



Life is for Livingston: *Our Story*

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Recollections of new town life



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Introduction

On 17th April 1962 Livingston was designated as Scotland's fourth new town. This announcement would permanently transform not only the landscape of West Lothian but the lives of thousands; from the villagers who would soon find themselves part of a rapidly expanding new town, the businesses from across the globe who would locate to the area, and the people who would leave their homes in search of a new life, to those who would eventually be born and brought up in the town.

This booklet, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, captures the memories and stories of current and past residents of Livingston. The local voices serve to enrich and illuminate the story of the town, giving it a strength and character which demonstrate that new towns are about so much more than slum clearance and economic regeneration.

The stories in the booklet have been extracted from a number of oral history interviews undertaken by volunteers and archive staff. The quest to capture the stories of the people of Livingston continues. If you have a story to contribute, please get in touch with the West Lothian Council Archives. All stories collected will be permanently preserved in the archives, becoming a rich source of history for future generations to enjoy.

Before the New Town

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Livingston Station south, 1950s. Image courtesy of David Noon via WLLHL.

The story of Livingston begins long before the establishment of the new town, and some of our interviewees have memories of an earlier life in Livingston.

John Gray got a job at the Scottish Machinery Testing Station in Howden House, in the early 1950s. This was a time when the agricultural industry was changing from horse power to the tractor and new machinery was becoming available. The Station at Howden tested the machinery before it could be sold, to prevent accidents happening. John describes Howden House at that time.

...The Howden House was split into two when we were there, you see. Now the Director of Engineering, a man called Walty West, he stayed in the house. As you look at the house he stayed on the right hand side of the house with his family...the other half of the house was the drawing office and the office that paid people and that was split into two. Now all the engineering workshops were down where the theatre is now, but the two places were part and parcel of the same combine, it was an estate. See originally where the theatre is now was the coach place for where they had the horses and the stables you see, but then when the LDC took over they eventually made it into a theatre and then fifteen to twenty years later they upgraded it...that's the Howden House...

John Gray

There were approximately 20-30 engineering and office staff working in the Scottish Machinery Testing Station at that time.

...We all seemed to drink in the same place called The Bothy... they came from all walks, they all had a

background in farming, that was important... We even had a weather station there and one of the ladies used to go down, and take the measurement of it...

John Gray

John lived in digs at Livingston Inn at a cost of £2.10s (£2.50). This covered food, lodging and washing. He reminisces about his surroundings in Livingston Village.

Well they were just an old fashioned village...and the buses used to run through the middle, and the coal fires, you could smell the coal fires you know...The post office, I don't know if you've ever been in the village but there's a post box in one of the [houses] that was the post office, I don't think there'll be any now...And the village shop that's there now, it didn't exist you see, and across the road was a small shop, every day the groceries were delivered, and a hairdresser, that's all...

John Gray



Howden House as Scottish Station of the National Institute for Agricultural Engineering. Image courtesy of Mr Phil Hutchison via WLLHL.



Livingston Inn, c1975.

John remembers Livingston Development Corporation temporarily taking over the offices in Howden House until their own premises were built. The Scottish Machinery Testing Centre moved to the Bush Estate in Penicuik. John moved to Edinburgh for a time and was married and had three children. He later returned to Livingston in 1972, this time to the new town.



Jim Gordon (front left) with his cousin and grandfather, in the garden of a miners' row in Livingston Station. 1957.

Jim Gordon grew up in the village of Livingston Station. He recalls life before the new town.

Livingston Station was a typical shale miners village. There were rows of houses, normally eight in a block... The village itself was a friendly place to live. Although there wis nae dire poverty, people never seemed to be interested in materialistic wealth. As long as ye had food on the table, a shirt on yer back and enough left over to pay for a holiday in the Summer then everybody wis happy.

The village at that time had the same as every other Scottish Oil's funded village. An institute an' a boolin green along wi' a church and a primary school and a cooperative shop known as The Store.

The boolin green wis oot o bounds fur us young yins until we were 16 an' had a responsible adult wi' us. Peter Hardie, Jimmy Wardrope, Davie Reston and Wullie Pender along wi' Harry Gray wer some o' the worthies who controlled the running o' the Institute and the boolin green. The Institute wis where a' the village dances and if yae could afford it where a' the local weddin's were held. It also had a snooker room which held two full sized tables, a games



This aerial view shows the landscape that would eventually become home to Knighstridge.

room wher ye played draughts and dominoes, a library, a kitchen and ante rooms where the doctor's surgery took place. Ye couldnae get tae play billiards or snooker until ye were 16 there as weel.

Jim Gordon

Like her husband Jim, Rhona Gordon also started life in Livingston Station.



Rhona Gordon, aged 12, 1962.

...it was still a very small village mainly made up of what were the Rows, the miners' houses. There were other houses built at Broomieknowe which had upstairs and downstairs eh also some block flats, two up two down ones. Em but my mum and dad lived in 28 North Street, one of the miners' houses. They lodged with a man called Andrew Walker where they lived in the upstairs part of his house. This was quite common in the 50s when houses were scarce and people took in lodgers to their houses to get a wee bit more money I suppose. The house we were in was an end at the very end of the street and my mother used to go down and lay Mr Walkers' fire for him she used to say. I think she must have done a wee bit of tidying up as well, maybe that was part of the deal to lodge there.

Rhona Gordon

Rhona vividly remembers the small village shops of her childhood.

Oh we had what we called 'up the street,' we had a West Calder Cooperative which had a kind of ironmongery side and a food side where you had to put your book in a box and they called your number when it was your turn to get served. It was great as everything was loose;

I mean you bought your tea and sugar and they got it out of big bags and put it into smaller bags for you to take home, your potatoes were weighed as well and the butter cut from a slab. Then next door was the Co-op Drapery department and I remember the woman was called Olive who ran that and she had the most beautiful auburn long hair; different people from the village sometimes worked with her through the years but I mainly remember Olive. Wullie McMillan had the next shop and he had a shop that had a small doorway but I know it went through the back but Wullie could get hold of anything or so it seemed to me and next door to that we got a Hays Store which was a wee bit like the Co-op but I remember it having all these boxes of loose biscuits at the left hand side of the shop and you could buy biscuits by the lb.

Rhona Gordon



Livingston Station Co-op, 1962.

Like many mining villages, Livingston Station had an annual Gala Day.



Livingston Station Gala Day, the Women's Hoop Race, 1950s.

The Gala Day was always a cause for excitement among the bairns. Held around the 18th June it was normally the Saturday after Lithgae Marches. It was a whole week o' sports. Because Lithgae Marches was held on the Tuesday a' the shows used to arrive in Livingston Station on the Wednesday while we were at school. It wis a race to get to the Show Park when the school shut for the day to find out what BIG shows wis there. BIG shows were the Dodgems, The Jungle Ride, Chairplanes, The Waltzer and the Dive Bombers. You would only ever have one or two o' the BIG shows because o' limited space but there wis always shootin' galleries, coconut shys, slot machines and an infuriatin stall where ye had to try an' throw a wooden ball into an enamel pail but it kept bouncing' back out.



Livingston Station Gala Day, 1950s.

...The week leadin' up tae the Gala Day the fireplace wid get polished, the house wid be spring cleaned, sometimes new curtains to impress the in-laws who would visit and the front step would be whitewashed. The garden would be tidied, hedges trimmed and flags hung out to create an atmosphere of celebration. Some folk even used to redecorate.

Jim Gordon



Miners' Rows in Glen Road, Livingston Station, 1950s.

Our Roots



Maternity ward at Bangour General Hospital, 1950s. Image courtesy of WLLHL

Most of the interviewees didn't start their lives in the 'new town'. Some grew up in wider West Lothian or in the villages that would later become part of Livingston, whilst others came from elsewhere in Scotland and beyond. Although they had different beginnings, they are united by their shared association with Livingston.

Jenifer Harley was born in Edinburgh on 15th August 1951. Her parents lived in East Lothian and Jenifer was brought up in Prestonpans.

...I had an idyllic childhood. Like other families just after the war we had to make ends meet. I remember combing the beach with my dad and two sisters when I was about four years old...looking for coal to keep the fire going. But we didn't know we were poor, we were happy...

Jenifer Harley

Douglas Roy grew up in Philpstoun, just outside Linlithgow.

...My Dad was a police officer and a house in Philpstoun was the police house which used to be the old police station, and I went to Bridgend Primary School...I was there for two and a half years to three years... with my dad being a police officer the divisional headquarters at that time, for West Lothian, was at Linlithgow. And then when they moved divisional headquarters to Bathgate we also had to move so we moved to another police house at Boghall, at 193 Philip Avenue in Boghall and I was there for three [years] when divisional headquarters moved again... when the new police station at Livingston had not long opened...

Douglas Roy

Sib Penman grew up in the fishing village of Pittenweem in Fife.

Aw, it was lovely, yeah, it really was, everybody knew everybody else, even people that didn't really go to church or anything like that, they still knew where they came from and what they did.

Sib Penman



Sib Penman grew up in this house in Pittenweem. Image courtesy of Sib Penman.

Rev. Ross McLaren also grew up in Fife. He was born in Newburgh in Fife and attended Bell Baxter School in Cupar. Ross went on to study at Edinburgh University and the Scottish Congregational College. He was ordained as a congregational minister in 1964 at

Tillicoultry and married the same year to Elma from Shetland. The couple have two children, Shaun and Vaila. Ross moved from Tillicoultry to a ministry in East Kilbride in 1969, where he had his first introduction to new towns. After a short while he was asked by his church, the Congregational Union of Scotland, to take up the vacant position on the Ecumenical Team Ministry in Livingston.

...I think I was asked because of my ecumenical commitment and conviction, it was a real sense of escaping from the dark life of East Kilbride... It was obviously difficult, the folk in East Kilbride disappointed at having their minister whipped away as quickly but the great thing about that experience was that it really did break us in, in terms of a new town. And so we came to Livingston and very positively feeling that it's bound to be better than East Kilbride was, and it was.

Ross McLaren



Pumphferston Gala Day, 1970. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.

Margaret White and her twin sister were born in Bangour Hospital on 26th December 1959. Margaret lived in Pumphferston with her family until she was 18 years old. She describes growing up in Pumphferston.

... It was a little mining village really, and there was a lot of works and things...everybody knew everybody. Nobody locked their doors, it wouldn't occur to you to lock your door... You knew all your neighbours.

The kids, we were outside playing all the time, we didn't have computer games...Skipping, Peevers, Elastics, you name it, you know, hide and seek. We just weren't allowed into the house until it was dinner time or lunch time... that was the only time we were allowed in the house. And as we got older that didn't really change much, we were out all the time with our teenage friends and we would go to the top park and just hang out, talk...

Margaret White

Iain McClafferty also spent most of his childhood in Pumphferston. Iain describes Pumphferston as a wee village. There was the refinery surrounded by shale bings to the east of the village. To the west of the village, where Livingston is today, was open countryside, mostly small holdings and farmland. From his home in Pumphferston, Iain witnessed the building of the new town.

