



# Community Connections

North Berwick Coastal

March 2021

The daffodil is the birth flower of March.

To our members and volunteers having a birthday this month, we wish you a very

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**



Rainbows are often seen as signs of hope and promise.

Photo by Robina Brown

West Beach North Berwick

## Introducing our new Befriending Co-ordinator

Thanks to East Lothian Council's One Council Funding, we have been lucky to be able to recruit a part-time worker to help coordinate the befriending project within Community Connections, which started up last spring in re-

sponse to the pandemic. We are delighted to introduce you to Lisa Brownlie, who will be working eight hours split between Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Lisa has lots of relevant experience, from her counselling skills to her

work with local families and older folk. Over the next few weeks, Lisa will be getting to know our volunteers and members, finding out all the ways we can improve our support, and reach out to gain more potential referrals.

Hi, I'm Lisa Brownlie, the new Befriending Coordinator. I'm really excited to start this new role and looking forward to meeting you all and working alongside Carol.

Here's a wee bit about me! I am a qualified Children and Young People's Counsellor, and I support children age 5 - 18. More recently, I have been running groups for mums and babies, supporting them through chat, singing nursery rhymes, reading stories and having fun!

My previous experience also includes supporting vulnerable families and older people, through 1:1 support, helping older people in their home and organising activities for an organisation working with people who have a head injury.

I am a mum of two, a 6-year-old and a 14-year-old, which certainly keeps me busy! I really enjoy sea swimming and love singing in the Abbey Gospel Choir. I have close links with North Berwick, attended school here and have lived in the town for more than 30 years.



*North Berwick Community Connections is a registered Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) (SC 050505)*

## Snow days by Emma Papakyriakou



Children and parents alike played in the perfect powder snow during February break. What a difference from the wind, heavy rain and home schooling the weeks before.

The beautiful blue sky, the white capped islands and the sound of joy in the air. Even the sea swimmers, myself included, joyfully danced over snow covered sand and plunged into the bracing sea (lowest sea temp. reading 4.6 degrees).

### The Snowdrop Fairy by Cicely May Barker

*Deep sleeps the Winter,  
Cold, wet, and grey;  
Surely all the world is dead;  
Spring is far away.  
Wait! the world shall waken;  
It is not dead, for lo,  
The Fair Maids of February  
Stand in the snow!*

*(as cited in Flower Fairies of Winter 1923)*



Snowdrops at Yellowcraig

### North Berwick in Bloom by Libby Morris

You might remember Cicely Mary Barker's books of Flower Fairies which were published in 1923 with beautiful drawings and poems of flower fairies for each season of the year. The snowdrop fairy is one of the winter fairies, although its poem is rather sombre.

Traditionally, Snowdrops flower at Candlemas which falls on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. There are lots of legends associated with them and they have come to symbolize hope as they are one of the first flowers to appear after the snows of winter. Their Latin name is *Galanthus nivalis*, which means 'milk flower of the snow'. The 'drop' refers to the positions of the flowers which hang their heads to keep their pollen dry in order to attract the winter insects.

Snowdrop bulbs are a source of the drug Galantamine which has been trialed as a cure for Dementia but unfortunately it has not been successful and is no longer used as a treatment. There are lots of places to see snowdrops in North Berwick, the banks of the Glen are carpeted with them and they pop up in lots of locations in the Lodge. You should never dig up wildflowers obviously, but snowdrops are best transplanted 'in the green' which means that they grow best when clumps of plants are lifted and divided while they are still growing. Dried up snowdrop bulbs are unlikely to grow successfully.

Another beautiful plant is the houseplant *Amaryllis* which is from the same botanical family as the

Snowdrop. Lots of people give these as presents at Christmas as they are incredibly easy to grow and many will be flowering now. I bought one in a box to take to my grandchildren but sadly, like many people, my trip had to be cancelled and I put the box away. I was astonished to see that after a few weeks the plant was trying to escape from inside the box, so I took it out into the light and gave it some water. It has now produced an amazing spike of several flowers and is on to its second! It's lovely to have a plant that grows away quite happily despite not getting much attention, particularly one that produces such amazing results so effortlessly.

