

# west lothian heritage

Newsletter of West Lothian Heritage Services

Spring 2016



## The Living Memory Association

The Living Memory Association is an Edinburgh-based reminiscence project recording memories for future generations, currently engaged in a Heritage Lottery Funded project looking at Gala days in West Lothian. Working in conjunction with West Lothian Heritage Services, we are gathering in memories and stories of Gala Days in Armadale, Blackridge, Broxburn, West Calder and Whitburn.

Since attending all the Gala Days in the five chosen areas in 2015, we have been busy conducting a whole range of interviews with past Gala Queens, flower fairies, attendants, silver band members and all those who just went along to celebrate these great community events. Colourful memories of Gala Day goodie bags, running races and the fun at the end of day on the rides at the shows... a rich tapestry of memories.

Time is approaching when we need pull all these stories together for a booklet and exhibition to be presented this summer.

However, if you have your own Gala Days memories, photographs or memorabilia that you would like to share please do get in touch.

As an exciting development of this project we will be opening a 'pop up' reminiscence unit at The Centre, Livingston on 4 April and we are very grateful to the management of The Centre for their support. As well as Gala Day displays we will also have a lot of other reminiscence material on show. West Lothian Heritage Services will be joining us to display some of their exhibitions

and material at the unit. There will be a good mix of items to see. We run a similar unit at Ocean Terminal Shopping Centre in Edinburgh and it has proven to be very successful.

So if you want a break from shopping, come along to Unit 103, The Centre, Livingston, just outside at the entrance to Centre Car Park One and Debenhams is nearby. Come along to share your memories or just for a blether. You will be very welcome.

[westlothian.gov.uk](http://westlothian.gov.uk)



West Lothian  
Council

# Buried Treasure

The Braids were a prominent family in Livingston Village, owning several houses. Robert Braid was born in 1864 in Livingston, then in his early years he worked in Glasgow as an engine driver before taking up work in commercial photography in 1909.

The Braid family moved back to West Lothian sometime between 1901 and 1911, settling in Livingston Village, where Robert Braid took up residence in the village Post Office and his wife, Elizabeth, served as postmistress.

From the darkroom at the back of the post office, Robert took advantage of the Edwardian post card phenomenon, producing hundreds of postcard views of West Lothian.

Robert's father made a special door for the post office, which held sixteen glass plates as a border, each one depicting local people. These photographs are similar to the romantic paintings of working

class people popular in the Victorian period. Fortunately, Andy Wanstall had the foresight to photograph the door in 1971, when it was still in situ. At some point after this it was stolen, and its whereabouts are now unknown.

The occupier of the building in 1971, John Shields, found hundreds of Braid's glass plates in the garage when he moved in. Unaware of their significance, he filled the inspection pit in the garage with them and concreted over the top. Presumably they are still there!

Fortunately several of Braid's postcards survive; some from the Museums collection are shown here.