I remember when Craigshill was being built, it was kind of resented I think. Farms and smallholdings were subject to compulsory purchase orders, cleared away to build the housing estates and factories right next door to the village. It was kind of imposed on us and most people resented it, although other people thought there were jobs to be had and I'm sure that was true. As a youngster I was only concerned that they were building over my playground but then I left early, left at 17. We used to walk from Pumphferston, round to what we call the Luggy Wood and it's just a wind break really where the Craigshill Sports Centre is just now. We'd walk up from Pumphferston and sit on the corner of that wood and you could look right over the Almond Valley to the Pentlands. You could actually hear the steam trains on what must have been the Carstairs or Edinburgh to Carstairs line. I'm not sure where that goes now. You could hear it; you could see the steam and the smoke, yeah on a quiet summer evening apart from that all you heard was birds maybe a few cows or sheep or something. It was a different world and different place then...

Iain McClafferty



School life at Pumphferston Primary, 1969. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.

Moving to Livingston

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Housing in Staffa, Deans South, c.1975.

Many of Livingston's early residents came to the town in search of work or a new home. The interviewees discuss their own moves to the town.

Many people saw their move to the new town as an escape from poor housing conditions in Glasgow and elsewhere.

...I came to Livingston from Wishaw which was a relief, because in Wishaw the house we were in was crawling with cockroaches and mice and I was pregnant on my fourth child and I was terrified...when we came to the house here, brand new house, what a difference it makes where I could sit down and relax...

Ella Knox

Garry Morrison left Glasgow for Livingston as a child. The family had been living with his mother's parents and it was overcrowded. His family settled in Deans South in 1965.

...we moved to Livingston to stay in Deans South which was one of the first estates built as part of the Livingston New Town. At that time Deans South was, well it was beside Livingston Station which was one of the three villages that formed Livingston New Town... I do remember my mother telling me it was a fairly desolate place at that point in terms of getting to. There was a bus that came from along the old A8, not sure even if the M8 was built at this point, maybe it was, but the bus came through the old A8 through Bathgate along that route and the bus stopped at what was called the Road End

down where the gas board used to be and then it was a walk up to Deans South. So...it felt fairly isolated initially would be the sense I had, but then as a kid you don't really notice these things.

Garry Morrison

Rena moved to Livingston in 1969 after living overseas for a number of years. Rena's husband had been in the army. The couple moved back to Edinburgh from Germany and couldn't get a house in the city.

...We stayed in Edinburgh and couldnae get a house... so we come into Livingston and got one within 6 weeks. In fact we moved in on my birthday so, I was 31 then [laughs] I'm a lot older now...

Rena



Shuttle Street, Glasgow, mid 1960s. Image courtesy of John R Hume.

Jenifer Harley lived in Fife before moving to Livingston. Although she expected the move to be temporary, she still felt very apprehensive.

I was terrified because I remember as a child going through West Lothian on the way through to an auntie's who lived in Johnstone. I thought it was miles and miles away. You can drive from Musselburgh to Livingston in about half an hour now using the bypass, but then in the car the road just seemed to take forever, going through the "Calders" and other towns. But I was very excited, and anxious. We rented a Livingston Development Corporation house, sold our house in Glenrothes and moved temporarily into Quentin Rise in Dedridge; the first people to move in to this newly built house. It was November 15th 1977 and I remember it was snowing about the second or third week after we arrived. I took my wee boy who was about three across the road and knocked on the door of another newly moved in neighbour. I introduced myself and said "This is David; I see you've got a wee boy, could David and him maybe play together?" They started school together and were friends throughout primary school." We bought the house and still live there now.

Jennifer Harle



New Dedridge housing, c.1974.

As an employee of Livingston Development Corporation, Douglas Roy's mother was well placed to choose a new home for her family.

...My mum was employed by Livingston Development Corporation as a draughtswoman so she was responsible for doing a lot of the drawings for the roads and housing estates that were rapidly springing up around the town; she had identified Willowbank as a really nice housing

development that was just about to get built and convinced my dad it'd be a very good idea to move to the town. So we went and had a look at it, at that point it was just a building site, nothing, no walls up or anything like that, identified where in the layout we wanted to stay, she picked her house before it was even built and we got that house which was nice and it was one of the first ones to have been built on that street. As a child I remember playing in the foundations of the houses as they were getting built round about us. The trenches had been dug...it was great fun to play in there. Willowbank at that point was the edge of the town so literally you stepped outside your door and you were into fields and trees and there was nothing else round about, there was nothing north of us. And it was great.

Douglas Roy

After attending teacher training college, Elizabeth Henderson came to Livingston in 1980. Elizabeth's first teaching post was in Blackburn. At the time the Livingston Development Corporation was encouraging teachers to come to the new town.

I came to teach at Blackburn but for whatever reason the arrangement between Lothian Region and the LDC at the time seemed to be... to encourage teachers and so on to come to West Lothian that you were entitled to a house from the LDC. So Doctor Valentine, the Rector at Blackburn Academy at that time, said, "Oh, all my young staff live in Livingston." Well, two of us fell for that because of the fifteen probationers who started the day I started at Blackburn only two of us lived in Livingston.
Elizabeth Henderson

Joy came to Livingston in 1978 after she got a job at Paterson's Shortbread in Houston Industrial Estate.

One of the other ladies who worked in one of the other units, her husband worked in LDC housing and she had said "Why don't you apply for a house?"; and I got one quite quickly, so I was delighted because this was the first house of my very own... and it had a small garden, so I was delighted...

Joy



Joy started work at Paterson's in 1978.

Manus McGuire moved to Livingston with his family in 1979. At the time he was almost 17. He can recall feelings of apprehension about the move.

I was at that stage in my life that I didn't go to school here, did not have any friends here and as I was starting to grow as a working person, all my friends were in Edinburgh so it was kind of difficult and of course the stories you heard about Livingston was it was a concrete jungle you were going to. I don't know if anyone else has used that phrase but invariably I think that was my first impression. I think it was my father's first impression, my mum was far more upbeat about it, but I remember the first journey that my dad and I took to go to the house, and again with him working in Edinburgh and me working in Edinburgh as well, we took this bus, and I even remember it was called the 201 that went from Edinburgh all the way through to Livingston and I think it went to Bathgate although I could not swear on that, but it used to go...to Howden, Ladywell, Dedridge, the whole nine yards, and then up to Knightsridge...We were in Raeburn Rigg which was Carmondean, it was in November so it was a dark night, we got off the bus early, we did not know where we were walking to and we eventually found this house in Raeburn Rigg and after probably about a year's settlement, loved it. I have got to say I probably love Livingston.

Manus McGuire

Some incomers relocated from beyond the border.

We'd been in Northampton about five years, and as Robert said the house was lovely, but the people weren't friendly, and every time we came back to Scotland... we were driving back down one time and we both said, "I don't really want to go back"... and we decided... that's why we wanted to come back to Scotland. I was quite

happy there while I was working, but I had my two boys down there, and in those days you didn't go back to work after you had children, so I was left in the house on my own...

Sandra

Many Livingstonians such as Steven McGurk arrived in the new town as young children, meaning that they only have vague memories of their relocation to the town.

I can't really remember moving to Livingston, to be honest. I remember my mum, we walked from what I think was Livingston Station and we walked along a long road to go see a house that we were going to be moving into...

Steven McGurk

Livingston is still a growing town, continuing to attract new residents. Maureen arrived in Livingston in 2006.

I stayed in the centre of Edinburgh and I'd taken early retirement, so I was looking for a smaller house with a garden, 'cos I stayed in an old flat; I didn't really want to come out to Livingston, but this is where I ended up, it's turned out a lot better, I must admit, than I thought it would. You know, in years gone by, they would say "Oh, you wouldnae want to live in Livingston", and it's this and it's that and the next thing, you just had this picture of Livingston conjured up in your mind, and you're thinking "Oh, it must be terrible out there", but when I started to come out and visit my son, that's when I noticed all the greenery and that, and I did like that part of it, and I thought "Oh, it isn't as bad...it doesn't look as bad as I thought it was".

Maureen

Settling In



Children playing outside housing at Ladywell, c.1974.

Many new residents spent a considerable time acclimatising to their new surroundings. For others, the process was much easier, and life-long friendships were quickly forged.

Sib Penman was employed as the first teacher at Riverside Primary School. Her work in the community clearly helped her settle into the town.

..I was employed by Mid-Lothian Council because that's the council that employed people who lived in Livingston at that time. I started work at the beginning of May and I had, I think, eight children in my class and the head teacher had two. I loved it because it was new. There weren't very many people in the town at that time and the first shop wasn't built until the summer of 1966. I virtually lived in the School as I was so busy and just came home in the evenings to make dinner for my husband. I even attended church at the school as well.

Sib Penman

Jenifer Harley reflects upon her early life in Livingston and attempts to find her way around.

When we first arrived...there was only two or three of us actually in the houses at that time, and slowly residents moved in. I loved the house, [it] was very similar to the house I was brought up in; big living room, front and back windows, a lot of light coming in. The one abiding

memory I have is getting lost in Livingston, but I'm not the first person to do that with all the roundabouts. I remember my husband got stopped by the police on a spot check when he was driving home one night. They asked him what his address was and he couldn't remember the name of the street, so they breathalysed him. He was fine but just couldn't remember the address because we had literally moved in days before.

Jenifer Harley

Many of Livingston's new residents didn't know anyone when they first arrived in the town. Women like Jenifer Harley were able to meet other mothers through their children.



Leven Walk, Craigshill, c.1974.



Cameron Iron Works machine shop, c.1975.

My sister's boy David who was a couple of years older than my son, was bussed to school in Mid Calder, as the infrastructure of schools was not able to cope with the amount of new families in Dedridge. My own son, also David, spent his first three months of school at St Ninian's Primary as Bankton Primary was not completed in time for the summer intake. The meeting place for the children going on the bus to Mid Calder was where young mothers stood chatting and getting to know each other... that was a big community hub. Children would go off on the bus and the mums would then linger and chat and get to know each other. It was a pioneering time because you were all strangers and had to introduce yourself.

Jenifer Harley

Elaine Hope's family came to Livingston from Whitburn in 1970 when her dad got a job at the Cameron Iron Works. Elaine was a toddler when the family moved. She reflects on her early memories of life in Livingston.