## Spring: a season of new beginnings? By Deborah Ritchie

The astronomical spring in the northern hemisphere is between March 21<sup>st</sup> and June 21<sup>st</sup>. But the meteorological spring will always start on March 1<sup>st</sup> and end on 31<sup>st</sup> of May. The astronomical spring depends upon whether you consider the Earth's orbit in relation to the sun and the meteorological spring is based on the Gregorian calendar. For me it is when the spring bulbs start to flower after the snowdrops and the days are longer. In 2020 we had the sunniest UK spring on record with 626 hours beating the previous high of 555 hours in 1948, according to the Independent (9<sup>th</sup> June 2020).

Spring is also considered a time for new beginnings, growth, renewal and transformation. I have found some lovely quotes for spring that are both inspirational and funny.

Robin Williams said, "*Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'*" And after this long COVID winter, I think we are ready for the roaring twenties to begin again!

Pablo Neruda's quote seems apt for us when most have been living on the reserves in our emotional tanks over the winter. He says, "*You can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep spring from*

*coming.*" So even though we probably feel a bit jaded and weary, there is hope and spring will come.

I love Lilly Pulitzer's quote, "*Despite the forecast, live like it's Spring.*" Such a tonic as I sit writing this with the snow outside my window and remember the biting wind of my walk this morning.

Lady Bird Johnson says of spring, "*Where flowers bloom, so does hope,*" and I need to remember the importance of hope. Hope reminds me to expect with confidence that things will change and this too shall pass. A state of mind that can be hard to achieve, but being able

to see the light despite the darkness is hope.

You may remember last March we had a spring in our step as life was paused and the reset button was pushed. And many of us were delighted for the pause and for the time to step out of the routine. My yellow wellies gave me such delight as I danced along the shoreline. I was absorbed in playing and poking through rock pools. Striding along with nowhere to be. Punch drunk on my sixty-seven years and happy that I was still touching my toes and sorting seashells.

Each day over the last year it has been the same walk, same place, same beach, same time, same good mornings. It reassures and soothes me. Anticipation is still there when I emerge through our wooded Glen to the freshly painted vista of the sea. With relief it is still there. My beach is a changing vista of grey metal waves as the storms roll in. White crests and startling blue as the sun shines through. Cold water swims and warm summer bathes. So as spring approaches, I am hoping for lots more yellow welly days.



### Hints of Spring by Liz Martin

Bunty enjoying the snow while hints of Spring and colours pop through the snow.



## SCONEntines Day Celebration

### Discussing the benefits of connecting online:

*Given current restrictions you can catch up with more people at one time.*

*FaceTiming family is not the same as having them near you but it is wonderful to keep in touch, especially with family far away.*

*Going to weekly church services and prayer.*

*Playing games like Scrabble, Charades and quizzes with family and friends*

*Listening to audio-books, podcasts, radio and music for free on BBC Sounds [www.bbc.co.uk/sounds](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds)*



The first Virtual Coffee Connections took place on 15th February.

Carol did her best to make sure everyone who was planning to join in could get into Zoom, and talked to a few on the phone to help them take the couple of steps to join in.

The catch up was a lovely way to come to-

gether and chat over a brew, with the most wonderful sweet treats made by volunteers, Isobel and Dorothy.

Some in attendance had not seen one another since Scone Café, so it was a welcomed reunion.

We talked about activities and hobbies we had been enjoying and any-

thing new we had taken up.

There was certainly a feeling it had been a success and that there should be more in the future, along with the usual buddy walks and talks.

If you would like to come to the next one, please just let us know. Contact details on page 10.

**One step at a time to online connections** - We know going online is no replacement for being with others, in person and for some the thought of using a tablet or smart phone, and actually accessing the activity or event you want, can seem really daunting. It is understandable that not everyone wants to be online and that is ok too. We can help you find a solution to build online connections if that is something you would like to do.

