended carefully.

Tidy up your spring bulbs which have finished flowering but don't cut back the foliage since it is needed to provide the energy needed for next year's bulbs to flower. Let the foliage die back naturally and add fertiliser around the clumps.

There are lots of seeds still to be sown in the greenhouse and masses to direct sow in the veg patch. Beetroot, brassicas, chard and pak choi to name but a few. Net them early on to prevent cabbage-white butterflies laying their eggs on the leaves. Carrots too but cover them with environmental mesh to prevent carrot-fly attack. Parsnips and peas can be sown outside now as can most herbs.

Plant out young brassica and leek plants to their final positions.

Earth up early potatoes and if you haven't planted all your potatoes yet you need to get a move on!



Caroline Lathe
(Ayton Gardening Society)



splash

Splash

NATURE FOR WELLBEING GROUP

Make the most of the health-giving properties of the amazing high quality natural environment that we have in & around Eyemouth. Connect with nature in the company of like-minded people.

We will go for a gentle stroll, practice mindfulness and generally spend time in nature in all but the worst weather so please dress accordingly.

Meet in the Masons' Hall at 1.30pm on Wednesdays

Splash

Womens Group

May Activities

Our Women's Group in Eyemouth meets every Tuesday at Masons Hall 1pm-3pm.

Weekly activities are shaped by the women who attend. New faces are always welcome - drop in anytime or email susie@eyemouth.org for more information.

Entry













Don't feed the gulls
Caring means not sharing

Human food is bad for gulls and feeding encourages them to associate people with food. Help gulls and your local community - caring means not sharing.





Gull-proof your bins
Help gulls find better food elsewhere

Gulls are attracted to food waste, but human food is bad for them and encourages gulls to stick around. Help gulls and your community - avoid sharing and secure your bins.



Spring is here and the wildlife is busy around Berwickshire Marine Reserve. Birds - including our local gulls - are entering their breeding season and we will be seeing lots of activity over the next few months.

This year we are teaming up with NatureScot to deliver a Gull engagement project in Eyemouth and the wider reserve area.

Gulls are an iconic coastal species and an important part of the ecosystem and we are keen to engage with you, the local community, in discussions about how we live alongside them.

Not feeding the gulls and gull-proofing our bins are some of the important and easy steps we can all take to avoid conflict with our feathered friends.

We have created a survey to gather opinions on what you think and feel about our gulls. If you could spare a few minutes to fill this in it would be very helpful shape solutions and plan for the Summer. Scan the QR code below or visit our website.

There will be more for us to share over the next few weeks and months, with drop-in events, citizen science surveys and more. We are really looking forward to working with the community. Keep an eye on our website and social media for updates!







AYTON
Gardening Society

invite you to a

Coffee Morning Plant & Cake Sale



Saturday 16th May
10–12noon
The Ayton Community Hall

in aid of

THE AYTON SHOW

The Ayton Show will be held on Saturday 5th September 2026

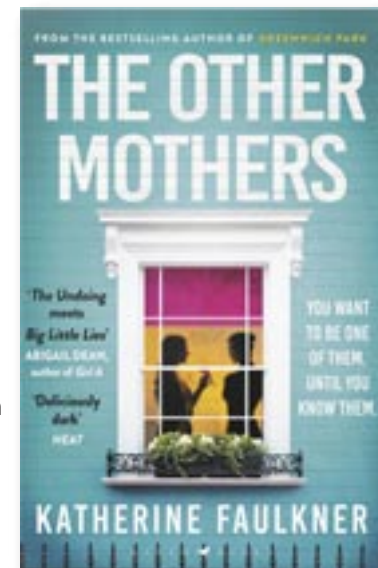
book news

Library opening times:

Monday 10am–1pm, 2–5pm, Thursday 10am–1pm, Friday 10am–1pm, 2–5pm.

The Other Mothers by Katherine Faulkner

Tash is a new mum and investigative journalist and is searching for a story to launch her freelance career. But she has also been searching for something else. New friends to help her navigate motherhood. She sees them at her son's new playgroup. The other mothers. The sleek, the sophisticated, the successful mothers. The women she wants to be. And then one day they welcome her into their circle and Tash discovers the kind of life she has always dreamt of: their elegant London townhouses a far cry from her cramped basement flat and endless bills. These families seem to have everything. But they also have their secrets. And it's soon clear that not everyone at the playgroup can be trusted.