I have a vague memory of where we were in Ladywell, there was nothing else beyond us, our street, you know... which was a street called Sedgemark, and Willowbank hadn't been built at the time but I remember it being built, because I remember traipsing through mud to get to the doctors, because the doctors surgery was actually in a house in Willowbank, so they built sort of wee bungalows at the front, and that was where the doctors surgery was. There was no nurseries, we went to a playgroup which was down in Forestbank... that's still in Ladywell. When we came there was basically just Deans

South, Ladywell, bits of Howden, and Craigshill, that was kind of it, so our life was centred around Craigshill really, because there was nothing else... eventually it sort of sprung up, the Ferns pub, and Christie's the sweetie shop I suppose, and there was a bank and whatnot there...and then St. Paul's Church sort of evolved round there... but mostly we went to Craigshill, to the library, to the shops... My best friend lived next door, we were fortunate that my next door neighbour, the girl was the same age as me and we were in the same class at school. And my mum made friends with the lady that lived three doors away, to the point where they were friends for life, and the lady only died last year and my mum the year before and they still kept up.

Elaine Hope

Lantern Local History Group discusses the mixed experiences of newcomers arriving in Livingston. Margaret comments that some people found it difficult to settle because they didn't have family support networks around them and felt isolated. Sandra's experience was very different.

It was a big problem for people that had moved here, like from Glasgow or whatever, they didn't have any friends, there was no network, and a lot of the women ended up on... they didn't get antidepressants then, they were given things like diazepam, and so, as a worker, we had groups to cope with...

Margaret



New housing at Dedridge, 1973. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.

When we moved here it was all entirely different because it was a completely new street, so everybody was moving in, and we all had children, so we all got to know each other that way, and it was great, we loved it.

Sandra

...but I know there was a lot of people who did move here who felt the isolation, who had been taken away from family networks, who didn't know anybody.

Margaret

The Glasgow families were very close, and they a' staed roond- sometimes they a' stayed in the one hoose, but they were close, and when Cameron Iron Works got built they moved oot here, the same wi' the BMC when they went tae Blackburn and they moved oot and they missed their family.

Rena

The Lanthorn Local History Group also discuss their recollection of navigating their way around the new town. Being an insurance agent Robert got to know his way around the housing estates well. He describes the clever design for the streets in Livingston. Every street you go into, with the exception of Deans South, is a cul-de-sac and houses are numbered consecutively and the streets were all named in alphabetical order.

...You went in and number one was on the left hand side, and across the road was number 99, or 199, depends on the size of the street...except Deans South, which is a nightmare...because you had number 10 here, and 222 was directly across the road from it!...

Robert

Other group members found orientation a bit more difficult.

...I remember dropping my friend off somewhere and I had my son and my friends son in the car, and every wee while they'd say 'We've been here before!' ...

Margaret

The Overspill Town



Glasgow families visit, 1971. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.

Like other new towns Livingston was very much envisioned as an overspill town. While most of the interviewees did not come from Glasgow, they were very aware of the incoming Glaswegians. Margaret White recalls the number of people coming to Livingston from Glasgow.

...Well, my neighbours below me came from Glasgow, Shona and Malcolm were their names, they didn't have any children or anything and Shona was quite ill actually, she ended up dying of cancer which was a wee shame. I got quite close with them, but yeah they'd come from Glasgow, but even my husband came from Glasgow and Livingston was... they classed it as a Glasgow overspill to be perfectly honest, and when my husband came to Livingston he was married originally with the two sons and they were both born in Glasgow and then they got the chance of the houses out here and then of course... a lot of people came to Livingston to work in Cameron Iron Works and then of course they had the house as well, so yeah, most people came from Glasgow...

Margaret White

...they would come from Glasgow, and they were English, or they'd come from the north of Scotland...very mixed because you had Leyland as an employer, NEC as an employer up in there, then you had Cameron Iron Works...all these places, they were all factories and they attracted lots of people and they were coming from all parts of the country.

John Gray

Elaine Hope's family came to Livingston from Glasgow. Eventually, her grandparents also relocated to the town.

I think we were in Livingston about six, seven years and my granny and grandpa still stayed in Glasgow in a tenement, but my granny was quite crippled with arthritis in the tenement and she was on the top floor so I think the stairs were a problem; mum said "Oh come through", you know, so she got a house in the next street to us, so we used to go to my granny for lunch... I think in those days you got local connection points or you got incoming worker points, it was all done on a points system... I think Livingston was planned for, what, a hundred thousand?... And I think they were having a problem filling it so we were lucky that my granny and grandpa came.

Elaine Hope



Glasgow's Lord Provost visits Livingston, 1970. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.



New towns Mobile Display Unit in the St Enoch Square Precinct, Glasgow, 1972.

Our Home in Livingston

Many residents were drawn to Livingston by the prospect of a new home. Interviewees were asked about their first homes in the town. Some interviewees arrived early in the life of the new town against a back-drop of building works. Robert Smith was a young boy when his family moved into Ash Grove in 1966.

It was actually quite surreal... we didn't have any slabbed footpaths or anything. We didn't even have any garden fence around the garden, even though there was a retaining wall there was a drop of about four feet, 1.2 metres, we had no fences or anything so what would happen is you would go out to school in the morning as I did, and then you would come back and actually see that some of the slabs had been laid, so you would suddenly go from walking on thin dust to slabs, and then the next day you would come back and you would see that the fence was put up round your garden so it was very, very odd to begin with...

Robert Smith



Sib Penman's house in Murieston. Image courtesy of Sib Penman.

She relocated from Tay Walk to Murieston in 1971. Her husband built the new house himself in the evenings.

We wanted to live in a more countrified atmosphere. When we moved to Murieston there were only four houses in the street, our friends had also built a house two down from us and they moved in at the same time as we did.

Sib Penman

John Gray and his family moved into Craigshill in 1972.

I moved into a new house in Torridon Walk which was a bungalow and it was a council house... It could have been better; it had a flat roof and it had a stone floor which made it a cold house, cause we had no loft insulation in thae days...

John Gray



Tay Walk, Craigshill. c. 1975.

Sib Penman arrived in the town in 1966, moving into a house in Tay Walk.

It was very different from the farm house that I lived in before, but it was ok. We put down carpets and made it a home. I think we had a carpet in the bedroom and in the hall and in the living room but...not in the kitchen or the bathroom, they had black tiles on the floor. There was a little room which was meant to be another bedroom but my husband kept all his tools in there. He was a joiner to trade... he had a lot of tools.

Sib Penman



Housing at Torridon Walk, 1974.



Flats at Don Drive.

Margaret White got a job in the DER television shop at the age of 18 and moved into her first flat in Don Drive in Craigshill, next to The Mall. It was on the third floor and had two bedrooms, a kitchen and living room. Margaret recalls that it was very easy to get a house at this time. She remembers going to Livingston Development Corporation, filling in a form to apply for a house and within weeks getting the flat.

...It was just myself and my boyfriend actually at the time ...it was great, just having your independence...I was 18 and then I'm thinking about my own children at 18 and never thinking in a million years that they could ever run a house you know, it would never had occurred to me that I couldn't but I couldn't imagine them doing it...

Margaret White

I particularly enjoyed Raeburn Rigg, it was a brand new house we were in...and interestingly enough, I don't know if you are aware but some of the houses are three stories and we had one of the bigger ones, we had tons of room in the house...that was a major plus and I've got... my mum and dad, three sisters and a wee brother, I was the oldest so we need that sort of bigger house...and I got a room to myself, so there you go, that's what I liked about Livingston.

Manus McGuire

Elaine Hope married and moved out of her family home when she was 21. She also recalls how easy it was to get a house in Livingston.

...As soon as you knew you were getting married you just went to the Council or the LDC and said "I need a house" and you got a house, and so our house was... actually the first house we were offered was in Livingston Village, it was a wee cottage opposite the Livi Inn...it was a derelict thing and they said we could have it with a view to buying it but there was so much work needing done, it was needing damp proofed; it had dry rot; it's roof was falling down; the chimney was blocked, it had birds nesting in it; there was no heating in it; and there was only one bedroom; and it was needing so much work we didn't have the money to do that so we handed it back and said "No", so we got a house in Deans actually, in Kenmore Avenue, that was our first house. It was fantastic...

Elaine Hope

Elizabeth Henderson's first home in Livingston was a flat in Willow Grove in Craigshill. She recalls the idea of living in a new town being exciting. Her aunt had previously moved to Glenrothes new town.

...My mum and dad got me moved in... my dad lent me some money to get some bits and pieces of furniture. I only got allocated the flat about three or four days before I was due to start so I actually stayed with my father's cousin... because the flat wasn't really ready and at the weekends, you know, my mum and dad came up and my dad laid the carpet and we got everything in Woolco and we painted the rooms... I did have a beautiful view of the Pentlands from the kitchen window because I was on the second floor...that was great.

Elizabeth Henderson

Some time later, on a shopping trip to the newly built Safeway store, Elizabeth saw a sign for new Barratt homes in Eliburn, including the Barratt Solo flats which took her interest. She purchased one of the flats and moved into it in October 1982, living there for five years. Elizabeth describes the layout and open plan nature.

...the thing about the Solo was it was pre-furnished, you know, so all your carpets and your curtains and your white goods and the actual furniture was already there. You had a sort of a bed that became a settee and you'd get your bedding in the box underneath...it was very small and you couldn't really have anyone to stay - well, I suppose you could sleep on the floor if you had a party or something.

Elizabeth Henderson



Barratt Solo flats under construction.
Image courtesy of Elizabeth Henderson.

Leisure Activities

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Finalists in Craigshill Social Club Talent Contest, 1972. Image courtesy of Johnston Press Plc.

There were limited leisure facilities available to the residents in the early days of Livingston, as the town was still under development. Nonetheless, the interviewees recall being involved in a range of activities.

Sib Penman joined the Livingston Players in November 1971.

...The first musical by the Livingston Players was South Pacific; we rehearsed at Craigshill High School. When Howden Park opened we were the very first people to perform there. We performed two plays and one musical in the first year. The next year I was asked to become a committee member. Whilst I was pregnant with Mark I did props for one of the shows and then after that I took over the role of Box Office Manager and Patrons Secretary. I did that for 25 years and then was President for two years after that but was also responsible for Front Of House.

Sib Penman

Social Clubs emerged in various part of the town giving residents a chance to meet and socialise with one another.

Well, there wasn't very much to do, you know, they didn't have a sports centre. The one thing, there was Craigshill Social Club, [that] was the only social point... my wife used to go there on a Wednesday night when there was a ladies' night section where the ladies would get together and they got speakers to come in and speak to them...

John Gray

A lot of residents got together and opened Dedridge Residents Social Club which was wonderful. We used to have Saturday morning film shows and things for the children. We all used to go down there on a Saturday - it was a children's thing...Very good community spirit. We lived in a cosy wee cul-de-sac and maybe I shouldn't tell you this but I remember at New Year time we used to put all the kids to bed, and the adults would go to one house, but every few minutes somebody would run round the houses in the cul-de-sac to make sure the children were OK.

We also had an impromptu street party after Charles and Diana's wedding, and a welcome home party for a young soldier who served in the Falklands. They were great times. You had to make some of your own social life, but the Social Club was a wonderful place for entertainment, shows, having fun. Of course I was younger then.