Step one...would being online help you feel more connected e.g. to family, friends, church services, Community Connections Virtual Coffee meet or your interests and hobbies? Would you like to try?

Step two...If you speak to us about what you might like to do online we can keep it simple and help you access it or if you need more help we can link you up with the wonderful AbilityNet <https://abilitynet.org.uk/> (free IT support at home—helpline 0800 048 7642 or [enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk) )

Step three...the technical bit. Do you have access to the internet, a tablet, smart phone or laptop? If not, would you be happy to access these?

Step 4... trial and error. Accessing anything online is an ongoing learning curve for everyone; the more we do it, the more familiar it become.

## Digital Adventures by Carol Stobie

It's my first Zoomiversary soon – a year since my first-ever hosting of an online meeting with my Community Connections managers, to safely discuss our response to the pandemic.

I'd Skyped for Christmas chats with Ottawa relatives, but this was a whole new challenge. I learnt on the hoof, like everyone else, and am still prone to clanging errors - inadvertently leaving someone in the waiting room of despair, sending the wrong link, forgetting to mute (or unmute), falling out of my own meeting with wobbly Wi-Fi.

I'll always prefer a warm gathering over coffee and biscuits to screen-talking. But it's enabled connection with folk who couldn't otherwise meet, whether for their safety or because they live too far away.

Over that year, I've experienced many a managerial

meeting, AGMs and volunteer get-togethers, but also delighted in virtual birthday parties, Burns suppers, Transatlantic charades and other adapted old-school board games (never got into computer games), Zumba with local legend Ruth, choir singing with Gareth Malone, Yoga classes, church services, book group (Toni in the Cairngorms has now re-joined us!), a Booker Festival chat between Nicola Sturgeon and book Prize Winner Bernardine Evaristo, Celtic connections folk concerts, Lyceum Christmas tales filmed in the theatre, and much more. Quizzes are still a lifesaver, making up and exchanging ever-quirkier weekly questions with another local family. The folk we'd normally gather with for a snowy cottage Hogmanay each created quiz rounds to share instead. Our Scottish and Canadian clan inaugurated a family trivia quiz on New Year's Day.

Many of you have embarked on similar adventures, surprising yourselves. So, we've launched our first-ever Members' Zoom, inaugurating 'Sconentine's Day' to celebrate the love and friendship across Community Connections. Our first was an absolute joy, despite inevitable wee tech glitches! Hope to see you there next time.

It only takes a Wi-Fi connection, a device and the willingness to give it a try. What have we got to lose?



## Swamped by emails? Here's a useful tip

Robert Burgon, Vice-Chair, Community Connections

Emails can be great - they provide an instant way of communicating which can be really valuable. However, I know that many people, myself included, can find emails irritating. It is all too easy to be swamped or overwhelmed by them. I know that this means that some folk don't look at their email account too often - the end result being that when we do open the Inbox, we find that it contains many more messages than we can really deal with.

I receive large numbers of

marketing emails from companies which are anxious to sell me their products. I may well have bought something from them in the past but don't need to receive multiple emails offering other products. Of course, it is easy to delete emails without reading them, but there is another, better, way of dealing with the problem.

My helpful tip is to look at the bottom of emails which you feel you don't really need to receive for a little button or link called

"Unsubscribe". Simply click on that and follow any instructions. You should find that you stop receiving these unwanted emails. In many cases this will happen immediately and in others you may have to wait for a few days.

I started 2021 by doing this and, every day so far, I have been able to reduce the number of unwanted messages. It is a good feeling and I am much happier looking at my emails now. Why don't you give it a try?

## March Wildlife Watch by Ruth Fraser



I have fallen in love with North Berwick since moving here almost 2 years ago. My family moved around while I was young, and I've been lucky to live in different places but moving here felt like coming home as soon as I arrived! North Berwick is an easy place to fall in love with and that, combined with an ancestral connection (my Dad's Great Grandfather lived and worked in North Berwick, he blasted out the rocks for the outdoor pool) gave an instant sense of home. It is now where I am raising my two children, Anna (9 years) and Jake (6 years old) with my husband Matt.