Tash is approached by a woman to investigate what actually happened to her daughter, whose death was recorded as an 'open verdict'. Tash reluctantly agrees to see if she can find out. She soon receives anonymous messages telling her stop digging.

The investigation soon gets tangled up in her own life. Are her new mum friends as they seem or are they hiding something about what really happened?

Available at Eyemouth Library

Library News

Hearing aid clinic on Friday 15th May, 10am–12pm

Drop in Lego on Fridays 8th and 22nd May, 2–4pm

Walking Bookgroup on Tuesday 12th May at 2pm

Food is music to the body, music is food to the heart

FREE ENTRY

Kirk Square FAIR Eyemouth
- Local Food & Drink - Crafts - Heritage - Music

Local Food & Drink — Local craft & Gift Stalls

Live Music — children's activities and face painting

Raffle — Event Fundraising Fun! — cookery demonstrations

+ MUCH MORE

Saturday 6th June
11.00am to 4.00pm
Kirk Square, Eyemouth

Splash FIND US ON   Thanks to our sponsors 

22 – 24 May 2026

Art Exhibition & Sale

Showcasing new works from **Grantshouse Art Group**



Coldingham Village Hall

Friday 22 May by invitation
Saturday 23 – Sunday 24 May 10am–4pm
free entry • donations on the door

history

Eyemouth's First Fort

The headland called 'The Fort Point' has stood on the north-western edge of Eyemouth's Roadstead, guarding the bay and providing shelter for boats and ships for ever. Its name comes from the two fortifications that were built there in 1547



and 1557. All that remains of these forts seems unimportant now – a few grassy covered mounds and deep ditches and crumbling cliffs. No signs of high stone walls, turrets or drawbridges. But the history of the forts, although short, is impressive.

The first fort was built by the English in 1547 and lasted only a few years. It was during the period called 'The Rough Wooing'. Henry VIII decided that Scotland should agree to the marriage of his son, Edward, to the infant Mary who had succeeded to the throne of Scotland after the death of her father, James V. The Scottish Parliament refused. They did not trust Henry, even though his sister, Margaret Tudor, had married James IV and was Mary's grandmother.



Henry ordered punishing invasions of Scotland and appointed Somerset, Earl of Hertford (*left*), to carry them out. Towns were burned, inhabitants murdered, abbeys ransacked – all to wear down Scottish resistance to the marriage. Somerset won several battles but knew he could only keep control of southern Scotland by building permanent garrisons.

In 1547, not long after Henry VIII died, Somerset and Robert Lee, an expert builder of fortifications, especially the star shaped bastion 'trace italienne', rode into Eyemouth. They decided immediately that they'd found an excellent location for a fort: a virgin headland with steep cliffs, a sheltered bay for landing supplies and reinforcements, and only a few miles north of the English port of Berwick.

The headland was a peninsula with sea on three sides and so would

history



only need to be heavily fortified on one side. Lee's design was for a deep ditch to be dug across the neck of the headland with a massive single bastion behind. It was arrow shaped in the trace italienne style and flanked by earthen curtain walls, faced with stone, that extended to the cliff edge. The stone came from Dunglass and the timber from Coldingham Priory. By January of 1548 the fort was "very strong against attack" and had cost £1,908.

The Scottish Parliament still refused to agree to Mary's betrothal to Edward, now Edward VI, but the fighting went on. The main outcome of the Rough Wooing was, in fact, the opposite to what was intended. It strengthened Scotland's Auld Alliance with France. In 1548 five-year-old Mary was sent to the French court for her own safety. She was later betrothed to Francis, heir to King Henry II of France, and in 1559 became Queen of France for a short time until her husband died in 1560.