Jenifer Harley



Guests arriving at Howden Park Centre for the opening of South Pacific, 1971.

There was the old Craigshill Social Club which my mum and dad were members of, and they used to take us out for the summer trip once a year and we used to go to Silver Sands or Burntisland, you know, so that was always organised... there were about six or seven double decker buses all going in convoys, that was always really exciting as well. We just spent the day on the beach as it were, so that was an aspect of the kind of things that were available...

Robert Smith

...it was a huge event for the town when we got a cinema, it was adjacent to the old Presto's store in the centre... it was fantastic, you had an adjacent bar upstairs and then the cinema was downstairs... The issue for us was very much if you wanted to go to the cinema you pretty well had to go into Edinburgh... so it was quite an event for us to actually have a cinema on our doorstep and it was very well used and when it shut down, it was really, really sadly missed...

Douglas Roy



Burntisland Outing, 1975. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.



Rhona Gordon, leader at the Riverside Youth Club, with the DJ at a Club dance, c.1970.

Childhood Memories

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Site of Livingston golf course, pre development.

A number of the interviewees grew up in Livingston. Some can remember the freedom of childhood in the early new town.

Robert Smith has fond memories of cycling around the town as a youngster.

...We used to cycle from our house in Ash Grove...it was all wee country back roads, they were wee narrow roads with high bankings, just reminded me of Cornwall a bit, you know, where you have the narrow roads and high bankings... then the Regional Centre came on and that totally obliterated, totally changed the landscape. After that we used to have a clean ship in Alderstone House Steading [now the Klondyke Garden Centre] for the Sea Cadets on a Sunday as well which was cleaning up the whole place, and after we went to clean the ship we used to cycle down Charlesfield Lane to the village to the old Post Office. We used to stuff ourselves full of food and then never eat our Sunday dinner when we got home, well I certainly didn't anyway... that was how things were when we were growing up. An interesting time, a lot of freedom, and things were always changing...when we used to go out and play about after school there was obviously loads of construction works on the go and I can distinctly remember the pedestrian flyovers over the dual carriageway being constructed but they had no side rails up because they were still under construction but we could still access them to walk over but because I was

scared of heights I got to the middle and had to go back, I just couldn't get over the edge to go over the other side; there were a lot of risks but they weren't perceived as risks at that time and it was just good fun.

Robert Smith

..If you look at summer holidays we were kinda allowed out at eight o'clock and whatever time and then we were just left to our own devices, cos my mother worked in the hairdressers I think at that point and then worked at the Motec, my dad was working but at this point he was probably at BMC, so they were out and we were just left to our own devices. We'd typically be out playing football which took up a lot of our time...if, you know, the weather was nice in the summer we'd go to the rizzle. I think it's



Robert Smith stayed in housing at Ash Grove.

still there, I think it's Eliburn Reservoir we'd swim in it... which now...from a health and safety perspective [is] quite frightening but we thought nothing of it as a kid, we'd play I suppose you call it hide and seek...what did we call it giant man hunt or something. If we went out on our bikes we might venture as far as Livingston village or old Livingston as people called it in those days, and if we were feeling really adventurous we might go as far as Bellsquarry which was the end of the world...we had no computers, television was not on during the day not because we weren't allowed to watch it, simply there was no television during the day and in that kind of sense you made your own entertainment, looking back, I don't know if I was bored at any point; looking at this point it didn't feel like I was bored, it felt like it was a childhood filled with things to do, adventure climbing up trees looking for crab apples, all of those kind of things. I had quite an idyllic childhood living in the country...another thing we did, just thinking about it and again doesn't really bear thinking about, in those days the railway line which subsequently has been upgraded and is now a passenger line the Bathgate to Edinburgh line, in those days it only carried freight. Bathgate was only a goods yard and we used to regularly hang about the railway line and kinda waiting on trains to come... it would make you shudder as a parent to think that, you know...

Garry Morrison

...It was interesting growing up in the town... there was never a dull moment and you thought nothing of walking from one end of the town to the other... even to this day I think Livingston is great in that there's so many footpaths that you can actually walk safely you know all through the housing schemes and you don't have to go anywhere near a road.

Douglas Roy

I mean Livingston kind of grew up about us so we grew up with all this space and you could just roam for miles and woodland and fields, and then all of a sudden houses would appear and shops would appear and churches would appear and eventually your world shrank. I get quite claustrophobic now as an adult...



"The Rizzy" (Eliburn Reservoir).

roads, cars and buildings, ...where as a child growing up it was just fields, you know, I mean there was Ladywell, there was no Eliburn, there was no Knightsridge, there was nothing between us and Deans South.

Elaine Hope



Children play outside housing at Heatherbank.

I remember I was in the Cubs and they used to meet at Harrysmuir Primary School and I was in them for years and then I moved to the Scouts, they were at St. Paul's Church and again I was in them for a good number of years but in they days it tended to no' be organised events, things would just happen, you know, in the



Many of our interviewees have fond memories of the countryside.

streets...football was always my kind of sport, I always liked football...and there always used to be games of football going on somewhere that you could get involved in. Sedgebank would play Heatherbank, for example, organise a big kinda, a big game, summertime that was always going on. I mean Heatherbank used to be the last bank as it were and there was absolutely nothing beyond that. Newyearfield Farm, that was out in the middle of nowhere cause I had a friend that used to stay across from us in Sedgebank, he actually moved into Newyearfield Farm so I would walk down there to see him and I mean Newyearfield Farm was just so desolate, there was nothing else round about it, there was just nothing, just farmland, that's all there was round about it, now it's right in the middle of Eliburn. But there were always events going on. Summer again, I remember

going to the play schemes at St. Paul's Church, used to go down there religiously, every day and you would obviously have your volunteer helpers organising games around us and football or whatever.

Steven McGurk

Jim Gordon's childhood memories are of life in Livingston Station before the new town.

I was brought up in 10 Main Street. This was a small house compared to today's buildings with one living room and one bedroom, a scullery (kitchen) and an inside toilet with bath (cauldest room in the hoose). There were two entrances. The main access was off the communal pavement into the scullery and then through to the living room which was a good sized room. I remember a three piece suite around a coal fire (the only heatin in the hoose) which was set in a big black grate which ma mother used to blacken with 'Zebrite' especially for Hogmanay and the Gala Day. There was also a dining room table and chairs, a sideboard, a radiogram and a double bed. In the corner near the window was a press (built in cupboard where you stored things like shoes, writin pads, pencils, string, furniture polish an' dusters an' Zebrite, cake tins an' auld Christmas decorations).

When a' wis younger a can remember sleeping in the livin' room but bein' feart when the Christmas decorations were pit up. The garlands were suspended fae each corner o' the room and fae the middle o' the wa's and when the light wais pit oot the shadow cast on the ceiling bi the light o' the fire it looked like a big spider. A wis soon transferred to the bedroom to sleep. The only problem wi' that wis that it wis as cauld as the bathroom and ye needed a stane hot water bottle to warm the bed. Apart frae a' they problems it wis a great wee hoose and hosted mony hogmanay pairties when the door was locked at ten to 12 awaitin yer first foot and once the door wis open that wis it for the rest o' the year. If ye did go away on holiday or away fur the day visitin you would lock yer door and either hing the key on a nail above the door or leave it on the windae sill an the windae wis ayewais open. The rent cost approx. £5 per week and this was deducted from the miner's wages along with two auld pence which was the subscription to the Community Centre.

Life in the raws wis great fur a bairn. We had the drying greens to play fitba on or in the summer ye wid make a tent by hingin' a blanket ower the washing line an' sleep oot wi yer torch and sweets and juice. The washing line could be used tae make a swing when ye folded a carpet ower two ropes on the same line but a lot o' the times the line wid break an' ye got a sair yin. The drying greens in Main Street joined up wi the dryin greens in Mid Street and this used to be a great place to build a Grand National course or yer ain horse jumpin arena usin Stretchers as poles an draggin auld branches frae any trees aroon. We also had the freedom o' the country side and great activity centres like:

- The Bing where we used to slide doon on a tin berge (section of corrugated iron).

- The Rizzy (now Eliburn Reservoir) where ye picnicked and went swimmin' an if ye were awfi lucky ye might have seen a fox or some wild deer.
- The Big Wid (Wooded area which still exists to the south of Woodlands Park and to the East of Middlewood Park) where you could re create WWII, imitate Tarzan on a rope swing, collect conkers and play hide an' seek for hours.
- The Fitba Park where the Gala Day wis held and the local juvenile fitba team brought back the Scottish Cup twice in three years in 1953/54 & 1955/56 seasons and where mony laddies played in the world cup final in their imagination.

Jim Gordon



Rhona Gordon in 1971, outside the house in East Glen Avenue which her family moved into when she was nine months old.

Rhona was brought up in Livingston Station; her family lived in the miners' rows until soon after she was born.

...we moved to 15 Glen Crescent when I was about nine months old. These were new houses that were built by the Scottish Special Housing Association about 1951/52 and we were lucky enough to get one of these. It had two bedrooms, bathroom, living room and kitchen with front and back lobbies, you also had your own garden...Growing up it was a great street to live in as there were lots of children and we all played together the length of the street. Our house was in the middle of the street and we had a lamp post outside so that was the centre of everything, we all started from that lamp post eh all the games of hide and seek, that was the den and everybody joined in. Oh I suppose we must have been about 20 children upwards playing in the street as it was a long street or it felt a long street when you were wee and there were plenty of kids. Favourite game was hide and seek especially in the winter nights when you could hide so much easier and we all had great fun. My favourite hiding place was up at one end at Mrs McConnachie's house cause she had a hedge round the garden and it was great fun to jump the hedge and hide behind it. Eh, I can't remember folks complaining too much as they all just about had kids and I suppose you couldn't complain if your kids were there playing as well. No one really got into bother in those days as we all played and mostly played nice eh I can't really remember anyone having any big fall outs then. If there was it would be quickly forgotten by the next day I suppose.

Rhona Gordon

A Livingston Education



Craigshill High School, c.1972.

There was a rapid school building programme in Livingston to accommodate the large numbers of children living in the town. Some of the schools were constructed after residents had moved in; this meant that a number of children, including some of our interviewees, attended more than one primary school or high school.

Garry Morrison moved to Livingston before any of the new schools were built. For the first couple of years he attended the old Livingston Station Primary School.

The Headmaster was a Mr. Heggie who... if my memory serves me right, lived in the house just at the bridge beside the railway. I think that was the Headmaster's house... So we were there for two years and then that school was closed down because they were building the new Deans Primary School down between Deans South and the kinda older part of Livingston Station. I remember that building being built because health and safety obviously didn't matter... I don't know what age I must have been; eight or nine running around the building site you know running around scaffolding and all sorts of things, the "watchie", the watchmen, you know... always keeping an eye out for him... then we moved to the new one which seemed, you know, it was all modern and had a gym, an assembly hall, had kitchens in it because thinking back the old school which I went to for a couple years didn't have kitchens so the school dinners were brought in, and if I remember rightly they were brought in big silver, presumably stainless steel containers... they were gey lumpy potatoes when we were at the Deans.
Garry Morrison

Rhona Gordon went to Livingston Station Primary a few years before Garry.