My background is in Zoology. I studied grey seals for my final dissertation and ever since graduating I've wanted to share my love of the natural world. I held different environmental education roles until landing my dream job as an Education Officer for the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. It was a position I enjoyed for 13 years before leaving to support my children with the move to North Berwick, and throughout the following COVID year. My passions involve anything which means I'm out in nature, a run along the beach, a swim in the sea or a paddleboard along the coast.

**Get snapping:** please send any photos of March wildlife that you capture for us to share in the April edition, contacts P8

### Wildlife to look out for this month

'March comes in like a lion, out like a lamb'. It's a time of change. We feel it from the first time we feel the wonderful warmth of the sun on our backs. Wildlife senses the change too. It wakes from its long winter's nap or returns to our shores from far-off migrations and is ready to Spring into action!



Male and female common frog.

**Amphibians** - During March amphibians emerge from their winter hideouts to find a water source, a mate, and lay eggs. It's the perfect month to keep a look out for them. Common frogs and common toads are the most abundant amphibian species in East Lothian. Frogs lay large clumps of spawn whereas toads lay long thin strands. Listen out for the loud croak of the males calling to attract females. The Law reservoir is a great place to spot frog spawn, and soon tadpoles and lots of froglets!

**Get involved:** if you spot frog spawn you can hop to it and record your sighting with the Woodland Trust. Monitoring helps to track the effects of climate change on wildlife: <https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk>



Bass Rock ready for the gannets!

**Gannets** - Gannets, Britain's largest seabird, are returning from months fishing at sea to their breeding colony on the Bass Rock. Keep a lookout for the Bass Rock turning white as more and more pairs arrive to reoccupy their patch on the rock. At the peak of the season over 150,000 gannets will occupy the rock, making it the world's largest colony of Northern gannets. Gannets have distinctive black tips to their wings, which can be spotted as they soar and dive.

**Did you know:** gannets have many collective nouns including a company, a plunge and a gannetry.

**Other Top Spots:**  
Daffodils blooming, peacock butterflies emerging and blackthorn blossoming.

**Wildlife Anagrams (answers p8)**  
H A C L T O K N B R  
D A Z U R Z B  
M U L I E G L O T  
R E M I P O E S  
W U L R E C

## History All Around Us by Margaret McSorley

For those of us interested in history, East Lothian is one of the best places to live. Everywhere you look there is something which reminds us of the people who went before, from prehistoric times right up to the present. It's worth being involved with local history societies such as North Berwick Historical Society or Gullane and Dirleton History Society (GDHS).

The Gullane and Dirleton Society organises evening talks from September to April and, despite not being able to meet face to face, we have had

some brilliant zoom talks over the last few months looking at prehistory in the Lammermuirs, archaeology in Garleton castle, Stobs camp in WW1 and many other topics from prisoners on Bass Rock in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, farming differences, priest holes, highwaymen to local life in WW2.

Some of our members have produced fascinating books which the GDHS sells either at meetings (when we can) or online. See the Society's website at [eastlothianheritage.co.uk/gullanedirletonhistory](http://eastlothianheritage.co.uk/gullanedirletonhistory).

## Giant Hares Spotted on Elcho Green

It was like a scene from Alice in Wonderland, as Rory (P5) and I walking past these giant Hares on Elcho Green.

Leuchie House are behind this joyful display. These sculptures will aid their fundraising efforts so we look forward to finding out more in due course. Keep an eye out [www.leuchiehouse.org.uk](http://www.leuchiehouse.org.uk)



Beautiful Photo by Diana Lebaschi

## Bass Rock Community Group Update by Richard

We have been refurbishing old laptops in response to Law Primary School's request for laptops to help children learn from home.

We have found this to be even more important when there is more than one child

at home, and not enough laptops to go around. This has meant children can study online at the same time.

We look forward to telling you more about other projects in the near future.



