

Network News

September 2022



Ministerial Visit



Men's Group



Walking Groups Grow to Meet Demand

View from the Chair



Anne Webster

This is a momentous time in our country's history. I am writing this on the day after the sad passing of Queen Elizabeth II, and the start of the reign of King Charles III.

Whatever your thoughts on the Royal family, there can be no doubt that our queen lived her whole life in service to her country, representing stability, continuity, and a moral standard to aspire to. Unlike many of us who are living our best lives in retirement, the queen was at work, welcoming our new prime minister, just 2 days before she died. I am glad that many of our members in the Network were able to join together in celebration of her 70 years on the throne at our Platinum Jubilee Party in June this year.

The long summer days that we enjoyed are now rapidly disappearing, and I'm sure many of you are concerned about the soaring cost of living. On page 15 we have a look at how fuel-hungry different appliances are around the home and offer some energy saving tips.

We've been busy over the summer preparing the way for lots of new activities that we hope you will enjoy. We are bringing back some of our pre-Covid regular events such as our fund-raising Thrift Shop and Coffee Morning/Craft Fair, and we've also established a good selection of new groups for you.

A new "first" was our Classic Cinema group which proved to be popular, with 24 members turning up for the premiere, a social evening with ice cream and popcorn for that real cinema experience!

The Network's membership continues to increase – at the time of writing we have some 572 members, 30 more than reported in our last issue of this newsletter. The pressure is on to develop new activities across a wider geographic area so there really is something for everyone! It's therefore especially difficult to have to say goodbye to our development officer Cheryl Scott -Davidson, who has decided to leave the Network at the end of September and return to a full-time position in the travel industry. We are grateful to Bank of Scotland Foundation for part-funding this post which focuses on broadening the scope and take up of the Network as well as strengthening our partnerships with other services which support older people and hope to be able to fill it again before too long.

With Christmas fast approaching, there's much to look forward to, not least in some of the events, trips and holidays we've got in store for you. We hope you enjoy them.

With best wishes to you all,
Anne Webster

Funding Update

We are grateful to a number of supporters who are helping us to run our Network.

M&G Prudential Community Fund

awarded the Network £2,300 towards resources for activity groups, equipment and marketing materials.

Murdoch Forrest Charitable Trust

awarded £1,440 towards the costs for the activity centre.

Albert Hunt Trust awarded £2,000 towards our Hub Co-ordinators' salaries

Thistledown Charitable Trust

awarded £1,000 towards resources for members' groups.

The **James T Howat Charitable Trust** awarded £500 towards our members' area, teas and coffees.

The Bank of Scotland Foundation

awarded £10,487 towards our Development Officer's salary and employment costs.

October sees the end of our 12 months as one of **Co-op Whitburn** charities of the year. Thank you to everyone who supported West Lothian 50+ Network throughout this time. We will find out the total amount awarded to the Network in November.

THANK YOU
to all of our sponsors!

Walking Groups Continue to Grow

Walking in a group is such a great social activity which is why it's so popular with Network members.

There are currently nine different walking groups to choose from, catering for all abilities, from slow coaches to those able to walk up to 10 miles.

Our photo shows members of the *Miles and Smiles* walking group led by Ian Beck on the top of Binny Craig. This was during their recent walk from Uphall to Binny Craig, returning via Oatridge College, Newbigging Craig and Uphall Community Woodland.

Another group, the *Happy Wanderers*, led by Heather Waddell, recently enjoyed a walk across the causeway to Cramond Island. It was a beautiful, calm day and the views from the island were clear for miles. The row of concrete pylons on one side of the causeway were built as an anti-boat boom during the Second World War. Care must be taken to check the tides when tackling this walk, as too many people get caught out, necessitating a life boat call out. It's all part of the research and risk assessment that walk leaders undertake when planning their walks.

Not all walks are so adventurous. The Two Left Feet recently took a stroll along the Clyde Walkway, a flat route on well made paths taking in the many points of interest along the river. The 40 mile walkway starts at Glasgow's Transport Museum just a stroll along from Partick station, and stretches some 40 miles as far as New Lanark. The group ambled only along the first wee stretch which skirts the centre of Glasgow and into the east end through Glasgow Green, where the regeneration of the area has resulted in some striking new architecture which sits well alongside Glasgow's heritage buildings.