Children playing in playground, 1970. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.

I can remember my first day at school as well, my mum took me I remember and we went into this building and there was a cloakroom with pegs and basins and she took off my coat and left me there and I can remember crying because she had gone away; can't remember much more about that day. School in the village was good though and I remember my first teacher was Miss Glasgow and she was in the first room as you go into the school on the left. Oh one of the things I remember was that she had a cupboard and inside the cupboard was a stuffed owl and you had to go up to this cupboard to get your morning milk as the crates were sitting beside it next to the radiators so the milk was usually quite warm ugh. The next teacher was Primary 2 and she was a lovely plump lady called Mrs Webster.

She was stricter I remember, or was that only because the real learning started off and by the time we got to Primary 6 Mrs Webster was the one who gave us handwriting classes and by that I mean the real pen and ink ones and you had to be really careful where you put your l's and t's and how high they went in the three lines that you had to write in.

Rhona Gordon

Sib Penman recalls her time working as an assistant primary teacher in the early days of Riverside Primary. Most of the pupils in Sib's first class came to Livingston from Glasgow. Although the pupils were effectively thrown together in a strange new place, they were quick to get to know one another.

...I worked there for a year and a half ... in the mornings we did reading and numbers and then sometimes in the afternoon the Head Teacher would say "Come on, let's go out for a walk"; we would walk almost as far as [Cameron Iron Works]... In the first term I had Primary 1 to 7 which was quite a challenge. The next term I just had Primary 1 because so many children came into the school after the holidays. I initially had a class of 30 but it went up to 56 by the end of the year...

Sib Penman



Pupils at newly opened Toronto Primary, 1971.
Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.

Douglas Roy attended Toronto Primary in Primary 5 and Primary 6, before becoming part of the first intake at Harrysmuir Primary in Primary 7. Later Douglas went on to attend Craigshill High School, becoming Head Boy in his final year.

...I was always impressed with the educational standards at school, the building however, was a product of '60s and early 70s construction and I'm afraid it just wasn't up to the task but... you got a very very good education and you know that's reflected in the aim and number of pupils that went to that school. I think when I was there in its heyday it had 1500 pupils... I think it was only built for 900 pupils... there was portakabins, there were classes being held in the corridors, there was classes being held under the stage, any available space whatsoever was getting used for teaching purposes... I've got a lot of friends who were in my year at school that I still keep in contact with and they've all got very good jobs...

Douglas Roy

Douglas also remembers going to school with pupils from a variety of places.

...I remember being at school with people from Australia, New Zealand, Canada...the electronics industry was just coming to the fore, you had a lot of people that were transferring in...you thought nothing of it, you just thought there's someone else coming into your classroom, "Where you from?" "Yeah, that's fine" so it was quite interesting... but again being a kid you don't really talk about what your parents really do, it was more of a case of "What sports do you play?" or "What's your interests?"

Douglas Roy

Well, I went to the nearest school, when I was of school age, cause you had two intakes a year at that time...Our local school hadn't been built so I went to the next district which was Howden, so I went to Toronto School, and started there, and six months later Harrysmuir School, that's our local school in Ladywell, and so I went six months at Toronto and spent a further year in Primary 1 at Harrysmuir, so I repeated and spent a year and a half in Primary 1...We just lived across...basically up the path and you were at school, through the mud again because there was no path and then you got into the school gates, it was just a field which wasn't nice if it was muddy, and I do remember getting into trouble once; I played violin in the school and I dropped my book in the mud, I should have covered it in wallpaper, that's what they told me, "You should have had it covered". That night I sat with the wallpaper covering my book... We used to visit our teacher at home, her name was Mrs Fleming and she lived in Craigshill so my friend and I used to go and visit her after school, just turn up at her door and say "Hello", and she would say "Come in, come in". She lived in one of those funny houses, it was a kind of three-tiered thing, I think it was Don or Dee Street in Craigshill, and the kitchen was kinda down... you went in at this level and the kitchen went down a stair, and the bedrooms were up a stair so it was kind of split-level, upsidy-downy house. But she used to take us in and give us jelly and a drink of juice and play with her kids and then go home.

Elaine Hope

Ah remember in the very very early years in Harrysmuir there was an incident with a JCB. It toppled over and went in tae one of the class rooms. Smashed the window and it was leaning on the... I remember vaguely that happened... I believe that was not long after the school opened.

Steven McGurk



Crane incident at Harrysmuir Primary School.
Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.

Work In and Around Livingston

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Cafeteria at Motec, c.1970.

Livingston quickly emerged as the epicentre of industry in West Lothian. Large numbers of residents were employed by the many companies who opened premises or factories in the town.

I was a carpenter and I worked on the first houses in Livingston, well, debatable, some people say the first, some say there were a couple built along at Deans South, but the first big housing development was Craigshill South, and that was with John Laing, and the type of house they built was called the Jespersion, it was a Swedish system, but it wasn't too successful here, they got quite a few leaks with the weather and that, ye know...they were predominantly flat roofs. And then I moved from there to Craigshill High School, and from the ground level of Craigshill High School I worked till it was complete, and then I went back to John Laing again and went to work in Edinburgh... In 1972 I decided I'd had enough of the building industry, and I got a job as Head of Department Maintenance with the Road Transport and Industry Training Board at the Motec, and I believe that was the best job that ever I had...the conditions were tremendous; I remember the first day, I went across to the restaurant - they had a restaurant and accommodation for 200 people - and I got a free lunch, beautiful three course lunch, and you went into this coffee room and it was all beautiful Ercol furniture...I went up and the girl gave us a coffee and I sat in there...I finished my coffee and she came back and she said, "Would you like another coffee, sir?"; and I said - "You've made it; I'm in heaven here!" The Motec was a great concept, a tremendous concept, trained everyone in the motor trade industry from apprentices to managers; it was financed by the motor industry, they paid a levy. But when Margaret Thatcher came to power she decided they didn't have to pay their levy any more, and it went downhill from then...

Matthew



Jespersion housing under construction, c1966.

Robert was an insurance agent and took the opportunity through his work to transfer back to Scotland in 1976.

We were living in exile in England, in Northampton, and...I was working as an insurance agent...I asked the company I worked for if I could do a transfer, and they asked "Where do you want to go?" so I said "Scotland", obviously, so they gave me the choice of two areas to go to, one was in Alloa and the other one was in Livingston, or Bathgate, the Bathgate office. The temptation to go to Alloa was really quite strong, because I was born and brought up in Stirling, but on the advice of a manager, the book I was getting in Alloa was what's called a geriatric book, with a lot of customers who were all dying off, but Livingston was a growth area, and I don't regret the move now, it was a good move from the insurance point of view.

Unfortunately, my first part of the area was Craigshill, I had to collect the insurance, and Freemantle Street was one of the areas. It wasn't the customers that was the problem, on a Friday night walking through Freemantle Street you took your life in your hands, especially as an insurance agent carrying all that money...

Robert

Robert Smith remembers that Cameron Iron Works were one of the major employers in Livingston.

...Cameron Iron Works, that was the be all and end all as far as I know, and it was absolutely packed full. You could see all the cars parked outside it and everything, it was massive, and then there was the demise and then it was really odd, it's still going along, trundling along but the cars are hardly anything. You see that massive building, you only see maybe thirty or forty cars now when there was hundreds before, but that was to me I think the main employment as it were apart from the wee corner shops...

Robert Smith

Robert didn't work at Cameron Iron Works himself. He started his career in local government.

...I started with Lothian Regional Council three weeks before my 18th birthday in 1978 and I started out as a labourer. I didn't do too well academically at school but it's the usual thing, I did more academic study after I left school through day release, so I did various day release courses and it was...the first of what we called the SCOTVEC courses... so I did that and became a charge hand in 1980. Then I became an inspector in 1982, I was heavily involved with LDC when I became an inspector in respect of adoptions and saying what we would adopt for public footpaths and roads for what was then Lothian Regional Council; and then I was more involved with the wind-up, there were a lot of inspections done then because everything that wasn't adopted, we had to go and look out and try and see what any outstanding issues were and then I believe there was a lump sum transferred over to the Council to finish off the bits and pieces that hadn't been finished prior to the wind-up.

So I was fairly heavily involved. I used to go into Sidlaw House, that's what it was called, right next to The Centre, and I used to meet with Jim Manson, he was the engineer; there was an inspector Ronnie Knight, that was my main two points of contact within Livingston Development Corporation.

Robert Smith

In 1984, Manus McGuire began working with a company called Apollo Computers based in Kirkton Campus.

I was one of the first people ever employed there, and they were really sort of ahead of the game when it came to the kind of computers that they were producing and I was involved in repairing PCB's that were faulty. They sent us over to Boston, Massachusetts to get training and stuff like that...I was 21/22 and it was a fantastic experience. We were away for a month and getting all this training, but we were living on expenses and the whole nine yards, it was just absolutely brilliant, and then coming back...then we had to set up the whole infrastructure for the areas that we were in and that was a huge experience as well, so we seen just an open shell, to getting it all built up, to eventually, you know, producing hundreds of computers a week to repairing hundreds of boards and dealing with people and all that sort of thing, right to when it unfortunately got bought over and they shut us down. The other one thing I remember about Apollo...Malcolm Rifkind...he actually came and officially opened it...he was obviously a very senior politician...and the other thing I remember about the same day is they brought in Andy Cameron to sort of give the troops a good laugh, and they looked after us really well, we were upstairs, giving us free drink and free food and everything that Andy Cameron said was just hilarious. It was good. It was a great place to work, it was sometimes tense, just like everywhere else, great camaraderie. I think the factory is still there...I originally think they got a new building made so there is another building just around the corner there again that was a big thing for people to be able to see...the standard shells that the Corporation built to bring people in, then Apollo had actually got them to build this other one...it was a beautiful, beautiful building that we had so from a Corporation perspective we were very well looked after.



Exterior of Cameron Iron Works, c1970.

We absolutely believed what we were fed that we had jobs for life, what a story that is, but it did feel like that, everything was electronics, we were in an electronic world. We were producing computers that people were crying out for particularly in academia and particularly in engineering, that's the sort of computers we were building and they were the best of the best at that point in time and it was a proud place to work.

Manus McGuire

Whilst many in the surrounding villages felt resentment for the new town that had arrived on their doorsteps, its construction also meant work for many locals. Ian McClafferty remembers his early career in the town.