Eyemouth fort had a relatively peaceful time for a couple of years. It had a modest garrison with some ordnance. Between September 1548 and May 1550 only 399 men in total served there. Battles with the English were being fought further north. French troops arrived to help the Scots and with Mary now betrothed there seemed little point the English continuing when the cost of supplying armies far from home was expensive. The Treaty of Boulogne between the English, Scottish and French was negotiated in 1550 and when Border grievances were settled, with the Treaty of Norham in 1551, one of the conditions was that artillery was to be removed from Eyemouth fort and the fort was to be demolished. Soil from the curtain walls was to be used to fill up the ditch in front of the fort and locals spirited away some of the stone but little else was destroyed.

But the peace didn't last. By 1557 a second fort was being built on Eyemouth's headland!

To be continued...

from the archives

RNLI plans for early lifeboat

Eyemouth's First Lifeboat and the Man who Helped Make it Possible

2026 marks the 150th anniversary of the launch of Eyemouth's first lifeboat. Why was a lifeboat needed and who was the man whose legacy made this possible?

The Illustrated Berwick Journal tells us that, in 1876,

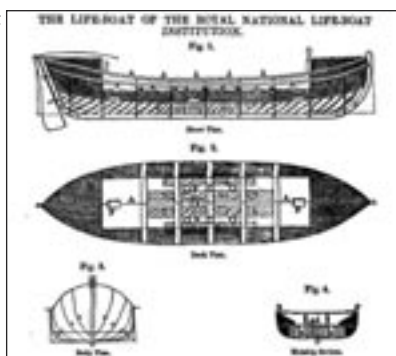
Eyemouth was a fishing village with a population of about 2,400, nearly all of whom are dependent upon the harvest of the sea for their daily bread. In wintry storms the Berwickshire coast, bluff and rocky, invariably suffers severely, and ill-luck the boat that finds itself exposed to the fury of the sea at such a time.

Eyemouth had 40 deep-sea boats, with crews ranging from 6–8 men, and a further 70 herring boats. The fishing industry was forecast to expand with proposed harbour improvements. Fishing vessels from other ports operated off Eyemouth and commercial vessels plied their trade along the coast.

In 1875, the RNLI sent Assistant Inspector of Lifeboats, Captain Gray-Jones, to investigate the establishment of a lifeboat station. Incidents in the early 1870s helped to make the case. In November 1875 in a severe gale, a yawl was upset at the harbour entrance and its crew had to remain in the water, in freezing conditions, before help came. A ship was also stranded. A public meeting was held in the Town Hall in late November and it was reported that

The narrow escape of the crews of several fishing boats in the recent storm and inadequate means at hand for rendering assistance by fishermen in case of wreck, directed the attention of a number of gentlemen in the town to the matter of a lifeboat.

On the recommendation of Captain Gray-Jones, the RNLI agreed to a lifeboat establishment at Eyemouth. Fishermen agreed to subscribe 10 shillings (50p) each and the RNLI and 'local gentlemen' agreed to contribute



from the archives

The 'second' James and Rachel Grindlay. (On station 1888–1901.)

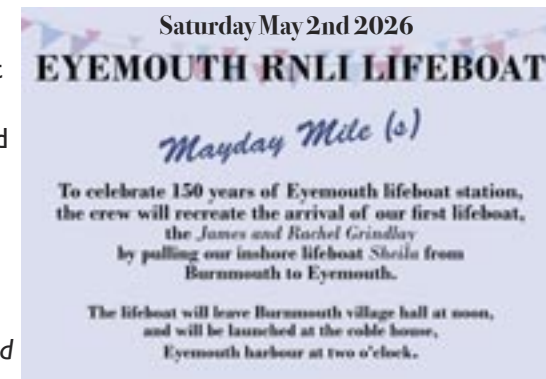
funds. In order to keep the lifeboat and to pay for quarterly exercises, further subscriptions were required from fishermen.

The RNLI was (and still is) funded by voluntary contributions, donations and legacies. On the death of Thomas Grindlay in Edinburgh in 1873 his will stated a sum of £1,000 (£150,000 today), be made with the wish that "the money be expended in the purchase of two lifeboats for the benefit of the Firth of Forth or any other part of Scotland, the boats to be called *The Rachel Grindlay* and *The James Grindlay*". It was 'ambitious' to expect the legacy to cover the cost of two boats and gear, therefore the decision was taken to provide one boat for Eyemouth, and it was to be called *The James and Rachel Grindlay*, after Thomas' parents. In his will Thomas was described as "the only son of the now deceased James Grindlay, formerly commander of Her Majesty's Revenue Cutter, *Princess Royal*". He left the remainder of his estate (£6 million today) to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

Thomas was clearly a very wealthy man. Census records from 1871 tell us that he had 3 servants and income from dividends and investments. On the 12 April 1871, aged 63, he married his neighbour Ella Semple Young, aged 50. Thomas died less than two years after his marriage, after a long-term illness. It was to be Thomas' widow, Ella, supported by her brother, who launched the lifeboat on 10 October 1876.