Miles and Smiles on top of Binny Craig

Walking Outing to North Berwick

The Network's annual Walking Day Outing brings members of all the Network's walking groups together. Successfully organised by walk leader Heather Waddell over the last few years, these trips continue to prove to be very popular.

This year's trip to North Berwick is no exception, with the trip almost selling out in the first week.

This year there are five different walk options, ranging from 2 miles to 9 miles. On booking, members must choose one of the following options:

Walk 1 approx. 2 miles North Berwick East Bay Circular

Walk 2 approx. 4 miles Dirleton to North Berwick via the John Muir Way

Walk 3 approx. 4.5 miles Dirleton to North Berwick along the beach

Walk 4 approx. 6 miles Gullane to North Berwick

Walk 5 approx. 9 miles Aberlady to North Berwick

Date: Saturday 8th October (Booking from Wednesday 7th September)

Cost: £15 per person



Ministerial Visit

We were delighted to welcome the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care, Kevin Stewart, to the Hub on 28th June.

It was a great opportunity to show him how we are investing the funding we have received from the Scottish Government's Recovery and Renewal Fund, which is helping the Network to reach out to more older people and help them to re-engage in community life.

The Communities Mental Health and Well Being Fund awarded the Network £10,000 for 2 laptops; docking stations; resources for groups; venue costs for 3 new groups and a contribution to the Development Officer's salary.

At the time of the Kevin Stewart's visit, our Men's Group were holding their weekly meet up, giving ample opportunity for the Minister to find out what belonging to the Network means to them.



L-R Willie Webster, Alan McCloskey, Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian, Kevin Stewart, MSP, Anne Webster



Members of the Network's Men's Group at their meeting with MSP Kevin Stewart

The Men's Group was established by the West Lothian 50+ Network to help older men to remain active whilst in a supportive social environment.

Like many organisations, the Network noted the imbalance of the gender mix within its membership – currently less than a quarter, some 24%, of the membership are men. However, this figure has improved considerably since the group was established 5 years ago in 2017, when analysis showed that only 16% were men.

The group was established, and is still led by Jim Dixon, one of the founding members of the West Lothian 50+ Network. Jim said: "We have known for many years that remaining active

is a major factor in staying healthy, and social activity is crucial in maintaining and sustaining both physical and mental health. Loneliness really can shorten life." "As we age, our motivation to meet new people and participate in a new activity can often be low. The most difficult time being when you lose a partner or close friend. Men in particular can have problems in creating a change in their lifestyle". In consultation with the group, Jim organises a programme of accessible activities that do not make too many demands on participants. The men wanted outings as the main activity, as well as the establishment of social opportunities. The men enjoy a range of monthly outings which have included visits to

The Wallace Monument, Faslane, Dawyck Botanic Gardens, Glasgow Transport Museum, The Peoples Palace in Glasgow, Carnegie Museum in Dunfermline, Balloch and Loch Lomond, Burns Museum in Ayr, the Secret Bunker in Fife, the National Mining Museum at the Lady Victoria Colliery at Newtongrange and Summerlee Industrial Museum in Coatbridge.

To create better social opportunities, in addition to the outings there's a weekly men's meet up at the Hub. This gives individuals a routine through meeting regularly and means that older and less able men who may not be able to go on the outings are able to attend.

Queen's Thank You Message

The Network was delighted to receive a special 'thank you' message from the Queen.

Members were thanked by Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II after sending her a handcrafted card on the occasion of her Platinum Jubilee in June.

The commemorative card was made by the Network's *Craft for Enjoyment* group run by Elizabeth Florence.

A response was received from Buckingham Palace just a month after the card was sent.

The acknowledgement reads: *"I send you my grateful thanks for your kind message on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of my accession to the throne."*



Celebrating Volunteering

West Lothian's army of dedicated volunteers were given a pat on the back at an annual event acknowledging all their hard work.

Anne and Willie Webster and development officer Cheryl Scott-Davidson represented the Network at the event on 23 June. It was organised by the West Lothian Volunteer Network (WLVN) specifically to celebrate volunteering in West Lothian. Anne accepted a certificate on behalf of all the Network's volunteers who are very much

appreciated and without whom the Network would not exist.

"It's good to be able to meet up with volunteers from groups across the county, said Anne.

"What great work is being done and how fantastic to see everyone being acknowledged and thanked!"