Door panels, 1971



Shepherd and his lass



Cycle Parade, 1911



Milkmaid with her suitor

## Museum venues Spring / Summer opening times

<b>Almond Valley Heritage Trust</b>	Millfield, Livingston Village, Tel: 01506 414957. 7 days a week: 10am-5pm <a href="http://www.almondvalley.co.uk">www.almondvalley.co.uk</a>
<b>Annet House Museum &amp; Garden</b>	143 High St, Linlithgow, Tel: 01506 670677. Mon to Sat 11am-5pm. Sun 1pm - 4pm. Open 25 Feb - 31 Oct <a href="http://www.annethousemuseum.org.uk">www.annethousemuseum.org.uk</a>
<b>Armada Library</b>	North St, Armadale, Tel: 01501 282282. Mon & Wed 10am-3pm. Tues 11am - 6pm. Thurs 10am - 7pm. Fri 10am - 5pm. Sat 9am - 1pm. <a href="http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries">www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries</a>
<b>Bennie Museum Trust</b>	9-11 Mansefield St, Bathgate, Tel: 01506 634944. April - September, Mon-Sat 11am - 4pm <a href="http://www.benniemuseum.org.uk">www.benniemuseum.org.uk</a>
<b>Blackridge Community Museum</b>	Blackridge Library, Craig Inn Centre, Blackridge, Tel: 01501 752396. Tues 2pm-6.30pm, Wed 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30pm-4.30pm, Thurs 2pm-6.30pm <a href="http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries">www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries</a>
<b>Broxburn Library</b>	West Main Street, Broxburn, Tel: 01506 775600. Mon & Tues 10am-5pm. Wed 10am-3pm. Thurs 10am-7pm. Fri 10am-3pm. Sat 9am-1pm. <a href="http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries">www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries</a>
<b>Hopetoun House</b>	Queensferry, Tel: 0131 331 2451. 25 March - 25 September. 10.30am - 5pm (last entry 4pm) <a href="http://www.hopetounhouse.com">www.hopetounhouse.com</a>
<b>Linlithgow Canal Centre &amp; Museum</b>	Canal Basin, Manse Rd, Linlithgow. Tel: 01506 671215 (answering service). Weekends: 1.30-5pm (last boat sailing 4.30pm). 26 Mar -25 Sept. Weekdays: 1.30-5pm (last boat sailing 4.30pm). (last boat sailing 4.30pm). 4 July-12 Aug. Falkirk Wheel Cruises: 29 May, 26 June, 31 July, 28 August. Canal Fun Day: 14 August <a href="http://www.lucs.org.uk">www.lucs.org.uk</a>
<b>Linlithgow Library</b>	The Vennel, Linlithgow, Tel: 01506 775490. Mon & Fri 9am-5pm. Tues & Thurs 9am-7pm. Wed 9am-3pm. Sat 9am-1pm <a href="http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries">www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries</a>
<b>Whitburn Community Museum</b>	Whitburn Library, Union Rd, Whitburn, Tel: 01501 678050. Mon & Wed 10am - 3pm. Tues & Fri 11am-5pm. Thurs 10am-7pm. Sat 9am-1pm <a href="http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries">www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries</a>



# West Lothian's Steel Foundations

Scottish steel usually makes us think of the big steel works like Ravenscraig and Dalzell in Motherwell, but West Lothian had its own steel industry which played an important part in Scotland's industrial past.

Although the county was rich in natural resources, it didn't develop as an iron and steel making centre like Lanarkshire. However, the good rail links and coal supplied meant that melting and casting steel became a major industry in Bathgate and Armadale. Steel foundries supplied components both locally, to industries such as coal and shale mining, and to other companies further afield.

The biggest works was the Balbardie Foundry in Bathgate, founded by the Menzies family in 1907. It originally produced steel castings for railways, and later other types of products including engine parts for the QE2. It later became known as the North British Steel Foundry, still controlled by the Menzies family.

Armadale had two steel foundries. The first was founded in 1876 as the Bathville Steel Works, a small company, which was taken over in 1892 by Dickson and Mann, who made castings for the local coal and shale mining industries.

In 1913 the Atlas Steel Foundry and Engineering Company was set up to make heavy castings; the timing was good, because during the First World War there was a large demand for ship and naval castings. Women were recruited to replace the men who had been called up.

Between the wars the foundry industries continued to prosper despite the general decline in heavy industries; a new works, the West Lothian Steel Foundry, was opened in the early 1920s to make small castings.

Renton & Fisher, of the Hopetoun Steel Works in Bathgate, made high quality castings; they were among the first to make steel using electricity instead of coal-fired furnaces.



*North British Steel Foundry employees, c.1910*



*Turbine casting for the liner Mauretania, Atlas Foundry 1937*

All the foundries continued in operation until after the Second World War, but the decline of heavy industry in Scotland took its toll; Dickson & Mann closed in 1969, and Renton & Fisher in 1982. The North British Steel Foundry took over the Atlas works in 1968, but the Atlas closed in 1990. The North British was itself taken over several times, but it continued on the original site until 2009, when the works closed and production was transferred to a new site in South Queensferry.

As with other heavy industries, it is difficult to represent steel founding in a museum context except through photographs. However, we were recently fortunate enough to be given a moulder's toolbox, which was used by James Ferguson at the Atlas foundry. This complements our photographs and will allow us to show the part played by skilled workers in producing these huge castings.

*Moulder's toolbox and tools, many handmade*



*An early publicity photograph showing mining castings by Dickson & Mann*



# We have moved!

## Archive, Records Management and Museum Services have recently completed a move to new premises.

The Records and Heritage collections have been relocated to purpose-built accommodation at Kirkton Service Centre in Livingston in a shared building along with West Lothian Council Building services, Customer Service Centre and Social Inclusion. Our public search room is open and researchers are welcome to visit to consult West Lothian's historical collections.