Thomas can rightly be regarded as the 'Father of the Eyemouth Lifeboat' and no doubt 'looks down' with pride on the brave men and women who crew our lifeboat.

David Littlewood



TEEN TALKS: BEAT EXAM STRESS!



Exam season can feel overwhelming, but here's the truth: you've got this! The key is starting early. Don't leave revision until the last minute—cramming the night before might seem like a quick fix, but your brain simply can't retain that much information in one go. Studies show that last-minute panic studying actually increases stress and reduces recall during exams. Instead, find a revision method that works for YOU. Some people love flashcards, others prefer mind maps, and some learn best by teaching concepts to friends or family. There's no one-size-fits-all approach, so experiment until you discover what clicks. The magic formula? Little and often. Short, focused study sessions spread over weeks beat marathon cramming sessions every single time.



You've Got This!

"Focus on effort, not perfection. Trying to be perfect creates unnecessary pressure. Just aim to do your best—you've got this!"



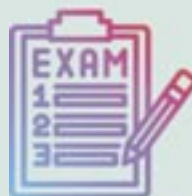
Your body needs fuel to perform at its best! Make sure you're eating properly—grab some brain-boosting snacks like nuts, fruit, and whole grains instead of living on energy drinks and crisps. Exercise is equally important; even a quick walk or dance session releases stress and helps you focus better when you return to your books. Taking regular breaks isn't slacking—it's essential! Try the Pomodoro technique: study for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break. Your brain will thank you.



Create a realistic study plan that actually works for your life. Be honest about how much time you have and don't overload yourself. And whatever you do, don't sacrifice sleep! Pulling all-nighters might seem productive, but tired brains don't retain information well. Aim for 8-9 hours of sleep—your memory consolidates while you rest.



If you're feeling overwhelmed, please talk to someone. Whether it's a parent, teacher, friend, or school counsellor, sharing your worries helps lighten the load. Remember, you're definitely not alone in feeling stressed—literally thousands of other teens are going through exactly the same thing right now!



Finally, focus on effort, not perfection. Trying to be perfect creates unnecessary pressure that actually makes everything harder. Just aim to do your best—that's genuinely all anyone can ask of you. Your worth isn't determined by exam grades. You've prepared, you've worked hard, and you've got this!





Rotary Ramblings

We live in a wonderful part of the world and we have a huge number of very talented young people in our midst, with whom Rotary Eyemouth has the privilege of working, not least when our schools enter our regular Youth Competitions.

This year pupils from all five East Berwickshire Primary Schools and Eyemouth High School took part in our Rotary Young Artist competition.



Ayla (Ayton PS)

The theme 'Happiness in Nature', proving once again that our young people's imagination knows no bounds. A huge challenge was created for the judges of the local round, faced with 250 entries to whittle down to a top three in two age groups, sadly we had no Senior entries this year.

Artists Jen Mole, Trevor Loftus and Rotarian John Nowak proved to be up to the challenge and selected, in the Junior group, Ayla (Ayton PS), Amelia (Reston PS) and Elina (Eyemouth PS) as the top three to go forward to the South of Scotland round.

For the Intermediates Eyemouth High provided, Lily, Nadine and Abigail to go forward. The judges noting the high quality of the work overall also

deemed that six young people would be highly commended for their skills: Dillon, Ffion and Emma in the Junior section and Wren, Hugh and Darla in the Intermediate.



Amelia (Reston PS)

The following week local artists Joanna Payne and Linda Foster joined John Nowak, to judge the work from Rotary clubs across Scotland South. Artwork from Annan to Fort William, from Eyemouth to South Queensferry and all points in between, was reviewed, critiqued, compared and, I'll be kind, discussed. (Shhh, what I mean is, quite strongly debated.) Three pieces were

selected to go to the National Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland final, to be judged in May.