Hannah Bardell: Getting to Know Livingston's MP

The 50+ Network is politically neutral, so it was with a view to hearing how Hannah Bardell, MP for Livingston, came to be involved in politics, and to understanding what life is like for a working politician, that we invited Hannah to speak at our June members' meeting.

Hannah has been an MP continuously since 7 May 2015. She currently undertakes the roles of Shadow SNP Spokesperson (Foreign Affairs Team Member), and Shadow SNP Spokesperson (International Development Team Member).

Born and brought up in Craigshill, Livingston, Hannah won her seat in the 2015 general election. She gained a majority over Graeme Morrice who had previously defeated her mother, Liz Bardell who finished in second place for the SNP in the same constituency in 2010.

Hannah attended Broxburn Academy and the University of Stirling. Two of her primary school teachers, in years 6 and 7, were both in the audience at our members' meeting. Hannah acknowledged them, Eleanor Shaw and Anne Milne, as two of the women



Hannah Bardell (centre) with Willie Webster (right) and her former teacher Anne Milne

who helped her become the person she is today.

Hannah started her career in commercial television with STV Glasgow and GMTV London, latterly as the Assistant Producer on their Political 'Sunday Programme'.

She then worked with the SNP as part of their 2007 central campaign team producing and presenting SNPtV online.

For the next 3 years Hannah managed Alex Salmond's constituency office working for him as an MSP and MP and working for Ian Hudghton MEP. She then moved on to work for the U.S. State Dept in their Edinburgh Consulate managing protocol, events and press.

Before becoming an MP Hannah worked in the Oil & Gas sector, initially with Subsea 7 and then as Head of Communications & Marketing for the UK, Africa & Norway with Oil & Gas service company Stork.

In her talk to the 50+ Network, Hannah spoke frankly about her experiences in Westminster, and her passionate belief that in order to bring about change, there's a need to be involved in the place where it's possible to make a difference.

Member's Meetings

The Network's monthly members' meetings provide a chance to catch up with other members and find out about everything that is happening in the 50+ Network. Most months we hear from a guest speaker on a wide range of subjects.

Open to all members, these meetings take place on the third Saturday of the month in the Network's Hub at 14 George St, Bathgate from 10:30am to 12 noon.

Please bring along your Membership Card which will be scanned at the door.

Weekenders' Walk in Holyrood Park

In June members of the Network's Weekenders group joined a ranger-led walking tour in Edinburgh's magnificent Holyrood Park.

As they walked, their excellent guide Gordon took the group through some of the amazing history of the park, including information about many of its geological features and varied fauna and flora. It was a beautiful day, with stunning scenery. Not to mention an excellent cardio workout!

The legend of King David's encounter with a mystical white stag some 900 years ago originates in Holyrood Park

Depictions of a white stag can still be seen dotted around the city. They mark the incident said to have taken place on Holy Cross Day, 14 September 1128, in the ancient forest of Drumsheugh which then covered vast swathes of land around Salisbury Crags.

King David I broke with convention when he embarked on a hunt in the woods on that day, despite being strongly advised that the date was for worship and not for the chase.

As the King and his nobles advanced through the forest, they glimpsed a beautiful white stag.

The King broke away and pursued the beast - before coming face to face with it in a clearing.

His horse bolted, leaving the king sprawled on the ground at the stag's feet, whereupon it made as though to gore him to death with



Learning about glacial erratic boulders - glacially deposited rocks differing from the type of rock native to the area in which they rest.

its antlers. At that moment, divine intervention reputedly saved the King from attack.

Several versions of the legend exist. When the King went to grab the stag's antlers, they miraculously turned into a large cross.

Other accounts claim that a silver cloud appeared at the moment the stag appeared, with a hand passing a silver cross to the monarch. St Andrew appeared to the King in a dream that night instructing him to show gratitude for his deliverance by founding an abbey.

While the truth of the legend is not clear, it is known that in 1128 a monastery was established which was to become Holyrood Abbey.

A gilded stag's head with a cross between its antlers sits on the top of Canongate Kirk, as well as on the Mercat Cross on the Royal Mile.

Afternoon Tea

If you enjoy an occasional afternoon tea, the Weekenders may be just the group for you! It's a popular regular choice of

outing, and with so many excellent places to choose from, there's always somewhere new to try.