### Museums

The Museums Service is also now open for business. Our new contact details are: West Lothian Council Museums Service, Kirkton Service Centre, 1 Lister Road, Livingston, EH54 7BL

T: **01506 283666/ 652**

E: **[museums@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:museums@westlothian.gov.uk)**

Reminiscence borrowers should enter the building through the front entrance. Use the phone in the inner vestibule to contact us and we will come to let you in.

## Our current opening hours and new contact details are:

**Monday - Thursday:**  
**9am - 12pm, 2pm - 5pm**

**Friday:**  
**9am - 12pm, 2pm - 4pm**

**Address:**  
**West Lothian Council Archives and Records,**  
**Kirkton Service Centre,**  
**1 Lister Road,**  
**Livingston, EH54 7BL**

**T: 01506 283670**  
**E: [archive@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:archive@westlothian.gov.uk)**

# Innovation & Design

The Scottish Government has designated 2016 as the year of innovation, architecture and design

West Lothian Council Archives has set up a dedicated twitter feed 'Innovation & Design' featuring West Lothian heritage collections to provide an insight into the area's built heritage, and to showcase examples of invention and design through the years.

The twitter feed went live in January and will run throughout 2016. Each week we feature selected images, stories and facts to give a flavour of the material held in the West Lothian Council heritage collections.



Many of the images featured in the twitter feed come for the thousands of photographs held in the archives including the Livingston Development Corporation (LDC) photographic collection, and track the growth of the new town. Through them, we can explore various aspects of the development of Livingston including housing, industry, town planning and public art.

The more innovative and inventive nature of West Lothians' residents is revealed through Local History resources including selected newspaper articles.

Anyone interested in further exploring these themes can view the historical sources in person. Archives hold house type drawings for each of the districts in Livingston as well as housing drawings and building warrant drawings for the towns and villages across West Lothian.

The LDC records also include board drawings which reveal much of Livingston's built heritage, as well as marketing and publicity material.





# Inside the Archives: A Box of Delights

**The Council's Museums and Archives Services have recently moved into new premises at Kirkton Service Centre. This involved the relocation of our entire object collection and we are now undertaking a full audit.**

As we were re-shelving collections we came across a large locked metal box with no markings. Some digging revealed that the box had come to the Museums Service in the 1990s from West Calder Library. Although it was clear that there were items inside, there was no documentation to suggest what might be inside.

We were able to gain access to the box and found several bundles of documents dating from the 1866 to 1937. There were no signs of anyone having accessed the box in the last 50 years, maybe more. The box contained a range of documents relating to the administration of West Calder parish and includes:

- Specifications, schedules and a blue-print for the construction of a footbridge over Breich Water
- Papers of Duncan Hay, District Clerk for West Calder District Council
- Plans and correspondence relating to proposed public conveniences
- Plans for a burial ground; play centre; leisure park; Parish Council offices
- Will and estate inventory of Richard Ellis