Rory, P5, multi tasking between breakfast, Google Classrooms and spelling, while mummy works at home, daddy works at the office and little sister Anna goes to school. IT at home has become essential for families juggling home-schooling.

## Looking Forward to a Creative Spring

Our team here at Rock and Bird has found this latest round of lock downs pretty tough. We were thrilled with the support we got from the community throughout 2020, and were all set to jump into the New Year, only to have weeks stuck at home twiddling our thumbs! And since our business is almost entirely staffed by family, being closed has meant seeing a lot less of one another throughout the week.

While we'd love to say that we've filled the days with endless creative projects and used our time to make and do exciting things, the truth is that creativity often needs company, and we've been pretty lacking on both fronts. But with spring around the corner and timetables for the easing of lockdown starting to be released, we're looking ahead to brighter days and creative projects we can take on as life returns to the world.

So if you're like us and you've been struggling for inspiration during the long dark winter indoors, maybe these craft suggestions will help you to get excited about the Spring:

### Use Art to Help You Notice How Things Are Changing

If every day during the lockdown has started to feel the same, then training your eye to see the little changes brought by Spring is a great way to lift your mood and practice your skills. Whether you think of yourself as an artist or not, carry a little pad and a pencil with you and make a point of drawing something new every day. In no time you'll start getting out of your own head and enjoying the world outside.

### Turn Your Spring Clear-Out into Textile Art

Being locked indoors with all your stuff turns out to be great fuel for the desire to have a clear-out. But rather than just taking everything to the tip, why not turn some of your unwanted clothes into the start of a new hobby. Your old t-shirts and felted jumpers could be the start of a new Rag Rug, or a good old-fashioned quilt. [Nancy's Notions on Youtube](#) has videos about how to make a 'No Sew Rag Rug' if you need some advice to get started.

Marty & Julia



## Armchair Chats

An online event series by Compassionate Community North Berwick Group Project

As a lead up to a creative and new North Berwick Fringe by the Sea, to be held in the Lodge Grounds (August 2021) we are going to host online 'Armchair Chats'.

The online chats will be a series of relevant topics, linked to the North Berwick Compassionate Community initiative. The first event took place in February.

#### Future events:

Tuesday March 30th 7pm

Tuesday April 27th 7pm

Tuesday May 25th 7pm

Tuesday June 22nd 7pm

For more information please visit <http://northberwickhealthandwellbeing.co.uk/>

**Wildlife Anagram Answers: 1. Blackthorn  
2. Buzzard 3. Guillemot 4. Primrose 5. Curlew**



### Chair Yoga

A combination of breath, movement and mindfulness

Wednesdays on Zoom (starting 17th February)  
10:00 – 10:45am

£4 drop in class



To book visit [www.bookwhen.com/satanamayoga](http://www.bookwhen.com/satanamayoga) or call Angela 07947436412 or [angela\\_edwards\\_holly@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:angela_edwards_holly@yahoo.co.uk)

### Zumba Gold by Ruth Hunter- Pepper



Come and join Zumba Gold classes online. The 40 minute Zoom classes consist of fun, low impact, easy to follow dance to Latin based music. There are 5 classes a week.

The monthly subscription means you can take an unlimited number of classes at the click of a link on your daily email. Try a session or two free before you commit and see if you like it. Exercise at your own pace and dance like no one's watching!

For further information contact Ruth at [figaroroo@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:figaroroo@yahoo.co.uk) or 07785 707683



Ageing Well have a wide range of activities available for anyone of all abilities.

Including Pilates, Yoga, Zumba, Singing and Tai Chi, for anyone over 50.

During lockdown most of these activities are online, however with guidelines changing often this will change and we will resume in person as soon as allowed.

For the full list of online classes and to find out what might suit your interests please visit Ageing Well [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page or you can talk to Parvine Jazayeri, Ageing Well Coordinator on [pjazayeri@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:pjazayeri@eastlothian.gov.uk) or call 07718 117585



Carers of East Lothian supports all adults in a caring situation in East Lothian to get information and services to help their individual caring role, enhance their own wellbeing, and strengthen their collective voice to improve services.