In August, twenty members of the Weekenders enjoyed a tour, followed by afternoon tea, at the original Willow Tearooms, now fully restored as *Mackintosh at the Willow*. The original Willow Tearooms was designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and opened by Miss Cranston, a leading figure in the development of tearooms, although now chiefly remembered as a patron of Mackintosh. The name of Miss Cranston lives on in reminiscences of Glasgow in its heyday. Miss Cranston also featured on the design of the Royal Bank of Scotland £20 note circulated in 2020.

The Weekenders group offers a wide variety of options for outings, all of which are agreed and organised by group members themselves.

Contact the Hub in the first instance if you'd like to join them.

Photography Group Gets Out and About



The good weather has seen the Network's Photography Group getting out and about this summer. Here they are on their visit to the National Museum of Scotland.

Other outings include visits to Blackness Castle, South Queensferry, and a walk in the countryside around Torphichen Priory.

The group has its own facebook page where members share their photos with others. Head to West Lothian 50+ Photography Group on facebook if you'd like to follow this group's activities.

The group meets in person at the Hub in Bathgate on Wednesday evenings. If you are interested in joining please note that this is not a taught group, but one where members share their enthusiasm for a hobby and help each other along the way.

New Creative Writing Group

Are you a budding author? Would you like to express yourself through writing?

Do you want to tell your story and leave a legacy or explore your thoughts? There is no time like the present to get writing. You will be amazed by the new found energy, enthusiasm, and interest you will gain.

The classes will begin by exploring poetry, short stories, and descriptive writing, using objects and pictures to stimulate writing provided by group leader Brenda Macdonald and the group itself.

The group starts on Tuesday 13th September and meets weekly from 13:30 – 15:00 at the Hub.



Table Tennis

The Table Tennis group has a new venue in Xcite at Craigswood in Livingston, meeting every Wednesday at 2.00pm.

All equipment and tuition is provided. All you need is a pair of trainers, comfortable clothes and a bottle for water refill.

The first 4 weeks have been funded and were free to members. The cost is now approx. £1.50 per week depending on numbers.

Thanks to Maggie Wills who is leading this group.

New Jewellery Group

A new weekly jewellery group started on 9th September.

The first 6 week block covers basic tools, and materials and participants will make some of the following items: simple earrings, clasps, beading bracelets and necklaces, charms and wrapped loops.

The second 6 week block covers wire wrapping, cording, stringing beads, ladder weaving, pearl knotting, hoop earrings, connectors.

The Network will cover materials for the first 6 week block, thereafter a small contribution for materials will be required.

New Book Club

Due to popular demand, a new book group has been created from the existing Book n Blether waiting list.

The Book Club led by Eleanor Shaw meets once a month on Thursday evenings in Bathgate Partnership Centre.

Learn to Play the Ukulele

Eileen Lander, leader of the Network's Ukulele Group, is on the look out for people who would like to learn to play and strengthen this group. We asked Eileen to tell us more about the group and how it has evolved.

"I started the Network's Ukulele Group in June 2018. A year earlier I had moved to Scotland from 'down south', and there seemed to be fewer ukulele groups around up here, so I thought, why not start one locally?

I had been playing for about three years by then, and knew what a fun, social activity it is, and very accessible for non-musicians.

I believe we started with about ten eager people, most of whom took to it very well. We were meeting at Rosemount Gardens, and before long did a gig there, where everyone sang along and even got up and danced. So that was great fun. And we have done a couple more gigs since then. We did a set at the New Generations event at the Regal in Bathgate. That

was scary, but very satisfying as we had a good response.

We have done sessions at care homes, which are always well received by the residents. A real highlight was attending a ukulele festival in Aberfeldy, meeting lots of other players and having some good jam sessions. But then Covid came! Some of us managed to keep going using Zoom sessions, though it was far from ideal, as only one person can play and sing, the others have to mute themselves and play along – so that wasn't for everyone.

When we were finally able to meet again face to face, we had some rebuilding to do. We have lost a few members – and gained some new ones, which is great. We are putting a new gig list together and practicing hard – and we have a good laugh too.

We have room for two or three more members, if anyone is interested. You don't have to be able to sing, though it helps. In fact we lost some of our better singers, so if there are any singers out there who would like to learn to play ukulele, we would love to have you! I can happily lend anyone a ukulele if they'd like to give it a try. So, if you are looking for a new hobby, and you enjoy music, do come and join us!"



Improve N Move

The Network has a new group offering gentle physical activity which helps to strengthen your muscles and bones.