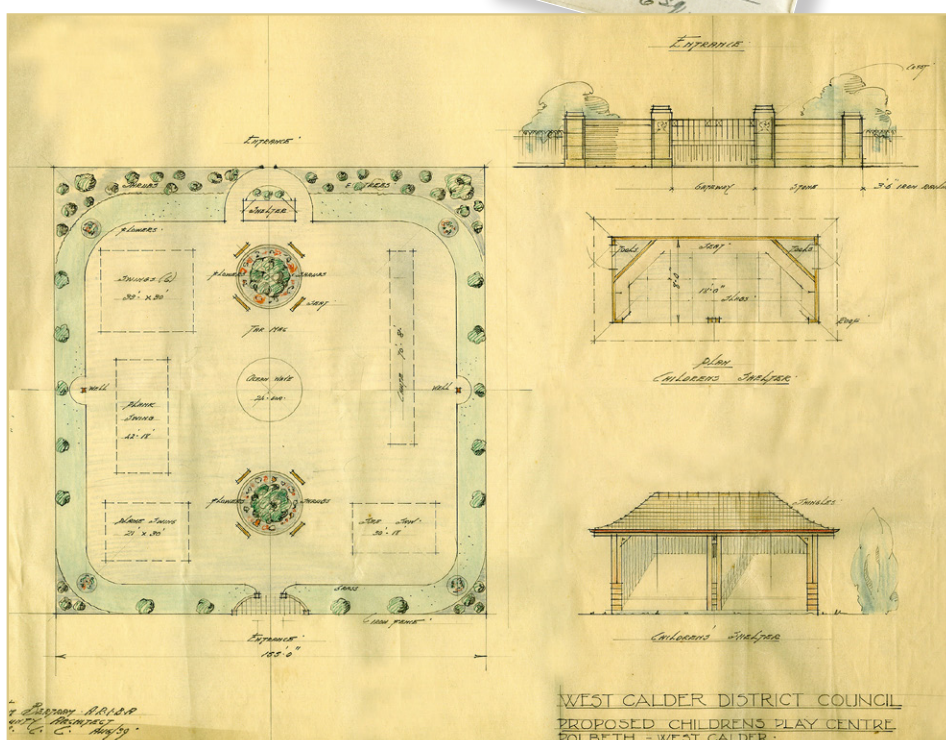
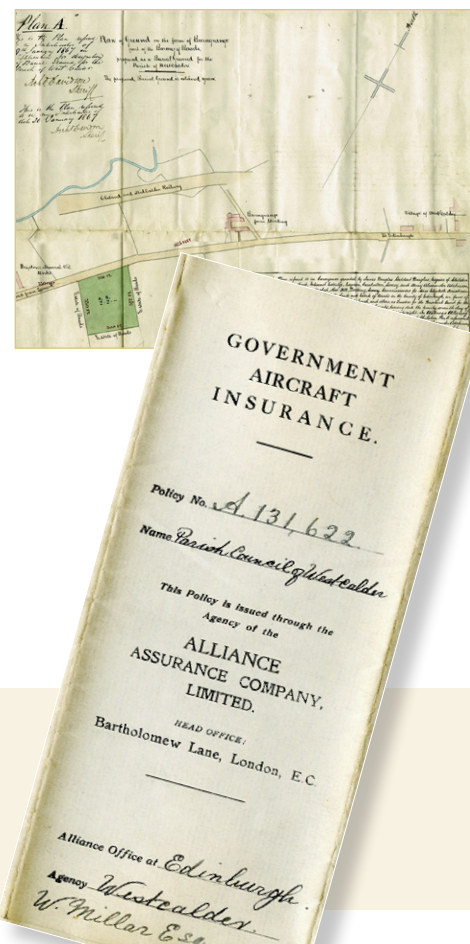
One particularly interesting record is a rolled list of residents of West Calder which details which residents were able to take evacuees, if they were able to take boys, girls or adults and whether they were able to provide their own

mattresses and blankets. Around 25% of listed residents were able to take an evacuee; Rev. Quigley at the Presbytery is able to take as many as 12 girls.

The box also contains several insurance policies providing cover for a range of items from a lawnmower to playpark equipment as well as a Government Aircraft insurance policy for the parish of West Calder for 1916. This insures the parish for up to £3000 if it is destroyed or damaged directly or indirectly by aerial craft (hostile or otherwise) or shots, shells, bombs, or missiles.

The documents have been transferred to the Archives Services. They are now being stored in acid-free archival boxes; the now empty box will remain in museums.

**If you are interested in viewing this collection, please make an appointment to come along to our new premises at Kirkton Service Centre by emailing [archive@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:archive@westlothian.gov.uk) or calling 01506 283670.**





# For King and Country: West Lothian's Patriotic Wartime Families

The West Lothian Local History Library is putting together a booklet on the large families in West Lothian who made the ultimate sacrifice for King and Country during the First World War.

During the four years of the War, there were over 30 West Lothian families with more than three relations serving at one time: some families had as many as seven members all serving overseas.

Recognition of the importance of these families went as high as the King himself, who would send a telegram from the Privy Purse Office to congratulate the parents on their patriotism: 'His Majesty much appreciates the spirit of patriotism which prompted this example in one family of loyalty and devotion to their Sovereign and Empire'.

However, this admiration didn't protect their family members from the horrors of war. These families lived for many years with the constant worry of sons,

husbands, brothers fighting overseas, being injured or going missing; some families had to deal with the death of loved ones over and over again. One West Lothian family lost three of their sons, two of them within three weeks.

The West Lothian Local History Library is hoping to highlight the sacrifice these families made during WWI in their new booklet 'For King and Country - West Lothian's Patriotic Wartime Families'. Most of the information for this booklet, including photographs, has been researched in the West Lothian Courier.



The booklet (available for loan, but not for sale) can be requested from your local library.