The fabulous news for us in Eyemouth is that the Junior winner in this round was judged to be Elina from Eyemouth Primary, the Intermediate winner was Lily from Eyemouth High School, with the Senior going to Sophia from Jedburgh Grammar Campus.

What a great achievement for Borders Schools!

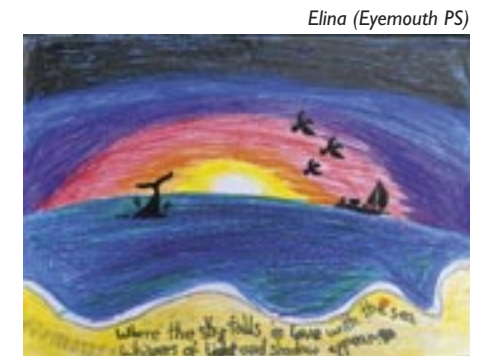


Intermediate 1st, 2nd, 3rd & Highly Commended Eyemouth High

Jim Hettrick



Lily (Eyemouth HS)



Elina (Eyemouth PS)

abi & kathy



What's a Bus?

Easter has come and gone. It's still windy so Abi and Kathy haven't braved the wind and are sitting in a café with their mugs of steaming coffee.

Abi: Well that's Easter over. Did you get to see your family? How were the buses?

Kathy: It was lovely to see the family but really, who has organised the buses? To get to Edinburgh now you have to get a bus to Dunbar and then change and wait for the Edinburgh bus. To get home you have to do it in reverse. The new bus to Dunbar doesn't even go the same route as the old one either.

Abi: Hang on, are you are telling me we no longer have a direct bus route to Edinburgh? But I thought we were a 'destination' as we have that bike on the harbour and were encouraging people to come and visit?

Kathy: Yes, we no longer have a direct bus to Edinburgh. It's crazy! How on earth do people get to work in the morning, let alone the tourists who come by bus to Eyemouth? I've used the bus for years and it's been really handy getting it up to Town. Now it's a nightmare.

Abi: You thought about using the train instead?

Kathy: I did but it just didn't work for me. Thankfully I didn't have to go early so at least the shops were open in Dunbar to get a coffee. I'm dreading having to go early in the morning.

Abi: I really don't know what's happening with the World! In our small corner of it, with the bus situation, the toilets in the Coop car park being vandalised all the time – let alone what the hell is going on with the World with USA and Iran. It's all frustrating me.

Kathy: It really is a scary time. Do you know that I now only watch the news headlines? I can't watch the full news as I find myself yelling at it all the time.

With that they both took a bite of their scones and contemplated The World.

abundant borders



We are delighted to welcome Koren and Angela to the Abundant Borders team as Green Spaces and Wellbeing Officer and Wellbeing in Green Spaces Officer respectively. Koren and Angela will be looking to design activities outside of our traditional food-growing in order to allow a wider range of people to benefit from our community spaces across the Scottish Borders, take part in activities that improve wellbeing, increase confidence, and strengthen social connection. We would like to thank the Volunteer Support Fund and the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for supporting these appointments. Our new team assembled for the first time in the Hawick garden in March to begin planning for an exciting year ahead. From left to right: Pete, Koren, Carys, Andrew (one of our fantastic Hawick volunteers), Angela and Bill. Even the sun put in an appearance!





John Lamont MP 

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Working hard for the Borders, all year round

The costs of this publication have been met out of parliamentary resources.

the witches of eyemouth

The Witches of Eyemouth

On Friday 19 January 1629 six men attacked Marion Hardie in Eyemouth dungeon. They took turns to punch, beat and stab her, leaving her bleeding and unconscious. One of the assailants, Duncan Kendla, was the prison jailer. Marion died within a few days.



Her crime? She was a suspected witch. But the mob attack was unusual. Marion ought to have had a proper trial in an *ad hoc* court in Eyemouth kirk. But the mood of the village was likely one of fear and panic. What if Marion implicated others at her trial? Maybe she had already named accomplices during sleep-deprived torture that Duncan Kendla would have heard.