The new Improve N Move group helps you to stay strong, healthy, independent and improves mobility.

It offers gentle exercise using a chair and standing and is delivered by professional, qualified instructor, Yvonne Tunnickliff. Exercises to music are tailored to suit everyone's needs.

- Ideal for over 50s, men and women
- Gentle exercise using chair and standing
- Stronger Muscles
- Stronger Bones
- Improve Balance
- Independent Ageing
- 45 minute class

Where and When: Tuesdays, 12 noon in Bathgate at the Members' Hub. From Tuesday 6th September 2022

Cost: Free for first 6 weeks, thereafter £2 per session

How to Join In: Contact the Members' Hub. Another session can be added if there is enough demand.

Choir's Christmas Cantata

The Network Choir is planning a musical treat for us again this Christmas.

Don't miss this year's musical evening of Christmas songs sung by the Network Singers.

The concert takes place on Monday 12th December at Armadale Parish Church.

Tickets will be "by donation" and will be made available in the Hub, at Armadale Parish Church.

Art & Crafts in Kirkcudbright

The Network's coach trip to Kirkcudbright on 30 July took place during the town's annual Art and Crafts Trail.

Kirkcudbright became a magnet for Scottish artists in the late 19th century and is now known as The Artists' Town.

Over four days artists, craftmakers, halls, galleries and businesses open their doors to visitors creating lots of interest in this attractive town which sits on the banks of the Dee and is the only town on the Solway coast with a working harbour.

In spite of the occasional shower, members enjoyed the waterfront, gardens and the town's colourful blend of medieval, Georgian and Victorian buildings.



On the banks of the Dee in Kirkcudbright

Lunch at Dumfries House

Our new King Charles III has a very close affinity with Dumfries House, the destination of the Network's coach trip on 28 August.

His Majesty the King intervened to save the neoclassical architecture of Robert Adam designed Dumfries House and its rare Chippendale furniture for the nation back in 2007. Through the Prince's Foundation, improvements have been made to the grounds and gardens, historic

outbuildings have been brought back to use and the estate is a focus for a range of training opportunities for young people and traditional skills and crafts.

The transformation of Dumfries House has brought many employment opportunities to the local area, which was greatly affected by the demise of the coal mining industry, and stands as a prime example of heritage-led regeneration.

King Charles considers Dumfries

House as one of his homes and has hosted world leaders, heads of charities, captains of industry and locals there.

It was a treat for our group to enjoy a tour and lunch together in the house, before exploring the 2,000 acre estate which includes the Maze, Arboretum, Chinese Bridge and the Queen Elizabeth walled garden, one of the biggest in Scotland.

Trip to Falkland and Dunfermline

For the Networks' coach trip on 26th June we visited two historic centres in Fife.

First up was the picturesque village of Falkland, best known for its fine Renaissance palace with an extensive formal garden and one of Britain's oldest tennis courts.

Then on to the newly declared city of Dunfermline where the group of 41 had free time for lunch and the chance to visit the lovely Pittencrieff Park, Dunfermline Abbey, Carnegie's birthplace and a number of other attractions.



In the extensive gardens at Falkland Palace



Planning Ahead

To help you plan ahead, here are the monthly coach trips we will organise in 2022.

Saturday 24th September -

The Burrell Collection, Pollock Park, Glasgow

Saturday 8th October - Day out for walkers in North Berwick

Sunday 29th October –

The Enchanted Forest, Pitlochry

Saturday 26th November - Christmas at Glamis Castle

December - no trip

The Burrell Collection

Our September coach trip to the Burrell Collection proved to be popular, with tickets being snapped up almost immediately after going on sale.

After being closed for almost 5 years for a major refurbishment, the Burrell Collection in Pollok Park, Glasgow's largest green space, re-opened earlier this year.

Sir William Burrell and his wife gifted their collection of 9,000 objects to the city of Glasgow in 1944. It has been described as "one of the most remarkable assemblages of works of art ever brought together by one man" and "one of the greatest gifts ever made to any city in the world".

On show are medieval treasures including stained glass, arms and armour, and over 200 tapestries

which rank amongst the finest tapestries in the world, as well as paintings by 19th century French masters like Manet, Cezanne and Degas.

More of the Collection is on show than ever before and exciting new galleries bring the objects to life, including more than 90 digital displays offering interactive and immersive experiences for visitors of all ages.