For further information on this booklet, contact the West Lothian Local History Library on **01506 282492** or email [localhistory@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@westlothian.gov.uk)



## Bathgate Once More

Back in 2011 there was a major oral history project to capture the memories of some of the thousands of men and women who worked at British Leyland in Bathgate. The interviews, photographs and memorabilia which were gathered during the project were deposited with the West Lothian Local History Library.

The material has now been catalogued and is available to the public. There's no need to make an appointment – you can come in any time during our opening hours:

**Mondays: Closed**

**Tues-Fri: 10am – 5pm**

**First Saturday of the month: 9am – 1pm**



**For more information, email: [localhistory@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@westlothian.gov.uk), or phone 01506 282491**

# Scotland's first Oil Rush

**West Lothian takes the starring role in a documentary on the Scottish shale industry to be screened on BBC Scotland in the late spring.**

TVI Vision is a media production company that produces all sorts of content for TV, radio and the Web, and their presenter for the programme will be Professor Iain Stewart. Iain previously presented the BBC series Planet Oil, and more recently BBC Scotland's documentary about the great Scottish scientist and mathematician, John Clerk Maxwell.

The company has been out and about during the last couple of months filming in all weathers in Bathgate, Uphall, Broxburn, Mid Calder, West Calder, Livingston, Addiewell, Polbeth, and 'over the border' at Tarbrax and Woolfords in South Lanarkshire.

They've interviewed former miners, and many people with shale connections, as well as local historians. Much help has been given by

the Almond Valley Heritage Centre and the West Lothian Local History Library, and everyone, they report, has been very helpful and generous with their time.

Despite the wintry, sub-zero weather, they got what they were looking for, some great contributions from our presenter Iain Stewart - and even an unexpected interview with an expert who just happened to be coming up Broxburn Bing when he met the film crew.

Look out for the publicity nearer the time, and don't miss the film when it's shown on BBC Scotland later this year.



*A shot of our crew at the entrance to Cobbinshaw No. 5, mined during the First World War in probably the most inhospitable and remote of all the shale works, high up on moorland near Tarbrax. ©TVI Vision*



*Iain Stewart hears more of Addiewell's history from Dr John Watts of Addiewell, former rector of St Kentigern's Academy. ©TVI Vision*

## Torphichen and its Wells

Supported by  
**The National Lottery**  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



**Torphichen is dominated by its ancient Preceptory, but there's more to its history than that.**

The name of the local estate and mansionhouse, Wallhouse, is a corruption of Well-house, and the village has been noted for centuries for its wells. Now the 'Water, Walks and Wells' project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, aims to engage local people in finding out the ecological and social history of Torphichen's wells.

At the centre of the village stands the 'Jubilee Well', so-called because it was refurbished in 1896 to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. It was originally built by the Free Church minister, the Rev. John Duns in 1852. The Jubilee Well is currently in a slow state of decline because of weathering, and this project aims to

conserve and restore it in a way that will preserve it long into the future. The project also aims to share knowledge about the ancient history and the related current natural heritage that are a strong backdrop to the village. We aim to do this by a series of engagement and education sessions alongside research and conservation work involving local residents. The Jubilee Well will be restored, and we'll create a series of maps of themed feature walks around the area.

While the Jubilee Well is the obvious focal point for the project, there are other wells around Torphichen - Wallhouse and St. John's Well, and at least two others - that we will link together to form a 'Water Walk' map. This will be based on historical and environmental research into the natural history of the watershed, the flora and fauna of the area, the local names of burns and the other wells that form part of the catchment area. We also hope to include dowsing activity and local place name research gathered through interviews with local residents.

Observing and sharing the importance of local biodiversity and ecology is also a very important aspect of this project. While mapping the springs and local wells, the idea is also to profile the abundant flora and fauna that can be seen in the vicinity of these West Lothian watery places.

To take part in or find out more about the project, contact [arts@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:arts@westlothian.gov.uk) or call **01506 773871**.

The project is funded by a Heritage Lottery Fund - Sharing Heritage Grant, and is being organised and co-funded by Torphichen Community Council with assistance from West Lothian Council Planning and Community Arts Services and West Lothian Local History Library. The project will run from spring/summer 2016.



*Plaque on Jubilee Well*



*The Square, Torphichen in 1969, with Jubilee Well on right.*



# West Lothian Family History Society

West Lothian Family History Society has now opened an office within the Lanthorn Community Centre in Kenilworth Rise Livingston.