I got a job as a site office boy building the very first factory in Livingston so there was quite a few who got work there when it actually opened as the Fire Appliance Company but there was other factories in the meantime being built all round. Well even before that, before getting started between building the factory as

a site office boy and getting taken on as an apprentice engineer, I worked with a company, it was Carmichaels who built the roads and the infrastructure there too so there was quite a bit of work going at that time. I remember someone saying "So we'll be to Livingston what Corstorphine is to Edinburgh"... no, no, no I'm afraid not, we got the industrial site, more like Granton... but it brought quite a bit of employment, for the whole area, not just Pumpherston.

Iain McClafferty

Although Livingston was a hub of industry, residents were not immune to recession and the effects of unemployment. Iain McClafferty struggled to find work in 1980s. He started his wood carving business selling birds to sell to garden centres.

...There was no real jobs available at all. There was a lot of unemployment. I can't think of anybody that we knew, in my circle anyway, that did work...

Iain McClafferty



Offices at Apollo Computers, mid 1990s.

Shopping in Livingston



Mohammed Ali outside his shop, 1974. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.

In the early days of Livingston the local shopping facilities were limited and many residents travelled to the surrounding villages and towns for their weekly shop.

I do remember my mum used to take us into Bathgate, really for shops, you know, if you need shoes or whatever...cause there was no shops in Livingston, you couldn't buy clothes, you couldn't buy shoes. We went to Pumpherston, to Crazy Kuts, which was fantastic. Mum and dad went down-the-stairs cause that's where the food was, and they had the toy thing up the stairs, so all the kids went up-the-stairs while their parents were doing the shopping and then you met at the end...

[Later on] we could go to the Centre for shopping, it was brilliant, the cinema opened, the ice rink opened, it just seemed to all of a sudden get better and when they opened Phase 2 of the centre, then we had British Home Stores, I thought that was brilliant, fantastic... Dorothy Perkins, all the shops that girls would want, maybe not BHS but Dorothy Perkins and then... Next came, and this was just fantastic, you know. You didn't have to go to Edinburgh or Glasgow.

Elaine Hope

...Well we were fortunate because I think Woolco was opened soon after we first came here. I remember Presto too, but Woolco, you go in there and get everything from a dishwasher to a reel of thread. I know we've got the likes of ASDA but Woolco was something special for me. I remember buying a dishwasher there in 1985 because somebody told me to buy it now when your children are wee, we couldn't really afford it but we bought it and that did make a big difference to us as we both worked... it lasted for twenty years. The shopping centre was very different then.

Jenifer Harley

As a student at the police college, Douglas Roy used to go to the barber at Craigshill Mall to get his hair cut. *...[it] was a traditional old style barber, with traditional style methods including taking an open razor to shave the hairs at the back of your neck... [that] was one of the very few places where you could actually get that done...so it was home at the weekends, make sure you got a decent haircut from him including getting the back of your neck shaved because when you went back to college on the Monday morning you'd have an inspection...John used to do the barbering down there until till he retired.*

Douglas Roy

...before The Centre came in and before The Mall came in we used to do our shopping at Crazy Kuts and that's in Pumpherston...I think that's probably where most people went for their shopping in the early days...It was great fun, we used to get in the car and go across to Pumpherston...and it was just like a big warehouse if you know what I mean, to me anyway...in fact it had an upstairs as well, you had all your foodstuffs downstairs and they had household stuff upstairs, and it used to be a family trip...we would just be dragging along obviously.



Craigshill Mall, Livingston's first shopping centre.

Mum and Dad always used to get a big egg box, a big big egg box, and fill it up, every week we would get a new egg box filled up with messages as it were and then you would come back and the box would be emptied so that was another thing to play with. I used to steal my brother's chocolate off him, we used to sit in the box...and he would have his chocolate and I would have a bit more than I should...

Robert Smith

...There was a little corner shop which was known as 'Ali's' the one in Thymebank, Whinbank... and there used to be shops at St Paul's Church at the Ferns. There was [a] supermarket there, I believe at one point there was a bank at the end of the row... Mr Christies, he ran the post office/news agent and there was the whitewash walls of the Ferns Pub that was in the same row. From what I remember that was the only shops there were

around at the time. For our weekly shopping we would go to Pumpherston to the Crazy Kuts. I think that's where everyone use to go. And it was the days before plastic bags so my mum and dad used to take a big brown holdall and that's where all the messages got put from the weekly shop...

Steven McGurk



Opening of Presto, 1977. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.



Krazy Kuts, 1971. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.



The Ferns, 1971.



Woolco, 1978.

The Communities of Livingston

.....



Housing in Knightsridge.

Over the years many residents developed an affinity with their own area of Livingston.

...I think it was pretty much... Ladywell, there was Ladywell, there was Howden, there was Craigshill, and there was Deans which was where my granny and grandpa stayed... well one set of grandparents stayed there in Deans South, but to get there it was sort of a bit of a journey. I used to go on my bike and just sort of turn up at their door, to Deans South from Ladywell at eight you know, seven or eight... My grandparents on my dad's side moved into Livingston before we did, they were sort of late sixties when they moved into Deans South and my grandpa worked for the LDC. Ladywell, it was kind of the hub of where we were... my dad worked at Cameron's, they had a social club; they built a social club so we used to go to things that were there, arranged for the kids, Christmas parties. They had a sort of summer event where it was a kind of open sports day kind of thing and you got a gala bag with a cake and a sandwich and a drink in it, and you had races. I think you sort of stuck to your own wee bit; we all went to the same school and we all played together and our dads all worked in the same factory, and the mums all socialised and it was great fun, you know. New Years were fantastic in our bit, you would start off... my friend's dad who was tall dark and handsome, he would start off, he would come into our house and then have a wee drink and stuff and then we would all pile into the next house, and the next house, and the next house and we would end up at the furthest away.
Elaine Hope

Margaret White has now lived in Knightsridge for more than 22 years. She sees it as a little community where everyone knows each other.

I think because it is a small community it reminds me of growing up in Pumpherston because everybody knows everybody and people will help you. A lot of people don't want to get to know their neighbours, they're not interested, whereas in Knightsridge I think if your neighbour needed help, especially an older person, they would get it,...because people settle there and have been there for years and years and years, you don't just know them, you know their children, you know their grandchildren, whereas Livingston keeps moving all the time. All these new areas build up, you're not getting to know your neighbours... I've spoke to several families who have left Knightsridge and went to say classier, nicer areas within Livingston and they hate it and they miss that feeling of community.

Margaret White

Margaret observes that Knightsridge has a bad reputation but she says that the people who live there feel differently.

Everybody criticises Knightsridge, it's like "Oh, I wouldn't stay there", "Oh no, that's... rough"; but that's only the people that don't live there. People who live there have a different opinion and it doesn't matter where in Livingston you go, you've got good areas and bad areas... but Knightsridge has always had a bad name unfortunately. I mean, just recently I had words with a girl who came from Ladywell of all places. To me I wouldn't stay in Ladywell, to me that's a bit rough but she'll come and she'll criticise Knightsridge having never been really there, doesn't really know anybody, but she criticises it... So I'm quite defensive of it. I'm not saying it's perfect, there's nowhere perfect, but the people who stay there and bring their families up there wouldn't criticise it... my children love it, they grew up there, their school friends are there and they love it and they wouldn't move for anything. It's strange, you know, but it's people's perceptions, isn't it.

Margaret White

At times the presence of distinct identities has given rise to the development of rivalries.

When Iain McClafferty and his family moved to Knightsridge it had a reputation for being rough. It was a working class suburb. Iain mentions the gang violence: at the time this level of violence wasn't unusual.

People would apply for home shopping catalogues - Kay's Catalogue - and be refused, and the talk was it was because of your postcode. Whether that's true or not, I don't know, I don't want to slate Kay's Catalogue but that was the impression they had gave everybody else. I came out of the Harvester one evening, there was a gang up from Ladywell, they were hammering, you know a carpet fitters hammer, you hammer and the nail comes out. They were filling the young boy's head with these staples just outside the building and that was the gang rivalry... they had come up from Ladywell, just picked on the first one they could get...I think it's calmed down a bit just now. They've probably got X-Boxes now.

Iain McClafferty

Iain did settle; he got friendly with his neighbours and was quite happy living in Knightsridge but his wife wanted to move.

Robert Smith also recalls tensions between young people in the different localities:

...We used to go up to Cousland Wood at the top, and then, although I never got involved because I was too scared, there was the reported battles between Pumpherston and Livingston as it were ...but I never got involved in that at all. I can remember getting chased once and I was scared stiff, so... that will do me, I kept away from these times.

Robert Smith

Although Garry Morrison was aware of the other districts of Livingston, he knew little about them. He had always considered himself to be a resident of Livingston Station rather than Livingston as a whole.

...I would say I lived in Livingston Station and it was a village and a community in its own right, independent of what was happening in Livingston, as it were... you knew the characters in the place. We always felt that Livingston Village that was, you know, was slightly posh and Bellsquarry was at the end of the world, I didn't even think about Bellsquarry but it definitely felt that this was a community in its own right having its roots I guess in the shale mining. So when I first went there they still had the miners rows,... they were still there...you had this original community who themselves would have been incomers because of the shale mining...but there was no sense of when Deans South was built the original inhabitants of Livingston Station feeling animosity or anything like that, I never got that at all, all I got was a sense of kinda enlargement, that Livingston Station was getting bigger but one of inclusion.

Garry Morrison

Despite the presence of local identities, our interviewees clearly do feel part of Livingston as a whole.



Miners' Rows at Livingston Station, 1970. Housing at Deans South can be seen in the background. Image courtesy of Johnston Press plc.

I belong to Livingston and am very defensive of any criticism about it. There's some jealousy from towns like Linlithgow and Bathgate who think Livingston's the spoilt child of West Lothian and other places are forgotten about. I say "but you can always come into Livingston", and there's still this feeling that it's new people coming into Livingston. I've been here...36 years this year. No, I definitely belong to Livingston now, and although my eldest son now lives in Musselburgh I think he still sees this as his home, but my younger son is definitely a Bathgate resident.

...What I find really charming about Livingston is it has its own accent now. I remember telling my son off for calling a car a motor. I told him "We don't call it a motor we call it a car" - "But it is a motor mum" he said. I suddenly realised that's what he called it. The Livingston accent is half east (Edinburgh) and half west (Glasgow). I would hear this strange Glasgow twang and I would think "oh that's not right" but it is right, it was their own accent, they'd become Livingstonians.

Jenifer Harley

I am actually very proud of staying in Livingston, seeing it grow up and quite proud to say that I am a Livingstonian.

Manus McGuire

Working Together as a Community



John Hoey at Craigsfarm cafe, c.1972.

The first residents of the new town were often said to have a pioneering spirit. This meant that local people have always been willing to work together to make positive changes to their local community.