For the first time, all three floors of the building are open to visitors, including the museum's stores, where you can learn more about how objects are cared for while not on display.

The new displays also tell the stories of the man behind the Collection, Sir William Burrell and his family.

Upcoming Network Holiday

We are pleased to offer members the opportunity to book a holiday to Northumberland in January next year.

This 5 day holiday is based at The George Hotel in Chollerford on the North Tyne River, near to the walking route for Hadrian's Wall and a five minute walk to the Chesters Roman Fort.

Hexham is 4 miles away and has shops, galleries, theatre and an arts centre clustered around a medieval Abbey. Excursions include Durham and Newcastle.

The hotel's leisure club is open for guests. This includes a swimming pool and gym.

In total The George Hotel has 47 bedrooms, offering a choice of standard single rooms or twin and double rooms. Rooms include a tea and coffee making station, in-room safe, en-suite and TV. Please note there is no lift in this hotel although there are some ground floor rooms. The rest of the bedrooms are on the first floor, approx. 20 stairs up.

9 –13 January 2023.

Cost: £199 sharing, £259 single

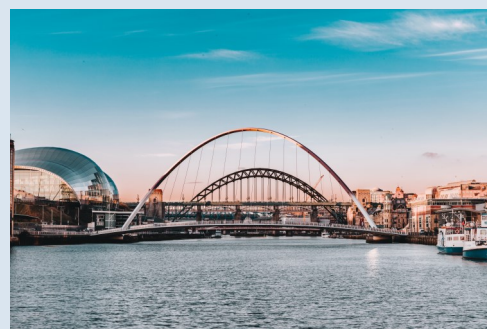
- ◆ Outings to Newcastle & Durham;
- ◆ Dinner, bed and breakfast;
- ◆ No portorage or evening entertainment;
- ◆ 20 double rooms for single occupancy;
- ◆ Glenton's travel insurance available from £10.

Deposit £30 from Wednesday 31st August 2022

Balance due Monday 28th November 2022



Durham Cathedral



Newcastle

RNLI Guest Speaker

Maggie Quayle, guest speaker at our members' meeting on 20th August, gave a fascinating insight into the work of the inshore Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Could you imagine being on call 24/7, prepared to run to the station at a moment's notice, whether busy at work, relaxing at home or even fast asleep?

The RNLI has 4,600 volunteer crew members who are prepared to do this every day of the year. They are undoubtedly motivated by the fact that, on average, three people die in

UK coastal waters every week.

Across Scotland, statistics show that in 2020, across 46 lifeboat stations, there were:

- ◆ 1308 launches
- ◆ 1335 people aided
- ◆ 17 lives saved

Since 2014, the Lifeboat Station at South Queensferry alone has launched 1,663 times, assisting 2,544 people and saving 177 lives.

Lifeboat crews aim to launch within 10 minutes of being alerted and can operate up to 100 nautical miles offshore. The RNLI aims to reach at least 90% of casualties within 10 nautical miles of the coast, withing 30 minutes of a lifeboat launch – in any weather.

One volunteer explained what it is like to be a crew member: *"You come off the lifeboat physically wrecked and bruised but you still come back for more, and after a successful rescue you're on cloud nine for days. It really is a hell of a feeling".*

The vision of the RNLI is to save everyone.

Their values: Our volunteers and staff are trustworthy, courageous, selfless and dependable.

*"We are one crew.
This is our watch"*

Maggie Quayle is the Community Presenter and Deputy Launch Authority based at RNLI South Queensferry.

Holiday Report : Bletchley Park and the National Memorial Arboretum

The Network's 5 day holiday in August to Staffordshire and Warwickshire took 37 members to visit Coventry, the National Memorial Arboretum, Tamworth Castle, Royal Leamington Spa and Bletchley Park, home of the code-breakers during WW2.

The Arboretum is home to nearly 400 thought-provoking memorials, each with a story to be discovered. After a land train tour of the site, there was free time to explore on foot.

The memorials are diverse in nature, rich in symbolism and represent a broad population of society, from military associations and charities to the emergency services, fraternity groups and individuals.

The largest and deeply moving memorial is to the Armed Forces. It is a nationally significant focus for Remembrance, created to remember those who have given their lives in the service of the country since the end of WW2. We learnt that since 1948 men and women of the Armed Services have taken part in more than 50 conflicts and operations around the world.