Small though it was, Eyemouth was already notorious for witch hunts. Several women had been executed in the 1590s, others marked as probable witches. In 1624 Isobel Falconer, long suspected of sorcery, was strangled and then torched on a pyre possibly at the Wellbraes.

Three co-accused, including her own husband, walked free.

But over the next five years strange things happened in Eyemouth. The mill, vital to the village, burned down. A ship sank off the bay and the whole crew drowned. A man was found murdered on the shore. Infants perished, horses went lame, cattle died in the fields. Was all of this unconnected, or the work of the devil? When Marion Hardie was arrested in early 1629 by the Eyemouth minister Rev John Home, folk were nervous of the trial to come. They took matters into their own hands.

But the lynching of Marion Hardie was only the start of a year of madness. More than a dozen Eyemouth women were brought to trial across 1629, and many delivered confessions under torture like this from Christine Wilson:

She had copulated with the devil. The devil called her to a meeting in Eyemouth with Marion Hardie and others and they burned Eyemouth mill.



the witches of eyemouth



The three who had escaped with their lives when Isobel Falconer was executed are grabbed, tried and killed along with at least ten others. Tied to the same stake, strangled and then burned in front of the entire population of Eyemouth.

The panic, the trials, the killings went on across the whole of 1629. But it didn't end there. In late 1633 six more women were arrested. Five interrogated, put on trial and most, if not all, executed. But not Betty Bathgate. Her husband had enough money to get her trial moved to Edinburgh where, in spite of facing the same charges as those who had been burned in Eyemouth, Betty was acquitted. Back in Berwickshire two men committed suicide in Eyemouth dungeon. They took their own lives rather than face the horror of burning.

More panics follow. In 1649 five women are seized. Helen Taylor confesses not only to be a follower of the devil, but to have changed her shape into that of a puppy, and that others in her coven likewise morphed into beasts. All are tried, convicted and killed. This too was the fate of 11 of 12 women who are hunted down as witches in late 1661 and early 1662.

Across the 17th century at least 28 Eyemouth women (and a few men) were accused of witchcraft, though that number is almost certainly higher, probably much higher. An astonishing figure given the population of Eyemouth was no more than 200–300 at this time.

A witch once burned was all but erased from history. Their ashes thrown to the four winds or dumped in the north sea. No headstone to mark their passing, no note to history even of their names. But they lived here in Eyemouth and they died here...in a most brutal way.

Peter Aitchison





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Charity No SCO 31477

The Wrecks of Scapa Flow – ‘Rust Never Sleeps’

The guest speaker at our Open Meeting in April was ‘technical wizard’ Chris Rowland. Chris is a professor at Dundee University where he leads the 3D Visualisation Research Lab (3DVisLab) and his projects are primarily focussed on investigating new applications of 3D visualisation methodologies. His fascinating talk to the group concentrated on the use of 3D digital imaging for surveying and producing high-resolution imaging of the wrecks of battleships in Scapa Flow, Orkney. The group were fascinated by the images produced by Chris and his team and we were all astonished by the amount of detail to be seen.



Chris and his team use a combination of multibeam sonar and photogrammetry to produce incredibly detailed digital modelling of the shipwrecks in Scapa Flow for the MoD, including that of the protected wreck and war grave, the *Royal Oak*. You can view the accompanying documentary at <https://vimeo.com/460447596>. Chris explained that many of the First and Second World War wrecks are rapidly deteriorating and are potentially hazardous due to the oil and munitions still left on board. The surveying and mapping of the wrecks records the speed of deterioration and provides fresh insight into the history of these great ships.

This talk was the final talk in this session but we will be back in October with more fascination talks which are open and free to members and non-members alike.

If you are interested in joining us you can find out more at <https://eastberwickshire.u3asite.uk/> or join us at our Enrolment Day on September 9th, 2–4pm in the Eyemouth Community Centre.

**Dissent, Disagreement and Disease in
19th Century Eyemouth:**
the impact on the town of population growth and changing social
and religious attitudes.

Eyemouth Museum
3rd April—31st October 2026
Open Monday - Sunday 11am - 4pm
Museum admission charges apply

EYEMOUTH VARIETY GROUP AND
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