The only problem was that the infrastructure didn't seem to be there...There was a playgroup, Dedridge Wing I think, and in the Lanthorn, but I was told my son would be seven before he would get down the waiting list to get a place. So we had a big public meeting in the Lanthorn. We were enraged that there was nothing for our children, so we decided to take action. We took quite militant action for young mothers at that time I suppose? We took our children down to the foyer of LDC offices and told them. "We are going to leave our children here with you until you give us a property, give us some hope that the children are going to have a playgroup. Not because we wanted our time, we wanted them to learn to interact and play together." Everyone was sort of looking, wondering, and said "You can't do that you can't do that" and we said "Yes we can". We started to walk out leaving push chairs and our children in them behind, which ended up with us getting a meeting with Leslie Higgs who was responsible for housing etc.

Long story short, they eventually gave us a workman's hut, in the bottom of Palmer Rise in Dedridge. It was filthy, absolutely disgusting. There was about half a dozen of us, we cleaned the whole place, and that playgroup became Hickory House. So I was a founder member of Hickory

House, but how it got its name was not about a nursery rhyme: we tried to find a name for it and called it the Piggery because it was so bad. It went from the Piggery to the Higgery after Leslie Higgs (sorry), and that's how Hickory House got its name. I'm sure there is only me and about four or five other people that know that! It was quite funny because I had been so involved in setting it up. My son was four by this time and the first time I tried to leave him he screamed the place down. From being on the committee I was then on the West Lothian Playgroups Association which met in Craigsfarm... That was my introduction to John Hoey and the farm. He was a young vibrant man, quite scary... He was just an "I can do it, I can do it" type of person who was invaluable to the area back then. The playgroup was excellent, we got staff in and had to slowly build up and get things for it. I was the treasurer at the beginning and ended up becoming the chairman. It moved to better accommodation in Nigel Rise and is now thriving in Crofthead.

Jenifer Harley

Sandra and Margaret, members of the Lanthorn Local History Group, discuss the Neighbourhood/Community Houses.

It was good, we used to go down there, the mothers and the kids, we used to bake and take scones, and tea.

Sandra



Opening of Dedridge Community House, 1976.

So, because there was no facilities, these community houses kinna served a purpose to bring people together.
Margaret

Robert used to be Chairman of Deans Community Council; he observes that the Community Council was instrumental in lobbying for a railway line between Bathgate, Livingston and Edinburgh.

...We were quite fortunate that there was a regional councillor that attended every month at our community council meetings and he lobbied the Regional Council on our behalf, as well as us...Ron put his case to the Regional Council and eventually and reluctantly they agreed to a two year trial for the Bathgate to Edinburgh railway line and I suppose it's one boast that we can turn round and say that it's turned out to be one of the most successful branch lines in Europe, so much so that as we all know recently that the railway has been opened up all the way to Glasgow, right through to Helensburgh and now in Livingston... from Bathgate to Edinburgh you've got a 15 minute service, which is absolutely brilliant, it's first class.

Robert

I am a member of the Carmondean Community Council. Carmondean never had a council before, and that only started last October and there was notices and stuff like that put up to say this was starting, and I don't know

if I was starting to get to that age that I feel I should be doing something, I put my name forward so I am really pleased to say that I am a member of the first ever Carmondean Community Council. Thoroughly enjoying it and we are just trying to gauge what people want.

Manus McGuire



Malcolm Rifkind opens Livingston North Station, 1986.

The Ecumenical Experiment



An aerial view of the Lanthorn.

Livingston was home to the innovative Ecumenical Experiment whereby different denominations worked together to provide for the religious needs of the town. A number of the interviewees reflected upon the experiment.

The area of Ecumenical Experiment came into existence in 1966. Five years later, Ross McLaren was inducted along with a new Church of Scotland colleague, Kenneth Hughes, joining the Ecumenical Parish Team which consisted of Dr James Maitland; Brian Hardy; Max Cruickshank, the youth worker; and Ken Thornton, who was part-time in Livingston and the Methodist minister in Armadale.

...it was a new experience being part of a team, and that was both a very positive thing but it could also be quite a wearing thing as well. It could take up a lot of time just being a team.

Ross McLaren

Ross was asked by the Ecumenical Parish Team to concentrate on the area south of the river where a new church was to be built by the Congregational Union of Scotland in Dedridge. He was aware that other organisations had also committed funding to building facilities in Dedridge and described the process of bringing different parties together to each invest money into the one community facility in Dedridge – the Lanthorn. Ross describes meetings with Midlothian Council (at the time Livingston was part of Midlothian Council), the Livingston Development Corporation and Archbishop Gray of the Roman Catholic Church to build support, and the compromises that were made to achieve the centre. Ross also describes chairing the working party.

The Ecumenical Team asked Ross to take on an active community role in the Lanthorn when the centre opened. He describes the opening of the Lanthorn Centre;

The Lanthorn opened, it was a sunny day, the place looked nice, it was completed at three o'clock in the morning on the day before, I was still over there at one o'clock in the morning. There were flowers, kids came and sang, Archbishop Gray spoke, George Foulkes who was the Chairman of the Lothian Regional Council Education Committee at that time, he spoke, I think someone representing my church spoke and I had to speak and sort of sum up... the Secretary of State Bruce Millan spoke as well. Now his private secretary told me subsequently that on the way out Bruce Millan had had a very heavy week and he was saying to him "Oh dear, I could have done with anything but this today", you know, anyway, then they were back in the car he said to him, "You know, that was one of the best things I've had to do on a Saturday morning for a long time"... So the Lanthorn opened but because of cuts the kind of staff who had been envisaged running the place was just not there. The Lanthorn ran on a huge voluntary effort and I had a huge team of women who ran the coffee bar and did a whole load of things. There was a real buzz about it but in many ways it was chaotic...

Ross McLaren

Ross goes on to describe the facilities at the Lanthorn and the organisations that used it.

There was a Library there and that was part of the set-up. There were several groups that were involved; young mothers, some keeping fit. There was a crèche area built into the building as well and that became very important for the large numbers of mums with kids and making sure it was properly programmed so that the maximum number of people got the maximum use out of it was important. We had in the Lanthorn the largest Boys Brigade Company in the whole of Scotland at that time led by Alasdair Marquis who was a Head Teacher eventually at Bankton School and became an HMI and that still is a significant size given the way that kind of uniformed organisations have contracted. There were keep-fit organisations, sports organisations using the building as well, but in these early days too came the appointment of an artist in residence. There had been an artist in residence in Livingston, Denis Barns, he was involved in lots of things that happened around and about the Lanthorn before it was built, and Ronnie Forbes was appointed. Now Ronnie was a painter and he became head of painting at Duncan of Jordanstone School of Art in Dundee after he left, so Ronnie set up in

the building as well and that was terrific, and we then began to get a whole number of the paintings around the place and Ronnie was contributing and working with groups of people too. They were creating art and obviously they were doing art with somebody who was very skilled and of top quality and didn't know how lucky they really were. Ronnie painted one or two of things and I remember one of them was the nude figure of Michelangelo's David that was obscured by what was meant to be the pixels on a television screen and somehow got into the Daily Record. Someone, I did not know who was supposed to be upset about this nudity hanging on the wall, and one of the Roman Catholic ladies was caught off guard by a reporter who came to follow up on this and said things which she deeply regretted. She came and apologised to me later.



Laying of the foundation stone at Lanthorn Community Complex, 1976.

At the same time the churches of course were significant and large and growing organisations and they also had a big demand for space. At that point as one of the tests was between Joan Ryland, my colleague, now Joan was an outgoing and caring person but with some of my experiences in team ministry people had strong ideas and vision of what it was all about that made it difficult to see another interpretation of what was going on. Joan

presumed that because I was the manager and I had been so involved in this, I would make sure the church was always put at the front of the queue. That wasn't my approach at all... therefore if the church wanted to do things they had to get their act together and if they needed space they had to book it at the right time. If they wanted space and it wasn't available, well there would be a need for a learning experience.

Ross McLaren

Jim Maitland and Brian Hardy were the first two ministers in the Ecumenical Parish... I think one of them preached one Sunday and the other preached the next. When I moved to Murieston I lost contact with them... we only had one car at that time and sometimes my husband had to work at the weekends so I couldn't attend because it was miles away. When the Lanthorn opened it was within walking distance from Murieston so I attended that church along with my two children who went to Sunday school there. I now go to church at Murieston Village Hall.

Sib Penman

...there was a vibrant church, a young church. I used to be a Sunday School Teacher in the Primary Department in the Lanthorn, a part of the Ecumenical Experiment, I thought it was a wonderful, wonderful thing, and not only was it four denominations, we also were involved with the Roman Catholic Church and that was great. We shared services. Oh I loved the Lanthorn when we first came here because it was also a community centre, there was none of the foreboding of the United Free Church where you were embarrassed if you dropped your collection money or your pan drops...the children could get up and move about, I felt very liberated by that. In the primary department the 5-7's, we had 60 children at one time. It was the same in the juniors and the beginners as well. So that was vibrant. The Boys Brigade, the Fifth Livingston Boys Brigade was second to none because we had all these boys attending, and Alistair Marquis was the Captain. Both my boys went, Colin got his President's badge and David got his Queen's badge and that I think was great grounding for them. I have a lot to be thankful for the discipline they learned at the Boys' Brigade.

Jenifer Harley

The Lanthorn Flower Ladies

The flower ladies are responsible for arranging flowers for the Lanthorn churches. As part of the "Life is for Livingston" project, the ladies came together to reflect on the Ecumenical Parish and life at the Lanthorn. One member recalls moving from Craigshill to Dedridge as the Lanthorn was being built. At the time there were no community facilities and church services were held in the school. She describes the coming together of the churches through the Ecumenical Parish and the Lanthorn Centre, and liking the openness of the church with the community. Group members also mention some of the churches' leaders involved in the development of the Ecumenical Parish including Ross McLaren. Another group member explains that she was employed by the Council as an adult education tutor in the Lanthorn Centre delivering OU courses for adults. It's been a well used Community Centre.

From a churches point of view there are joint services at Christmas time including a special joint carol service.

Another member remembers that when she first moved into the area in 1979 the baby clinic was held in the Lanthorn and people brought their babies to be weighed. Members reflect that this was an important time for young mums and the Lanthorn provided a space for them to make friends. One member points out that as this recording is being made the hall is being used by a Mother and Toddler Group. In the past the Lanthorn Churches Ladies Flower Group used to meet in the hall and the Mother and Toddler Group were in a small area but the group has grown so much that they need the larger space.

A group for people with disabilities also uses the centre and only last week a group of disabled people came by coach on a visit to the centre. They had refreshments in the cafe. When asked why they chose the Lanthorn for their visit they said it was because "everybody is so friendly".

Group members discuss why the Ecumenical Parish at the Lanthorn has been a success. People have tried hard to make it work. They've listened to each other and can joke with each other. Members mention the friendship and support they have got out of it, and how people care for each other.

The seed was grown so many years ago and it's been well watered by people like ourselves and other groups.

Members also mention the encouragement they've had from the priests and their churches. Information about what's happening in the various churches are given out at mass. Prayers are said for the whole community. The churches share the same noticeboard.