Tamworth Castle is full of history and our guides were excellent. A few who were defeated by the steep entrance to the castle enjoyed the colourful gardens below.

A morning in Coventry gave ample free time to visit the magnificent cathedral, stopping by to admire the statue of the legendary Lady Godiva, known for riding naked through the city on her horse in protest against the oppressive taxation imposed by her husband on his tenants.

A full day was needed to take in Bletchley Park, our guides giving fascinating insights into this top secret location where code breakers worked tirelessly to intercept and translate enemy messages to speed up the end of WW2.



Enjoying the fountains on a warm day in Coventry city centre



Strolling in the beautiful gardens below Tamworth Castle



An excellent afternoon tea at Bletchley Park

Thrift Shop Fundraiser

The Network is holding a fundraiser thrift shop at the end of September. It will be held in our Hub at 14 George Street, Bathgate for 3 days only, from Thursday 29th September to Saturday 1st October.

We're looking for donations to sell in the shop so if you are clearing out cupboards, attic, wardrobes or garage please think about us.

We are grateful to nearby games shop, Knightly Gaming, who are letting us use space to store our goods in their basement. Find them at 2-6 Hopetoun Street, Bathgate, opposite the top of the precinct.

Support for School Uniform Charity

Network chair Anne Webster and committee member Sue Bedford-Visser went to meet Collette Moran, Project Manager for local charity The School Bank West Lothian.

They presented the charity with a cheque for £200 that was raised by members through "coin jar" donations.

It's a well-established tradition that each year, at the Network's Annual General Meeting in May, members vote for a charity they would like to support during the course of the coming year. The School Bank was supported in this way through loose change donations during 2021-2022. The School Bank is a volunteer-led group aiming to improve the lives of children in local families experiencing financial hardship by providing them with a brand-new school uniform and other clothing and equipment required for the school day.

You can drop donations there anytime they are open - from 12 noon till 8pm most days.

We will also be taking donations at the Hub on Wednesday the 28th September from 12 noon, however, if the goods can be delivered to Knightly Gaming before that date, it would be much appreciated as it will give us time to sort and price the items.

This is our first Thrift Shop fundraiser since 2019. Prior to that, it was an annual event which raised much needed funds for the Network.



Volunteers Needed

We are looking for volunteers to help sort items in the Hub on Wednesday 28th September from midday, so if you are free, please let us know, as that would be very helpful.

We also need members to work in the shop when it is open.



The Network first became involved with The School Bank in October 2019 when members embraced the charity's "SOCKtober" appeal by donating many pairs of new socks suitable for school wear. Collette Moran, speaking for The School Bank said: "This £200 donation will be very helpful for us here at the School Bank during this difficult economic time and rising numbers of referrals!"

Thanks to all who supported this very worthwhile local charity.

You can find out more about The School Bank on their website at <https://schoolbank-westlothian.org/>

If you would like to support their "Winter Warmer" appeal, we are taking donations at the Hub of new socks, gloves and scarves suitable for pupils from P1 to S6.

The charity nominated for Coin Jar support during 2022-2023 is the West Lothian Foodbank

Energy Saving Tips

Energy prices are skyrocketing - prompting households up and down the country to find ways to cut back on energy use.

Here are some changes you can make at home to help fight back against soaring bills.

Switch to cheaper cooking appliances

Microwaves are generally considered to be the most cost-effective cooking appliance.

Figures based on how frequently the average household uses an appliance each day have shown that it costs 8p per day and 58p across an entire week to run a microwave (this does not take into account the new rise to the price cap, which will come into effect this Autumn).

Though marginally more expensive to use than a microwave - 14p per day and £1.01 over the course of a week - air fryers are another cost-saving cooking appliance.

These compare well with the cost of running a traditional electric cooker for a single day (87p).

At 16p a day, slow cookers will also save money compared to an electric cooker.

But despite costing less to run on a daily basis, these appliances cost as much for a full years worth of usage as a typical gas cooker (£120.83 each). Dual cookers (72p per day) and electric cookers were shown to be the most costly appliances.

Across a 12-month period it would set you back £264.03 to use the former and £316.54 for the latter.

Switch off and unplug

If you haven't already done so, now is a good time to carry out a complete check of every power outlet in your house.

Getting into the habit of doing this regularly, making sure to unplug anything that is not necessary and turning

devices off standby mode can save an estimated £55 a year, according to the Energy Saving Trust.