The bespoke research Centre is a result of the continuing partnership with West Lothian Libraries which brings us to Livingston for the first time, and reflects the growing interest in family history throughout West Lothian.

Society volunteers will run the new research centre on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as our established advice desk in the Local History Library at Linlithgow which will continue on Wednesdays, and Fridays. All this now means that visitors can bring their family

history enquiries to the Society from Monday to Friday each week.

The Lanthorn is also our new venue for meetings and lectures. These are held on the first Tuesday evening each month, from September to June, and start at 7pm. Members recently enjoyed our last invited speaker who lectured on Census records of Scotland, England, and the USA.

The Society also has a long standing arrangement for monthly evening visits to the National Records of Scotland, when members carry out their own research.

Upcoming events can be seen on the Society's website at [www.wlfhs.org.uk](http://www.wlfhs.org.uk) - or drop into either of the Centres and find out more. New members are always welcome!



## Bridgend Shale project

In 2015, the Bridgend Bulletin Group gained funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project on the shale heritage of Bridgend.

The village, two miles east of Linlithgow, came into existence in 1884 when the Linlithgow Oil Company was set up to exploit the shale beneath the estates of Champfleurie and Ochiltree. The oil works and candleworks were built at Bridgend. There were four rows of miners' cottages behind the church at Kingscavil, and a shop and a pub, making a village of some 700 people. The rows at Auldhill Entry (the original name for Bridgend) housed another 430. Other workers came out each day from Linlithgow by horse-drawn brake. The two shale mines at Champfleurie and Ochiltree alone employed 305 men in 1890 – plus those employed in the oil works and refinery.

The company, never highly successful, was wound up in 1902. The mines were sold to James Ross & Co. of Philpstoun and some of the men got jobs at Philpstoun oil works, but many had to leave the area to find work elsewhere.

The rows at Kingscavil were demolished in the 1930s and residents were re-housed in council housing at Bridgend. Some of the miners' rows, now refurbished, survive at Bridgend, as does the old brick-built school on the main road, though it's now converted into flats.

The project brings together P6/7 pupils of Bridgend Primary School and members of the community. They are sharing together what

they have learned and what they can remember of the shale industry. Community events have been held, attended by over 50 people.

Bruce Jamieson gave an illustrated talk about what life was like in Bridgend, the 'Cavil and Philpstoun in those days. Some of those in the hall shared stories of their relatives who were involved in the industry. Photos and models of things like pit helmets and lamps made by P6/7 pupils were on display.

Over 20 people went to the Shale Museum in Livingston and began to get the feel for what life was like for miners thanks to the reconstruction of a pit. BP donated old records of the many oil companies to the museum and they are being digitized. For example, old wage books and employment records will let us trace a family member who worked in the shale.

Meanwhile the children are working on a creative arts project around shale and life in the rows, which will result in a short film. A book on Bridgend and shale will be another outcome of the project. If you would like to get involved, or have any photographs, objects or memories that would be of interest, contact [bridgendbulletin@gmail.com](mailto:bridgendbulletin@gmail.com)



## West Lothian History and Amenity Society

**There are two meetings left in the WLHAS 2015-16 syllabus:**

Wed 20 April, 7.30pm

Ecclesmachan Village Hall,

**Harry Knox**

***Vanished railways of West Lothian***

Wed 18 May, 7.30pm

Chalmers Hall, Linlithgow Bridge,

**Hector Woodhouse**

***Building the Forth Road Bridge: stories of a young engineer***

The society is currently planning its 2016-17 season, and has secured what will surely be a very popular speaker and topic for its November meeting. If you were fascinated by the story of the King in the Car Park – the finding of the remains of Richard III under a municipal car park in Leicester – then make a date in your diary for 16 November. Phillippa Langley, the moving spirit behind the astonishingly successful project will be in Linlithgow to talk about 'The Finding of Richard III'. Afterwards there will be a chance to chat with Phillippa who will be signing copies of her book.



## Comments? Suggestions?

*If you've enjoyed reading this newsletter – or not enjoyed it – let us know. We'd like to hear the sort of articles that interest you, and your comments, suggestions, and feedback will be welcome. If you have any suggestions for future articles, or for improvements that might be made, don't hesitate to get in touch.*

**Please contact [sybil.cavanagh@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:sybil.cavanagh@westlothian.gov.uk)**