One member points out that not all clergy have been happy or comfortable with it. Members joke that they don't last long!

The ministers and priests aren't always here. We're always here. We're the body and I think that's what's given it strength.

Members also reflect on the clergy working together in the early days of the Lanthorn especially Ross McLaren and Archbishop Gray, and the support from the Livingston Development Corporation and the Council.

They all agreed a certain amount of money and they designed the building so that we could all come together but at the same time we could all have a wee bit of freedom so that small churches could have weekday services and that suits the people who find it difficult to get involved [in the Ecumenical Parish] but I must admit I've never had any problem with it.



Opening of the Lanthorn, 1977.

The Happiest memories of Livingston

The interviewees were invited to reflect upon their happiest memories of Livingston.

When the children were young...we had the Gala Day and then we had the Dedridge Fun Day and going along there and meeting everybody was great. They had a five-a-side competition too. The Bankton School Football Team qualifying for the finals of a national competition and playing at Hampden. Watching both our sons playing football for Murieston United. The walks in Livingston are excellent, walking up round Murieston all through that way. Family times, social times, sales of work, jumble sales; every week there was something going on in the Lanthorn. The Queen coming to the Lanthorn - stuff like that.

Jenifer Harley



The Queen visits the Lanthorn in 1978.

...Bringing my children up I think... Once I had the kids and then you get involved in the community and your neighbours and your friends and everything with their children I'd say, especially when they were small, that would have been my happiest time. Growing up in Pumpherston was wonderful but as regarding Livingston, when I went to Knightsridge it felt more homely. I did so much more there, knew more people and just spending time with the kids and doing things for the kids... That shopping centre we have's wonderful, I have to say one of the best that I've been in; that includes the Gyle or East Kilbride or anywhere else, I think Livingston has a wonderful shopping centre there, but yeah, bringing the kids up was the best I think, definitely...

Margaret White

All the children, well, two of them were born in Bangour but Dominic was born in St. John's and Paul was born in the house, absolutely the children. Just my family being here, family days and all that kind of stuff.

I think that's...to me that's probably more [important], the immediate family and seeing them grow up, and I've got grandchildren now as well and they are all doing really well. I think Livingston has to take some of the credit for that, I think the schooling system in Livingston has to take some of that credit as well...I think St. Margaret's has done a fantastic job and, I am not saying St. Margaret's is better than anywhere else, I think the schools in Livingston do a great job. I think they have really, sort of, allowed people to grow...

Manus McGuire

I had friends that lived in Dedridge and had gone up to first foot them as you did, picked up some of the people from that party to go to another party in Craigshill to come home trudging through the snow on the streets in the wee small hours and bumped into another group of friends who had done something similar but in reverse order and we met each other on the foot bridge between Howden and Ladywell and we sat down on the bridge about three o' clock in the morning in the snow and had a party. Bizarre! But it was because you wished everybody a Happy New Year and it was just strange... it was the relationships and friendships of individuals... the town was still small enough that you could afford to have that luxury of interaction... now it's huge, you go into the shopping centre and you might bump into three or four people.

Douglas Roy



Dedridge Gala Day, 1971.



Children play at "tot lots" in Kirkton.

...probably my happiest time would be pretty much all of it right up until being an adult... when you're young and you're a child you don't know that you're missing out on anything because you're just doing what everybody else is doing and because everybody was in the same boat, everybody's mums didn't work, everyone's dads worked at Cameron's, not everybody had a car, nobody could go to shops because there wasnae any, you know, so everybody went to Krazy Kuts, everybody went to, you know, Bathgate; you didn't know that you were missing anything until things started sprouting up and then you'd sort of look and the way my mum would have always said "Oh we used to have the dancing halls and the bingo and the trams and..." so you didn't know you were missing out on anything until you look back and you think. Nowadays people are trying to get back to the values that we had when we were young where kids just went out to play and it was safe to go out to play and kids went to school and there were less cars on the road... everything was made from scratch because there was no junk food, there was no McDonalds.

Elaine Hope

*I loved being part of the Ecumenical Experiment. I loved working with colleagues even though that could be difficult. To be together and not be doing a 'loner' thing 'My Church' you know, it was Our Church, it was Our Town; we were in it together. That was good. I liked the challenge of being in something new - about the fact it was a dynamic picture and that you were involved in it... one of the things in the Lanthorn days was a recorded principle that you don't do separately what you can do in partnership with the community. And that was my kind of *raison d'être* about what I was doing, that we were part of a whole community... it was a privilege really to be allowed to play the part I did and doing things for the new town as Chairman of the Working Party for the Lanthorn; working with people from different backgrounds; working closely with the Development Corporation, feeling that I could go in there at any time and speak to anybody from the Chief Executive down was important, it was a great privilege.*

Ross McLaren

A Changing Town



Aerial of Almond Valley Bridge Construction, 1971.

Livingston has grown extensively over the last 50 years. The interviewees were asked to reflect upon how the town has grown.

Margaret White reflects on some of the changes she's noticed over the years. The town has grown enormously, and The Centre has tripled in size. Margaret feels that, large as it has grown, each part of the town tries to keep a sense of community.

...at the Almond, you've got houses way up to practically, well practically up to Kirknewton now and just everywhere you look; north, south, east, west Livingston has just exploded. It has just grown so much, but I do think they try very hard to keep it as that community, as large as it gets, each little place; Knightsridge, Howden, Craigshill, they're like small communities which make up a very large town... My only negative is not enough work for the children, and no housing, which is so sad. I mean I know, we bought our house, we had the opportunity to buy our council house which we did, but I think now looking back it might have not been a good idea for them to do that because people can't get houses. We're not over housed by any means, cause my daughter and son still stay with us, but eventually there might just be my husband and I and we'll be sitting in a three bedroom house that maybe someone could of used for a family. So, that would be my only negative and that's not just Livingston I think that's just Britain as a whole, isn't it, which is a shame. I feel sorry for the kids now cause I think they can't get full time jobs. I'm just going by my own children who have just started full time jobs but the

contract's only a year. If you've not a full time job how can you afford to buy a house? Livingston as a whole, I think it's a pretty good new town. When you consider there's Glenrothes, East Kilbride and that... I think Livingston's a very nice looking new town...

Margaret White



Howden Park Centre.

I've lived here for nearly 47 years and my husband and I have lived in our current house for the last 42 years. At the very beginning we felt just like pioneers and since those days Livingston has changed so much.

Sib Penman



The Centre.

Ross McLaren moved to Aberdeen in 1989 and was there until 2005 when he retired. He and Elma returned to Livingston to be closer to their family. Ross felt that Livingston had changed a great deal in the intervening years. He felt there was an emphasis on the market place and has found it difficult to feel part of the community as he did before. The town has improved in terms of facilities, sport and transport, and as a modern conurbation there are many positives, but for Ross the sense of solidarity and relationships with people that he felt in the 1970s has gone. He feels that traditional meeting places have lost their place in community life, though the bowling clubs seem to have been very successful in bringing people together. He sees the new Howden Park Centre as a terrific addition to the cultural life of Livingston.

It's improved in many ways in terms of facilities, in terms of transport...but it has none of the sense of solidarity with people, of the relationships that I encountered certainly in the seventies and knew had begun to be lost in the eighties. I think it's happened all over, but in Livingston, because it's growing, it's still a dynamic growing thing, the question of where people gather has not fully been found. The church has lost its place in society, the pubs have lost their place in the market place...

Ross McLaren

It's changing every month, this place, I think I seen the difference and the changes because I was away for ten year and I used tae come back, maybe twice a year, and every time I come back... I come back and there's traffic lights, I had the shock of my life!... likes of before they built that bridge tae, we didnae have the shopping centre, we didnae have this end, we couldnae go over

to this end of the place, because we didnae have the bridge, they built the bridge and then once that was built the place just expanded.

Rena

Oh it's just grown, it's so big. I used to know everywhere in Livingston when I was growing up, I could go anywhere, now I'm struggling. Somebody stopped me and asked me "Could you tell me how to get to such and such?" I don't even know where that is, to be honest with you. Well, certainly the shopping has improved, there's no getting away from it, it's a nice area to go for shopping now. Would it be the same for growing up now for somebody? I don't know, because I think there was a good community spirit when I was growing up, I mean we knew all our neighbours and at Christmas and New Year everybody used to get together, and certainly we don't get that in Bathgate here now. I don't know what it's like in Livingston now for somebody, eight, nine, ten year old now, growing up the way I did.

Steven McGurk



Public Art at the Crematorium.

I don't think I would move back to Livingston because it's too busy. I liked Livingston growing up, I still think it's a great place if you've got kids and each little area has got its own sense of community, and I like that, I like a sense of community; but I don't think I could come back because it's too busy.

Elaine Hope

Douglas Roy still lives in Livingston Village; he appreciates the closeness to the countryside and access to local facilities.

You look out your door and you've got green fields, we've got the Almond at the bottom of our street, I go up the heritage centre where my kids spent most of their days, you know, feeding animals and looking after them.. it's nice to walk out your door and round about fifty, sixty yards and you're back in the countryside where there's wildlife... I like staying in the town... Livingston's matured into a very modern, thoroughly cared for town; everything you want is here, so why would I want to move anywhere else?

Douglas Roy

I think it's got just so much more to offer now, when I think back to that night that I arrived with my dad on that bus, and it was pitch black and we didn't know where we were going. I don't even know if there was a map of Livingston at that point in time but whether we had the 'nous' to think about getting a map of was another story as well, I don't know, but I just think the amenities with regards to the shops... look what you've got down the centre there, all those different restaurants and stuff, even like five, six years ago you didn't have

anything like that. It goes back to that Boulevard thing; you've now got a central focus that allows people to see exactly what Livingston has to offer. I think it does have so much more to offer. I think it would be great if it could become that real sort of hub again of employment, I don't know if it is, but you get the impression that there are no longer the NEC's, no longer the Motorola's, there's no longer the Cameron Iron Works, places like that. Yes there's jobs, and there's lots of small firms which is fantastic because we absolutely need them, but if there was a hub of real employment that people could sort of come into town and know that their sons and daughters could possibly get a job in the same company as their parents. You know the closest place to that is the hospital to be absolutely honest, and it is a huge employer but I think we need more than that. If we got that again I just think again it would increase the prestige of Livingston.

Manus McGuire

I'm definitely a success story in Livingston. I came here thinking it was going to be terrible, I was only going to stay for a few weeks until Dave got settled and then we could go back to the east. I don't think I would go back to the east now although I still have loads of friends and I love going there. Both our sons got good education here and went on to obtain Masters' Degrees from Heriot Watt. This is my home, and you know what I just decided? When my time comes I'll go to West Lothian Crematorium. Now that's a big step for me because my husband's family are in Mortonhall and my family are in Seafield, Edinburgh. That could be my final thought, yeah when I do go if I'm still in Livingston, I'll go to West Lothian.

Jenifer Harley



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