Almost all electrical appliances can be turned off at the plug without upsetting their programming. You may want to think about getting a standby saver or smart plug, which allows you to turn all your appliances off standby in one go. But do make sure to check the instructions for any appliances you're not sure about. Some satellite and digital TV recorders may need to be left plugged in, so they can keep track of programmes you want to record.

Check your boiler

A recent report by the Heating and Hot Water Council found that households can save around 6% to 8% on their gas bill just by turning down the heating flow temperature on their condensing combi boiler. This will allow the boiler to run more efficiently and could save around £200 off an average energy bill.

Another easy saving is to turn off the pre-heat mode on the boiler, which while it could mean hot water taps taking longer to heat up, might also save hundreds of pounds a year.

Stop using your tumble dryer

Tumble dryers are massive energy drains, so on warm days hang clothes outside to dry instead if you have access to a garden or outdoor space - and invest in a drying rack for cooler months.

Use your washing machine on a 30C cycle and reduce its usage by one run a week. Only turn on your dishwasher when it is full and use eco settings if possible.

Defrost your fridge and freezer

Remember to regularly defrost your fridge and freezer, as the more they ice up the more energy they will use.

A full freezer is more economical to run as the cold air does not need to circulate as much, so less power is needed.

One tip if you have lots of free space is to half-fill plastic bottles with

water and use these to plug gaps.

Invest in insulation

New analysis by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit has found homes rated band F on the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) system - a measure of the home's efficiency - are set to have a gas bill worth £968 higher than a home rated EPC band C. The average home in the UK is rated band D and these homes will pay £420 more for their gas this winter, compared with band C - the Government's target for 2035.

Investing in professional draught-proofing and insulation in preparation for the winter months could also lead to a reduction in bills by £405 for a semi-detached home, according to the Energy Saving Trust.

Meanwhile, installing solar panels for a similar property might lead to additional annual savings of around £450.

Topping up from 120mm to at least 270mm of insulation in your roof - where around a quarter of heat in an uninsulated house is lost - could also help to future proof your home.

Don't turn boilers, fridges or freezers off

Some people believe turning off their boilers could help to save them energy, but the exact opposite is true. Instead, thermostats and timers should be used effectively to regulate their operation.

Likewise, fridges and freezers are designed to be kept on at all times. You will not save energy by turning them off for short periods because more energy will be used to cool them down again when turned back on. There are also important safety issues that can arise if food partially defrosts before it is prepared for eating.

The council's Advice Shop has specialist advisors who can help you to understand your energy issues and become more energy efficient. Call them on 01506 283000

Or email energy.advice@westlothian.gov.uk

Network News



What is the West Lothian 50+ Network?

The West Lothian 50+ Network is a group of active over fifties run by members for members.

We facilitate a wide range of physical, social, educational and cultural activities for our members, with the aim of keeping active in mind and body whilst combating social isolation.

We meet monthly with an interesting speaker, offer more than 50 special interest groups and run day trips, holidays, concerts, dinners and other events.

Limitation of Liability

West Lothian 50+ Network does not assess its members' fitness for participation in any of its various activities.

The decision about your fitness to undertake any activity lies within yourself, together with any medical advice you wish to take. It is your own responsibility to ensure your personal safety and that of your belongings.

We want to hear from you

Do you have a story you'd like to share with other members?

Or an idea for a topic you'd like us to cover?

We'd love to know what you've been doing over the last few months.

Have you mastered the use of a new technology, taken up a new hobby, or found new places to visit?

Send us your stories and we'll aim to include them in the next issue of Network News.

Dates for your Diary

17th September - Members' meeting

29th, 30th Sep and 1st Oct - Thrift Shop

15th October - Members' Meeting

5th November - Coffee Morning & Craft Fair

19th November - Members' Meeting

12th December - Choir's Christmas Cantata

17th December - Christmas Party

Members' meetings take place on the third Saturday of the month in the Network's premises at 14 George St, Bathgate from 10:30am to 12 noon.

Contact West Lothian 50+ Network

14 George Street

Phone: 01506 635510

Bathgate

Email: hub@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk

EH48 1PW

Website: www.westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk

Open Mon– Fri, 10am to 2pm Facebook: [WestLothian50PlusNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/WestLothian50PlusNetwork)

Make the rest of your life the best of your life