We can help with all aspects of your caring role, such as help with benefits and other money matters, counselling, workshops, training and

peer support

We are continuing to deliver support to carers over the telephone and via video calls during the coronavirus pandemic.

If you provide support to a relative, friend or neighbour who could not manage otherwise because they are frail, have a long term illness or disability, then there are many ways you can get support.

To register with us and find out more please phone 0131 6650135, here's a link to our website <https://coel.org.uk/> and you can also follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/coel92/>

### Tastes Like Holidays—Pasta Bake, shared by Judy Lockhart North Berwick Community Council

Bake together for 30 minutes - 500g cheery tomatoes, 1 block of Feta, 4 chopped garlic cloves, 1/4 cup of olive oil  
Season with salt and pepper,  
Once baked add a handful of basil and our favourite cooked pasta and serve.



### April Newsletter Content – Please send in to Emma by *Thursday 18th March*

We welcome a range of content so please share your stories, photos, hobbies, news, as well as any events cross North Berwick and the Coastal Villages. We would also welcome content that celebrates Easter and National Poetry Month.

Please send directly to Emma Papakyriakou at [newsletter@nbc-communityconnections.org](mailto:newsletter@nbc-communityconnections.org).

If you want Emma to give you a call about a story or idea for the newsletter just send an email or mention to Carol or Lisa when you catch up with them.

## North Berwick Coastal Community Connections

As soon as the February snow melted we welcomed longer daylight and blue skies, the sound of birds singing from our windows and the warmth of the sun as we Spring into March.

Community Connections is here and can help you enjoy the delights of March. We can go for walks and if you would like some company we can arrange a one-to-one Buddy Walk with one of our trained volunteers. Or maybe a local friend you've not seen for ages could join you to enjoy the spring flowers in the Lodge?

If you would like to chat to someone during the week, we can arrange for you to have a weekly chat with one of our lovely volunteers. It's a great way to share stories about your life and interests or how you are doing.

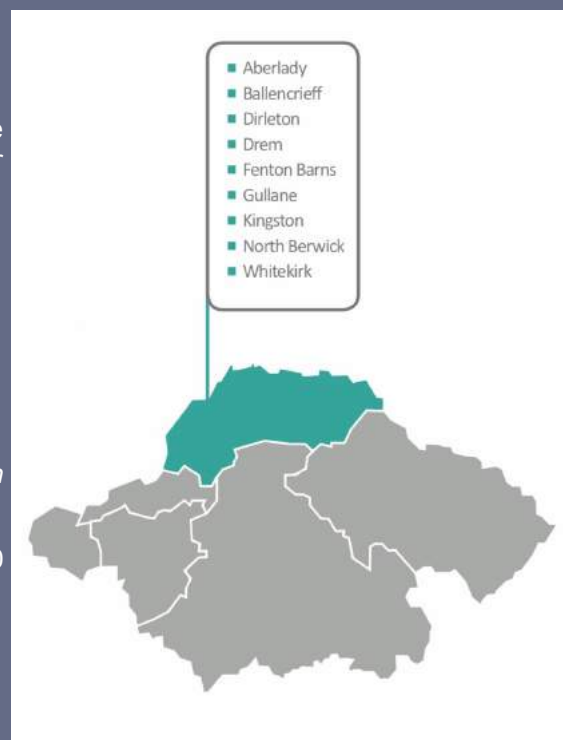
We're planning further Members' Virtual Coffee Calls, to help people get to know each other's faces and gently prepare the ground for an eventual return to gatherings like Scone Café.

Please get in touch with Carol if you would like to build more conversations and connections into your weekly routine. Over March we will continue to offer:

- Phone calls
- Buddy Walks
- Monthly Newsletter
- Virtual Coffee Connections - date to be confirmed
- \*Coffee Connections (\*Available only if East Lothian is in Covid level 1- 3)

**For more information please contact:** Phone: 07940 203380

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Email: [communityconnections@outlook.co.uk](mailto:communityconnections@outlook.co.uk)

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